

The SOCIETY PAGES

HARSENS ISLAND / ST. CLAIR FLATS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

∞ 2012 ∞

LECTURE SERIES

Peter Rindlisbacher: Marine Artist



Peter Rindlisbacher currently works as a full time marine artist, generally portraying War of 1812 subjects. He enjoys research and working closely with historians in order to create his paintings,

using maps, models and primary source documents as much as possible.

Museums and historic sites in the U.S. and Canada have purchased many of his oil paintings, while limited print editions of his work are currently sold as fundraisers for various heritage groups. His images have appeared on numerous book and magazine covers, and in a number of video and Public Television productions such as The History Channel and National Geographic.

In terms of education, he is a self taught artist, but obtained a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology in 1992. His affiliations include a membership in the Canadian Society of Marine Artists, and associate memberships in North Star Sail Club and the Naval Officers Association of Canada. He is also a model maker, racing sailor, and longboat owner in the Provincial Marine, a naval historical re-enactment group. Peter presently lives in Amherstburg, Ontario, with his wife and two children. ■

Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Historical Society
presents

WARSHIPS on the ST. CLAIR RIVER

The 1812 War and Its Aftermath
to commemorate the 200th Anniversary
of the War of 1812.

Featuring Artist and Historian
Peter Rindlisbacher

**SATURDAY
APRIL 14**
3:00 to 5:00pm

LIONS HALL
262 Lacroix Road • Harsens Island, MI 48028

This is the first in the 2012 Lecture Series
presented by the Historical Society

Seating for this event is extremely limited.

Please make your reservations
by contacting Nancy Licata at:
810-748-1825
or via e-mail at:
nlicata@comcast.net.

Suggested donation: **Ten Dollars**

HARSENS ISLAND
ST. CLAIR FLATS
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

BUILDING *for*
THE *Future*
PRESERVING
Our *PAST*

2012
7

The Society Pages

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Join us on Facebook!

From the President

Last October, **Captain Donald Erickson** gave a generous gift to the Society when he and his friend **Mac McAdam** conducted a fireside-chat at the Lions Hall about the loss of the *SS Edmund Fitzgerald* on that horrible night in November 1975.

Captain Erickson made a very difficult decision to leave safe anchorage, risk his ship, his crew and his life; and, face the fury of 85mph headwinds and 30-35 foot seas to search for the missing ship, her crew or any survivors.

It is with a sad heart that I report to you that I received word this past week that the good Captain has suffered a heart attack and is in critical condition. Our thoughts and prayers are with him and his family.

April is here and your Historical Society will launch the 2012 Lecture Speaker Series by commemorating the War of 1812. **Peter Rindlisbacher** will present: **Warships on the St. Clair River; the 1812 War and its Aftermath.**

A schedule of 2012 Events was sent to each of you last month and is posted on the website. If you are interested in attending these events, please reserve a space early as we have limited capacity for each event.

Your board is always looking for new ideas that will highlight the history and culture of the Island and the Flats. Please let us know your thoughts on how to improve. Phone or e-mail me any time.

bernard

🔗 2012 Lecture Series 🔗

Arthur M. Woodford May 12, 2012

Retired Library Administrator and current Historian and Author who is listed in *Who's Who in America*, *Contemporary Authors*, and *Michigan Authors*. The island's rich history will come alive with **Tashmoo: The Park and The Steamer**. He will also conduct a book signing of his new book: **Tashmoo Park and the Steamer Tashmoo**, at the conclusion of the presentation.

