

The SOCIETY

PAGES

HARSENS ISLAND / ST. CLAIR FLATS HISTORICAL SOCIETY



The Legend of St. Valentine's Day

February 14 brings memories of paper Valentines quietly slipped into a paper bag taped to the side of the desk in grade school. Would there be any in your bag? Would you be popular and have a lot of them – or none?

How did Valentine's Day get started anyway? St. Valentine's Day, as we know it today, contains remnants of both Christian and ancient Roman tradition.

According to one legend, an imprisoned Valentine actually sent the first "valentine" greeting himself after he fell in love with a young girl-possibly his jailor's daughter-who visited him during his confinement. Before his death, it is alleged that he wrote her a letter signed "From your Valentine," an expression that is still in use today. Although the truth behind the Valentine legends is muddy, the stories all emphasize his appeal as a sympathetic, heroic and-most importantly-romantic figure.

At the end of the 5th century, Pope Gelasius declared February 14 St. Valentine's Day. It was not until much later, however, that the day became associated with love.

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From the President

Well, for you snowbirds and other escapees enjoying the balmy weather of the South, it finally got cold enough here to produce ice on the river and this new ice is actually threatening to close the ferry tonight, January 24. It sure did change-up fast; it was just a couple weeks ago and it was balmy here.

In other news...

- Your board is waiting further communication with the **Community Foundation of St. Clair County (CFSCC)** and **Clay Township** regarding The Society's proposal for **Freighter View Park**. In the interim we are investigating possible financing to complete phase I of the project.
- I failed to mention back in October that The Society invited the Island business community along with the churches, library and other organizations to meet on October 14 and 28 to help build a Harsens Island **COMMUNITY CALENDAR for 2013**. You will find the calendar at: www.hiscfhs.org. Almost every organization on the Island participated and some adjusted the dates of their planned events to avoid conflict. It was a great cooperative meeting with good results. Please check it out and let us know if you think it will be a quick and helpful tool for you this upcoming 2013 season. (You can print out a month at a time and post it on your refrigerator as a quick reference events guide.) If you are involved with an organization whose events are not posted, please have them contact The Society's Secretary: nlicata@comcast.net with the information.
- During the first of the calendar planning meetings, The Society introduced a concept for a new annual event for the Island that would be known as: **TASHMOO DAYS -**

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The Society Pages

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From the President continued

Experience the TASHMOO era of 100 years ago. The group who attended the first meeting was excited about the idea. The idea now has acceptance, consensus and commitment to move forward...so mark Saturday, **July 20** for the first annual Tashmoo Days event. The Historical Society will combine First Nations Day with Tashmoo Days to help make this event as authentic as possible. More information on all the activities that are being planned will be provided in the March *Society Pages*.

- Our **2013 Lecture Series** will kick-off on Saturday, **April 13** with certified PADI Divemaster, **Tony Gramer**, who has been diving since 1977. Tony is the president of Silent World Information Masters, Inc. (SWIM). His images have taken best in show and first place in photo contests across the world. This is a lecture you will not want to miss. Make your reservation early by phoning 810-748-1825, or e-mail: nlicata@comcast.net and, put this lecture on your calendar.

For those of you who missed any of the last five great Lectures, you will find the DVD's now posted for sale on our website. You may go to: <http://www.stewartfarm.org/hiscfhs/store.htm> to find an Order Form and instructions for ordering.

Our annual dues mailing was sent off a few days ago and we hope you will continue to support The Society and the good things it brings to Harsens Island and the St. Clair Flats.

Your board and executive team cannot function without your input. Any questions or comments should be sent directly to me at: president@hiscfhs.org.

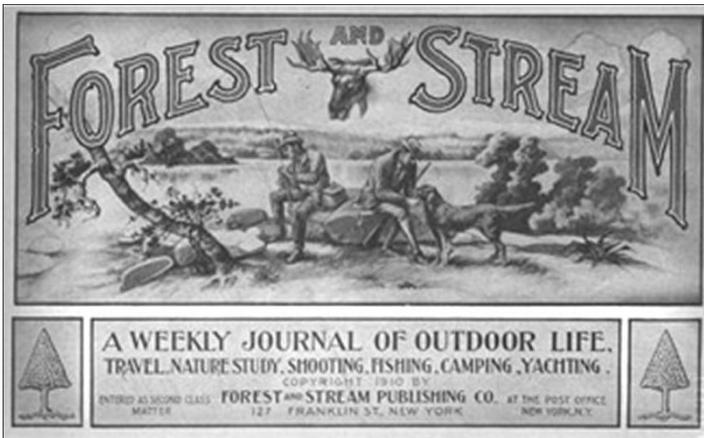
thank you
bernardo

The Legend of Valentine's Day continued

During the Middle Ages, it was commonly believed in France and England that February 14 was the beginning of birds' mating season, which added to the idea that the middle of Valentine's Day should be a day for romance. Valentine greetings were popular as far back as the Middle Ages, though written Valentine's didn't begin to appear until after 1400.

