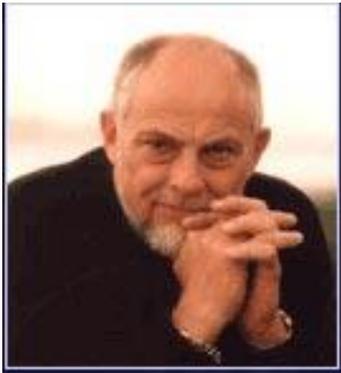


# The SOCIETY PAGES

HARSENS ISLAND / ST. CLAIR FLATS HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## 2013 LECTURE SERIES

**Jim Clary**  
*presents*

### The Great Lakes Storm of 1913

**Saturday**  
**Sept. 14, 2013**  
**3:00 – 5:00 PM**  
**Lions Club**  
**Harsens Island**  
*see page 3*

## From the President

It is with great pleasure I report this month that the Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Historical Society are **now the owners of the Old Fire Hall** in downtown Sans Souci. On Friday, August 23, members of your Board executed the documents necessary to establish ownership.

With direction from you, **the membership** and with the unfailing support of the **Karen and Drew Peslar Foundation**, the **Webber Foundation**, and generous contributions, The Society is proud to announce that your Board has achieved the goal you have set for us. The prior owners, Donald DeWolf and Lou Campbell of Bluewater Land Development, have accepted a land contract with an attractive interest rate and generous terms that will allow The Society the opportunity to make the Old Fire Hall a permanent museum.

### We thank them for their support.

Our Treasurer, Joyce Hassen, reports that we are financially sound, have an achievable projected plan to pay down the balance due on the land contract in five years; and, have sufficient working capital to continue the historic, cultural and educational programs The Society has directed itself to achieve in its Mission Statement.

We are at this juncture *because of you. You are:*

1. The small group that gathered at the Readers Cove Library in December 2009 to explore the idea of creating a historical society and museum on Harsens Island.
2. The first board of directors, who established direction, wrote by-laws, incorporated, achieved 501(c)(3) tax exempt status with the IRS, identified and negotiated a rental program for an historic building that would be suitable for a museum, organized programs and established achievable goals.

## The Society Pages

Volume 4 / Number 9 / September 2013

a publication of the Harsens Island/  
St. Clair Flats Historical Society

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website

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### HISC FHS Board of Directors

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Directors

**Nancy Boulton** - 810-748-3802

**Lucy Burby-Mastro** - 810-748-8977

**Kathy O'Connor** - 810-748-3113



Join us on Facebook!

## Homemade Pie Sale Oct. 5

**Sat., Oct. 5 from 10:00am until  
4:00pm we will have a  
homemade pie sale at the  
museum. Please come to  
purchase your pie! If you could  
bake a pie, please call Nancy  
Boulton at 748-3802**

## From the President *continued*

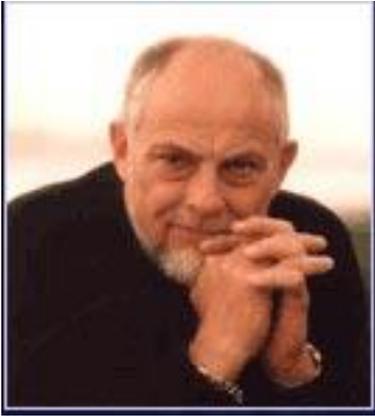
3. The members of the community who were there to clean up the Old Fire Hall and make it suitable for occupancy.
4. The Museum Curators who have transformed the old building into a 'Museum' that is receiving accolades from the experts at the Port Huron Museum.
5. The Charter Members who provided the incentive and the seed money to get these programs underway.
6. To those who contributed so generously to the Building Fund...you know who you are.
7. The individuals who have contributed their time, their talent and the resources of their businesses to help at every turn.
8. The Committee Chairpersons who have been there to create and support programs like:
  - a. The Lecture Series....
  - b. Fund Raising Events....
  - c. First Nations Day...
  - d. Tashmoo Days....
9. The Volunteers who have supported the programs and especially those who staff the Museum to greet visitors to our Island.
10. My dear wife, the very special person in my life who dragged me kicking and screaming to one of the first organizational meetings...who said at the time, "You don't have to get involved...just come to the meeting to see what they are planning".

YOU should all be proud of what WE have accomplished in the short time period from December 2009 to August 23, 2013. It has been 44 months since we started (same number as our PO Box number!). WE have a new goal to fund the \$70K land contract in the next 60 months. Can WE do it in the next 44 months? I know you are up to the task and I am confident that WE can make this happen.