Suggested Donation: \$10.00 per person

Robert McGreevy July 14, 2012

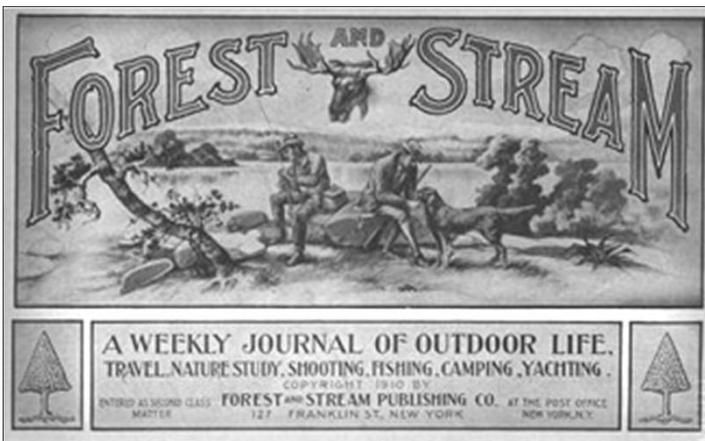
Bob is a Great Lakes Historian and Maritime Artist whose family history is steeped in the ship-building industry. Bob will present the history of: **The Steamer Key Stone State (circa-1861)** Built by Bidwell & Banta of Buffalo in 1849, it was the second largest passenger vessel on the lakes. Bob will also conduct a book signing at the conclusion of his presentation.

Suggested Donation: \$10.00 per person

Joel Stone October 13, 2012

Joel is Senior Curator for the Detroit Historical Society and will present: **Committed to the Deep: Exploring Underwater Treasures**. The very first ship on the upper Great Lakes, LaSalle's Griffon, sailed only a single voyage before disappearing beneath the waves. Several thousand vessels, along with their crews, have met the same fate. This presentation offers great photographs and underwater video that explore the world of those committed to the deep.

Suggested Donation: \$10.00 per person



The Clubs of the St. Clair Flats by E. Hough

Editor's Note: This is Part 4 of a multi-part series originally published in Forest and Stream in August and September, 1890.

THE RUSHMERE CLUB

CROSSING the deep cut above Mervue Club, one comes to a fresh and pretty cottage, with a good little lawn and generally self-respectful look. This is **Sunnyside**, the summer abode of **Mr. A. C. Varney**, a noted Detroit architect, who designed the great building of the Rushmere Club, which stands so close by as nearly to over-shadow his modest dwelling. Mr. Varney was out on the roof of his barn doing some shingling. At least, it would have been the barn if there were any such thing as a barn on the St. Clair Flats, only that instead of pulling the carriage up by the barn you row the boat up there. The Flats are strictly aquatic. There is not such a thing as a horse or a vehicle throughout the club region. The summer resorters here have no long moonlight drives, it is true, but then they have no livery bills. Everything goes by water. When Mr. Varney first began to come up into this country he was broken down in health through hard work at his profession, but some years of outdoor summer life at the Flats had changed him from all that, and made him an apparently hearty and certainly very good-natured man. Mr. Varney rolled down his shirt sleeves and volunteered to go over to Rushmere club house with the thirster after facts. Accordingly we crossed the little arched bridge, whose single truss is a long oak plank, and crossing an expanse of

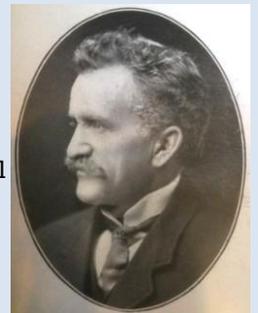
ground whose filling in is not yet complete, soon stood on the wide expanse of green velvet lawn of the Rushmere Club.

The engraving will do well which gives any adequate idea of this noble building, which is in many ways the superior of anything of the kind I have ever seen. I remember when the opening of this club was reported in the papers, a few years ago, it was generally said that no club house in the country came near this one in the ornate, elaborate and expensive character of its structure. It is indeed a noble building, and no temple of sportsmanship and pleasure in all the country round about shall we find to overtop it in our scale of comparisons. Shades of the muzzleloading days, look down upon us! What is modern sportsmanship coming to? Thirty-four thousand dollars here, expended for a playhouse, with no one knows what additional outlay for the boats, yachts and personal paraphernalia belonging thereto.