In Great Britain, Valentine's Day began to be popularly celebrated around the 17th century. By the middle of the 18th, it was common for friends and lovers of all social classes to exchange small tokens of affection or handwritten notes, and by 1900 printed cards began to replace written letters due to improvements in printing technology. Ready-made cards were an easy way for people to express their emotions in a time when direct expression of one's feelings was discouraged.

Today, an estimated 1 billion Valentine's Day cards are sent each year, making Valentine's Day the second largest card-sending holiday of the year after Christmas. Happy Valentine's Day!



The Clubs of the St. Clair Flats

by E. Hough

Editor's Note: This is Part 5 of a multi-part series originally published in Forest and Stream in August and September, 1890.

The Peninsula Club (aka The Marshland Club) Star Island House

AFTER leaving Rushmere Club there is no other club building for some distance up the river. The right hand bank of the river presents the same expanse of rice and reeds, but that on the left—the strip of made land—is pretty well built up with structures large and small, public or private. The first building beyond the cut-off is the tasty twelve-room cottage of Mr. Wm. A. Butler and sons, of Detroit, which was planned by Mr. Varney and built before Rushmere club. Then there comes the long water front known as “Keweena Island Dock.” There is no building here yet, unless one except the bath houses at the back of the island. Our yacht lay anchored just back of this spot, and in passing to and fro here in the chick boat we could not help observing what a good bathing beach there was here, the water being shallow for a long way out, and bottom for the most part good.

Beyond “Keweena Island” is another deep cut-off, which serves as the boat canal for the boat houses of the well-known Star Island House, the largest, neatest and most desirable socially of all the public resorts in this portion of the Flats. The Star Island grounds embrace 29 acres, well shaded and with an admirable turf. The house is 158 x 150, built in cross-shape. Its dining-room is 158 ft. long and a

fine room. It often sees 200 guests at table. Jim Slocum—or may be, as he seems to be pretty well fixed financially, I ought to call him Mr. James Slocum—bought this property about 9 years ago. The house is 12 years old. Much of the popularity of the place is due to Mr. Slocum's tact and ability as a manager. This is a great stopping place for the pleasure vessels, which pass up and down the channel from all parts of the waters hereabout. Some of the notables and would-be notables drift in here occasionally to eat fish and put on airs. It was our fortune to see here a certain American tenor, with an Italian tenor's stomach, who has lately achieved success by marrying a rich and weighty wife who paid



Star Island House, c. 1891

an opera company to let her new husband sing in the cast for a while. One could not soon forget the large and princely air with which this celebrity waved adieu to Star Island from the deck of the receding steamer. After the custom of resorters, the populace had gathered to see the boat off. The tenor thought they came to see him off, and smiled graciously as he stood spraddled out at the rail and waved his gloved hands. That made me laugh, which did my dyspepsia good. So it seems that tenors can be of some use after all.

Mr. Slocum sometimes uses 1,300 lbs. of fish in one day on his tables and has had 625 guests at one meal. He sometimes uses bass, illegally speared. I know this, because I saw a French fisher boy sell such bass there, during our stay, which was in May. There is much complaint along the Flats that such and such an individual buys speared bass, and so offers a market to the Indian and French law-breakers. Old Joe Bedore isn't the only man along the channel who buys illegal bass and there don't anybody need think so.

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In an article last spring I described a string of speared bass that I saw sold at the Peninsula Club. At that time the bass were beginning to spawn in the shallows back of the marsh which lies up toward the latter club house and the French fishers were spearing them there, if the lights out at night were any sign. It has already been stated that the falling off of the fishing, or the growth of illegal methods, had caused certain gentlemen of the St. Clair and Rushmere clubs to invite John Parker and Frank Wherry, the game wardens, to make this very trip upon which we had now come up. Let these gentlemen make no mistake about how matters appear to an outsider who spent only one day along the Channel.