*I look forward to working with each of you in our quest to achieve our next goal in less than 44 months.*

*.....then we will have a **really big party!!!!***

*bernard*



## Jim Clary - The Great Lakes Storm of 1913

World-renowned Artist, Author and Historian, Jim Clary, will present the story of *The Great Lakes Storm of 1913*. Jim portrays an accurate historical record of this treacherous storm that took many ships and many lives in November of 1913.

Historically referred to as the **Big Blow**, the **Freshwater Fury**, or the **White Hurricane**, the storm was a blizzard with hurricane-force winds that devastated the Great Lakes Basin and the Canadian province of Ontario from November 7 through November 10, 1913. The storm was most powerful on November 9, battering and overturning ships on four of the five Great Lakes, particularly Lake Huron. Deceptive lulls in the storm and the slow pace of weather reports contributed to the storm's destructiveness.

Jim is a prolific Artist, Author and Historian. Jim was chosen as expedition historian and artist for the 1983 Titanic search. His tremendously popular books, *Ladies of the Lakes I and II*, *Superstitions of the Sea*, and his latest volume, *The Last True Story of Titanic*, have proven to be just as compelling as his art. Jim Clary has realized his boyhood dream of bringing ghost ships to life through art. He is a man who thrives on art and the notion that others will enjoy and learn from his work for years to come. Jim will conduct a book-signing at the conclusion of the lecture.



# THE GREAT LAKES STORM OF 1913

SATURDAY SEPT 14 3:00PM

Featuring: Artist, Historian & Author

**JIM CLARY**

Lions Hall • 230 LaCroix • Harsens Island 48028

Seating is limited. Please make your reservations by contacting Nancy Licata at 810-748-1825 or by e-mail at: [nlicata@comcast.net](mailto:nlicata@comcast.net)

[ Suggested donation \$10.00 ]

Proceeds to support Building Fund  
[hiscfhs.org](http://hiscfhs.org)

This lecture is one you will not want to miss, it ranks up there with *The Night the Fitz Went Down* with Captain Donald Erickson and Mac McAdam, and *Warships on the St. Clair River* with Peter Rindlisbacher.

Please make your reservations for this event, as seating is limited, by contacting Nancy Licata at 810-748-1825 or via e-mail at [nlicata@comcast.net](mailto:nlicata@comcast.net). The lecture is scheduled for 3:00 PM, Saturday, September 14 at the Harsens Island Lions Hall on LaCroix.

## Pictures From The Attic

### The Old Folks Fishing on the Flats

By Joyce Hassen

"I know what's missing, it's the sound of all the boats of the men leaving for fishing early in the morning," my 80 year old aunt, who grew up on the Flats, told us on a recent visit when we were having a cup of coffee and watching the rising sun glint off of the calm surface of the canal. My aunt, Loraine Anderson, was one of the generation before me who spent summers on the Venice Canal. Like many others who visit the Island today, she has great memories, and although she lives in Florida, she enjoys trips back every summer.

Harsens Island and the Flats, of course, drew many sportsmen, my great-grandfather included. My aunt's memory of the Venice was one of her grandfather, George Burgett, as well as his Venice neighbors, Cy Grates, Perce Lovett, Alex McMinn, Bill Gagnier, John Carroll all starting those old Johnson inboards, 4 or 2 cylinders, between 5:00 and 6:00 am and heading out to their favorite fishing grounds. The distinctive, noisy "wop-wop-wop" of those engines woke us kids up early and meant that the weekend had started.

George and his son, George Jr. (my grandfather) were serious fishermen. The first time I went out fishing with him I caught 53 perch. It was a "catch and release" day, although we probably didn't call it that back then. The last time I went out fishing with him, we weren't catching anything. Being a teen, I decided this was getting boring, and I laid out in the sun at the bow of the boat. Well, that just wasn't acceptable to Grandpa! And that was the last time I was invited to go fishing with him! I have to admit I didn't miss it much, it was fun when you were catching but not so much when the fish weren't biting.



George Sr. in the middle, with his wife Delphine (far left) with friends or relatives (think they're all sisters).

My Grandma would get up at 5 on Saturday's to make bacon, eggs and toast for Grandpa and the rest of the Venice men. She'd also make sandwiches for them to take for lunch; pumpnickel bread, bar cheese and hard salami. Not sure why that was the special fishing lunch, but it was always the same. My favorite was Grandma's homemade cookies: when the kids went fishing the men were pretty generous and shared with us.

My Dad, John Chamberlain, remembers the men coming back from fishing, they'd hold up a big string of fish from out of the boat and show off how many they'd catch. "Where'd you catch 'em?" someone would yell out. "Over at the Blues", they might say, or "right up the narrows", local slang for spots around the river, lake or bay. Whatever they said, the others would laugh and know better. They would straight out lie to protect whatever spot was hot. You might as well go to the "horseshoe" or somewhere else, don't even think about running out to where they'd try to send you...no fish there. They also lied about catching their limit. If the stringer wasn't lifted up to show off their catch...well, that meant they didn't have a catch to show you. When asked, "got the limit, just so heavy can't lift the stringer," they'd say.