Organized sportsmanship shows how commanding of respect the sportsmanship of to-day really is. No sneer at sportsmen to-day. They are a class. Their trade is worth money. Forty thousand dollars, let us say, was here paid by one body of sportsmen. It went to a good many people. The tradesmen dare not argue against that. The business man dare not scoff longer at the fellow with the gun. After a while the politician will bend a willing ear to hear what the sportsman has to say. ►

A.C. Varney - Architect

Almon Clother Varney was one of the best known and most successful architects of Detroit. Mr. Varney drew the plans, supervised the construction, and furnished the capital for the erection of the first flats or apartment building in Detroit. The firm of Varney & Company were architects for a large number of business houses and flats in Detroit, including the Butler Building on Griswold Street, the Oriental Hotel, and considerable part of the earlier buildings of ParkeDavis & Company.



The Clubs of the St. Clair Flats *continued*

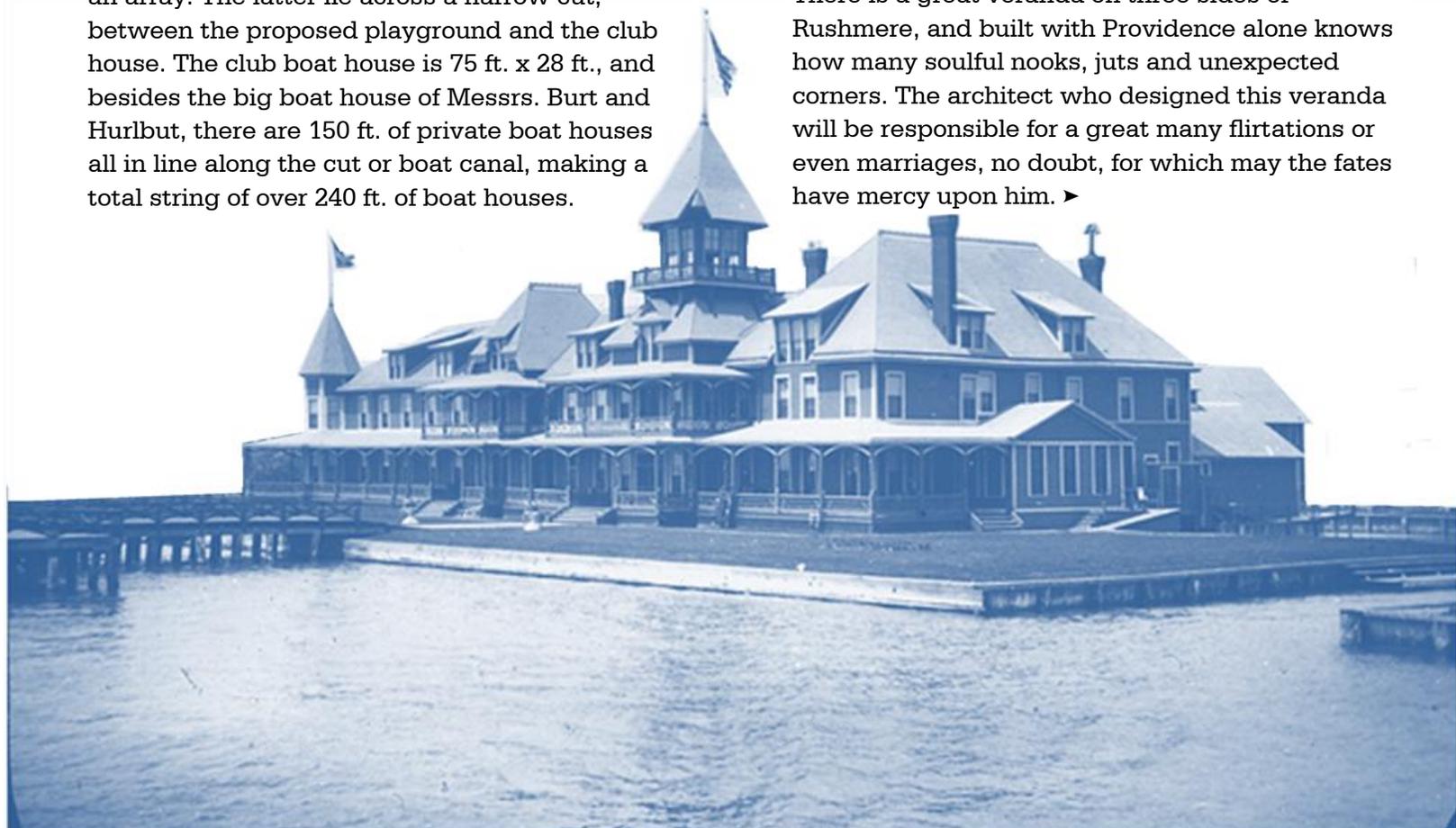
The baptismal name of **Rushmere Club**, as it is generally called, after the local name of the club building, is **The Detroit Fishing and Hunting Association**. It is, of course, duly incorporated, the charter members being Mr. W. R. Clark, president; Mr. F. B. Dickerson, treasurer; Mr. Charles Beck, secretary; Mr. L. Burt, Dr. Phil Porter, Dr. Moore and Mr. A. C. Varney. The organization was made in the fall of 1884. The club house was built the second season, and occupied the next thereafter. The price paid for the Rushmere realty was \$400 per 50 ft. lot. The present grounds, as far as completed, are now 340 ft. front and 100 ft. deep. The club owns the tract between the cut-off and Mr. Varney's cottage, 300 ft. more, and this will soon be filled up thoroughly and put down in grass. The plot thus formed will be given over to the children for a playground.