But it is a long way yet to the Peninsula Club by way of the water, as any one may find who paddles a duck boat against the rapid flood of the blue St. Clair. After the cut-off next above the Star Island House there is 1000 of vacant land, its water front all nicely piled and planked. Then there comes another cut-off, with a current like the tide at sea. Just across this is the summer cottage of Mr. Hiram Stansell, of Detroit. There is a big horseshoe of water clear about the place. Over the next cut is the cottage of John and Wm. Boydell of Detroit, said to be the first private house ever built on the Flats. I tied up here a few moments and talked with Mr. Boydell, who, with his two manly young boys, was just fixing up his little steam yacht for a run. He kindly offered to pick me up, further on up the river, and take me over to the Canada Club, whose housetop we could just see from this portion of the

bend, but which I was doubtful about reaching that night in the duck boat. This seemed a very clever offer to a perfect stranger, and I gladly accepted it. He overtook me about an hour later, up the channel, saved me a lot of time and gave me a very pleasant ride, too.

Above the Boydell place is a cut, then comes 450 of vacant land, owned by the Boydells, and then another cut, and then what is called the Mayberry cottage, built by Mr. W. C. Mayberry, but now owned by Mr. Mayberry and Mr. J. F. Webber. Then there is another cut for a change. We will get to the Peninsula Club after a while and the man who thinks this is a tough way ought to paddle up there once. Then there is another cut. We are now getting up toward where these cuts run back into a marshier looking sort of country, with channels or runs through it. Then there comes the Sam Craig cottage and the Gies cottage, and then another cut, and then the two small cottages of the Holland brothers, and then a cut. Beyond this is the solid and spacious dock of the Peninsula Fishing, Shooting and Yachting Club.

The Peninsula Club, so called by the public, was organized in October of 1884 and duly incorporated, the incorporators being Messrs. Geo. W. Larkins, John C. Brandon, Emmet Streeter, Aid. C. Lanyon, Thomas A. Woods, Alfred C. Hempel, Henry Koester, Levi A. Wilcox, Hobart H. Gray, Frank Bowring, Andrew W. Hackett and Alex S. Gray. Stock is held at \$50 a share. The membership is limited to 200. There are about 80 members now. The annual dues are \$10.

The club house is about 40 x 60 ft., two stories, very comfortable and provided with good boat houses, which harbor about thirty small boats. Mr. W. R. Cole, one of the members, owns a good little steam yacht, the *J. I. C.* There are about a dozen bedrooms in the house, and these are not enough to hold everybody sometimes, for now we have fallen upon a club of strictly practical hunters and fishers, who come out when the season is on and work hard for results.

There has been a good deal of change since the beginning in the membership of the Peninsula Club, and also in its character. It is said that there used to be a few men in the club who didn't care very much for either game or fish laws. They

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Looking upriver from Star Island House, c. 1890

would net, spear, shoot out of season, or do anything else they felt like doing, at least so say their neighbors. And these same neighbors say that all that is now changed, and that no such carryings on now occur.

The membership of the Peninsula Club is now certainly of a high order, and is drawn mostly from the ranks of solid business men or those in official capacity. Mr. C. P. Collins, the president, is the able Auditor of Wayne county, and a Detroit man of large business interests. He is a sportsman, and has a big heart for sportsmen, as witness the expensive medal he offered the Peoria Club at their tournament last spring. Jim Battle is chief of the Fire Department of Detroit, Mr. Jas. Nagle is a State Senator of Michigan, and there are a good many others of the members who live in the court house in working hours. All of the gentlemen I met were courteous and helpful to the last degree. A very whole-souled set of hard-working, practical sportsmen, I should take the body of this club to be. Their club house is chiefly for business. The ladies of the club are welcome, but when the flight is on, the decks must be cleared for action. There is considerable summer-day pleasure, sailing, boating, etc., here; but this is no summer resort, but a lodge of fieldsmen.

There is someone in the kitchen who can fry perch to the queen's taste, as I found when the steward, Mr. Hodgson, asked me in to supper as I was coming back down the channel later in the day. Mr. Hodgson has been steward for about a year. The basis here is about the same usual elsewhere—the steward has a salary and charges a rate for board, providing his own materials.

Mr. Hodgson is a quiet, pleasant young man, and will make the club popular and pleasant. In a talk with him he expressed a knowledge of the lawless depredations being carried on upon the Flats and of the necessity for a proper game warden for that locality if any respect was to be had for the law.