John's brother David, stayed with their "Gramps" one summer. Gramps bet with one of his neighbors, Cy Grates, on who would catch the biggest fish. And as it turned out, Gramps caught a pretty good size bass. After they got back, David happened to walk quietly into the boathouse, and witnessed a crime in action. Here Gramps was shoving led sinkers down the throat of that dead fish! "I never imagined Gramps would do something like that," David would say after, whenever he'd tell that story. ■

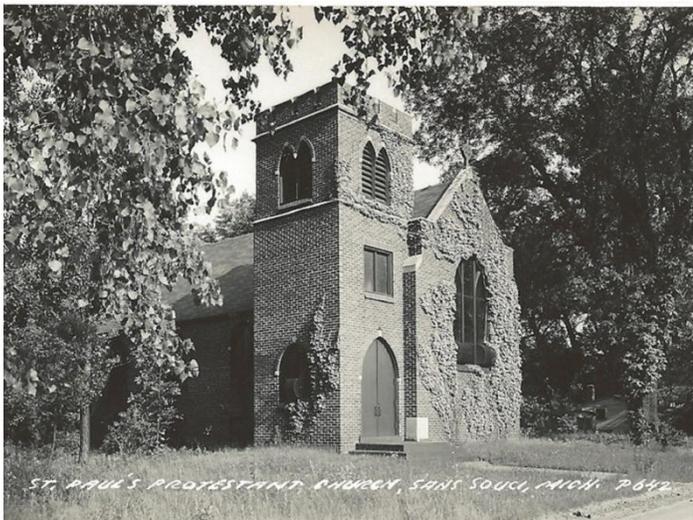
## St. Paul Church

How does a church get started? For St. Paul's on Orchid Blvd. on Harsens Island, it was a chance meeting and conversation on the streets of Algonac in 1922. The Rev. E.L.C. English of St. Andrew's in Algonac was informed by Mrs. Emma German, of Harsens Island, that her children had not yet been baptized. Arrangements for the baptisms were immediately prepared.

With the continuing interest of Rev. English and the support of several Island families, a Sunday School for the children was started. The first sessions were held at the home of Robert and Celia Hill on LaCroix.

Early leadership toward the formation of a church and congregation was quickly and readily supported by many Islanders and summer cottagers.

In 1924, Mr. and Mrs. Neil MacMillan gave the gift of land upon which the church stands. Under the leadership of Bishop Page and the financial assistance of the Diocese of Michigan, plans were made for the building of the church. In 1925, the cornerstone was laid and the building completed.



In 1966 the first of the stained glass windows were installed. Over time, the land across the street was purchased for a parking lot and the Fellowship Hall with a complete kitchen were added.

- The first person baptized in the church was Zella McLane, daughter of Horace and Jennie McLane on July 11, 1926.
- Members from the first confirmation class were Margaret May Woods, Edith Marie Woods and Esther LaCroix. They were confirmed on December 14, 1924.
- The first marriage was held Sept 15, 1926. The lucky couple was Emma Woods and James German.
- The first burial service was for Thomas Alexander Woods, Sr., age 84 years, in 1925.

Today, the fundraising group at the church is called GEMS (God's Elegantly Maturing Servants). They plan the activities including the Strawberry Festival, spaghetti and roast beef dinners. Funds raised keep the church functioning as well as contributions to scholarships for graduating high school seniors and Goodwill. They also help island families that need it. ■

-courtesy of *The Delta News*, 1967 & 2013



PO Box 44  
Harsens Island MI 48028

## **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**

**Sept** - Saturday 10 AM - 3 PM and Sunday Noon - 4 PM

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

### **September**

**1st, 2nd** (with Aug. 31) - Saturday, Sunday, & Monday - Labor Day Weekend - Museum open

**7th** - Saturday - 10:00 AM - Board Meeting (Museum)

**11th** - Wednesday - Social hour - 5 to 7 PM (Museum)

**14th** - Saturday - 3 to 5 PM - Lecture Series III (Lions Hall) **Jim Clary presents the Storm of 1913**

### **October**

**12th** - Saturday - 11:30 AM - Board Meeting (Lions Hall)

**12th** - Square Dance with Chicken Dinner - 5 PM dinner, 6 PM dancing (Lions Hall)

### **November**

**9th** - Saturday - 11:30 AM - Board Meeting (Museum)

### **December**

**7th & 8th** - Saturday and Sunday - 10 AM - 3 PM - Christmas Sale (Museum)