Rushmere is put up upon a large scale in every way. The lawn is both long and wide, the dock is long and solid; even the boat houses present quite an array. The latter lie across a narrow cut, between the proposed playground and the club house. The club boat house is 75 ft. x 28 ft., and besides the big boat house of Messrs. Burt and Hurlbut, there are 150 ft. of private boat houses all in line along the cut or boat canal, making a total string of over 240 ft. of boat houses.

The number and quality of the boats may be judged from these figures. There are several of them, if not more.

The main building of Rushmere club house, if the reader likes figures, is 325 ft. front by 38 ft. in depth, with two large wings additional. There is also another building, a bit further back, 35 x 50 ft. in size, for laundry and servant domicile purposes. A big club is necessarily much like a big hotel. For instance, there are seventy-five bed rooms in Rushmere, and sometimes Mr. Moore and his genial wife, who have the household reins in hand, are called upon to dispose of 200 guests. When the summer months come, the interesting fact becomes evident that every Detroit has web feet. Along in June, July and August, all Detroit lives on perch and bass, and goes up to the Flats to catch and eat them. The Saturday traffic on the boats of the Star Line is something immense. These great clubs are the lungs of Detroit, and a very hearty, pleasant, city they help to make her.

There is a great veranda on three sides of Rushmere, and built with Providence alone knows how many soulful nooks, juts and unexpected corners. The architect who designed this veranda will be responsible for a great many flirtations or even marriages, no doubt, for which may the fates have mercy upon him. ►



The Clubs of the St. Clair Flats *continued*

Off the veranda opens a big hall, upon the opposite side of which is a most excellent big grate, over whose mantel rests a goodish oil painting. The main stairway is to the right of that, and to the right, close by the entrance door, is the office, beyond which is the smoking room, and beyond that again, down at the end of the long cross hall, is the ladies' parlor, a bright and cheerful nook 14 x 14 ft. in size. To the left of the entrance hall is the main parlor, 18 x 34 ft., white curtained, tasteful and quiet, supplied among other attractions with a pretty little piano which I certainly should have stolen if there hadn't been so much other stuff in the duck boat. Back of this parlor is the dining room, 26 x 45 ft. in extent, and all as it ought to be, of course. Traversing the building for the greater portion of its length is a cross hall, 8 ft. x 145. Rushmere is a club of magnificent distances. You couldn't kill a duck across the veranda, and you could hardly cast a frog the length of this long hall.

The entrance hall, or reception room, is finished in natural pine, worked down in hard oil. This will improve with age, but the effect is mellow and pleasant today. The floor is polished hardwood and the hat racks are heavy oak.