On the day following my first visit I returned with Messrs. Parker and Wherry, who, as has already been stated, were up purposely to try to find a suitable person to recommend for the position of warden on the Flats. They had a long talk with Mr. Hodgson and I inferred that the latter would be very likely to get the appointment. This would be

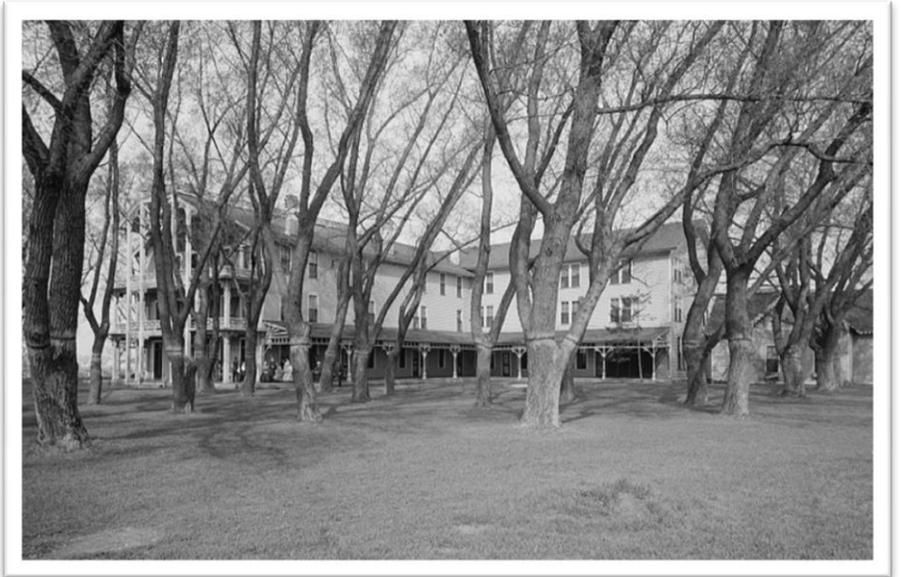
very well, and I feel sure that if Mr. Hodgson were backed by the clubs of the Flats, as he should be, he could stop a great deal of lawless destruction of fish and game. The previous warden resigned his commission, or stopped work, simply because he could not afford to do the work for nothing. He was a better warden than he is spoken of as being, but he could not work at this unpleasant business for pleasure, nor could any reasonable man expect it. There seems to be a notion that a game warden should be diligent and active, out in all sorts of weather, after all sorts of characters and should live on the glory of supporting the law. There is no good sense displayed in game law matters. The great and wealthy clubs of the St. Clair Flats don't need to get so very proud of themselves. They have not done their part, but have failed just where they should not have failed. They should certainly be ashamed of themselves if they cannot now between them raise enough money to keep at least one warden in the opinion that he is not alone in the work. They would better cut a little ginger bread off from their boathouses and put a little ginger into a place where it is sadly needed. For Mr. Hodgson in this capacity there is this to be said, that his work as steward would not interfere with his work as warden, but help it. Let us hope that he will hold this place and begin a work which has been delayed too long.

In the next paper or so some description will be given of a few methods of taking bass in these waters, any one of which may be called an unsportsmanlike device, although extremely deadly in its way. This will be touched upon in the talk about the Delta Club. To the Peninsula Club, with regret that the necessities of space make the mention so scant and dry, we must bid a hurried farewell, for we are not yet up to the Southeast Bend and have still some traveling to do. ■



The **Peninsula Club** was renamed the **Marshland** in 1895.
These photos were taken around 1900.
It burned to the ground in 1929.





Star Island House was reputed to have the largest dining hall in the state seating up to 500 people at a time. Built as a 3-story hotel of 26 rooms in 1875, it was expanded and had 100 rooms by 1895. The cuisine was exceptional and it was a popular destination on the Flats. It burned down in the mid-1920s.





PO Box 44
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Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Historical Society 2013 Calendar of Events

subject to change

Members are welcome to attend any Board / Membership Meeting to keep apprised of Society activities and to bring issues before the Board.

Museum Hours

Jan, Feb, March - closed - open by appointment

April, May - Saturday - 10 AM - 3 PM

June, July, Aug, Sept - Saturday 10 AM - 3 PM and Sunday Noon - 4 PM

Oct, Nov, Dec - closed - open by appointment and for Christmas Sale (Dec)

February

No Meeting

March

30th - Saturday - 11:30 AM - Board / Membership Meeting (Museum)

April

13th - Saturday - 3 to 5 PM - Lecture Series I (Lions Hall) with **Tony Gramer**