When you get upstairs you are simply in the second heaven. There is a big reading and writing room up there, finished in the same manner as the reception room, and commanding a fine view out over the channel. There are two fine balconies up there, too, where one can sit and write poetry.

But details of the architectural excellence and elegance of the house or description of the charms of the Rushmere cuisine will hardly be what most greatly interests the sportsmen who read about the Flats. What do the members do, how and where do they shoot and fish, what sorts of boats do they use, and what are the special features of the sport enjoyed—those are questions which will be asked imperiously. To answer them must bring out the unique character of the sportsmanship of this locality.

Rushmere men fish for bass after the fashion of St. Clair bass fishing, which will be touched upon a little later on, in the course of speaking of some of the other clubs. They shoot ducks as has been already mentioned. We may, however, go a little further in one regard, and assign to Rushmere a boat that may be called typical, though it follows the description already given of the craft in most general use.

Mr. Varney showed the writer a boat of his own device which is worth comment. This little ship was 18 ft. overall and 5 ft. 5 in. beam, with a skin entirely smooth. She was decked forward about 4 ft., and had steps for two different positions of the mast, according to the amount of wind. She had a good stiff centerboard drop, and was provided with rowlocks for two sets of oars. Handsomely furnished and finished, in and out, this made a most comfortable craft for a long fishing journey. Mr. Varney showed me on this boat a little appliance invented by himself, which has lately been largely copied by the seamen of the Flats. This is simply a light little fonder rail, covered with sheet brass, and running along the swell of the sides from stem to stern. The nicely painted skin is thus protected from injury or chafing against the dock when making a landing or lying alongside. This "Rushmere" model is of very safe but graceful lines, and is said to be a good stiff sailor, which is something highly desirable on the touchy-tempered seas of this region.

The system of conducting the household at Rushmere is that general among the clubs. The steward furnishes everything by way of food, and charges a rate per diem. The annual dues of the club are only \$25. The membership fee was originally \$100, but has been raised to \$225. The lists will always be full, and will always represent a body of men of the very best class, whether in society, in business, or more than all, in sportsmanship. ■

Rescue Vehicle Update

The Historic Harsens Island **RESCUE VEHICLE** donated by **Bob Williams** is being refurbished and repaired by **Mark Gentile**, island resident and owner of Gentile's Collision on Van Dyke in Shelby Township. They were able to put in a new fuel line and get the truck running. By the looks of the photos and Mark's comments he is doing a first class job on this project.

The Historical Society sincerely thanks Mark for his contribution. If any of our Society Members have a need for collision work, we are certain that Mark would appreciate your business. We all look forward to seeing the Rescue Vehicle back on the Island with a fresh coat of paint and, of course, hearing the siren.

THANK YOU MARK...!

Mark Gentile, Jr.
Collision Consultant
Gentile's Collision, Inc.

Phone #: (586) 739-3777

Fax #: (586) 726-6470

Email: MarkJr@GentilesCollision.com



2012 Activities & Events Calendar

Dates and locations subject to change

Museum Hours

Open by appointment in February and March 2012

May: Saturday 10 AM – 2 PM

June, July, Aug, Sept: Saturday 10 AM – 2 PM and Sunday Noon – 4 PM

For museum information, contact Nancy Boulton at 810-748-3802

Contact us at email@hiscfhs.org

All events and meetings held at the Old Fire Hall Museum unless noted
3058 S. Channel in downtown Sans Souci.

Members are welcome to attend any Board meetings on the calendar to keep apprised of Society activities and to bring issues before the Board.

March	31	Board Meeting Saturday – 11:30 AM
April	14	Peter Rindlisbacher presents “Warships on the St. Clair River; the 1812 War and its Aftermath” Saturday – 3 to 5 PM at the Lion’s Hall
May	12	Board Meeting Saturday – 11:30 AM
	12	Art Woodford presents “Tashmoo: The Park and Steamer” Saturday – 3 to 5 PM at the Lion’s Hall
	26	Memorial Day Open House & First Year Anniversary Saturday 11am to 4pm