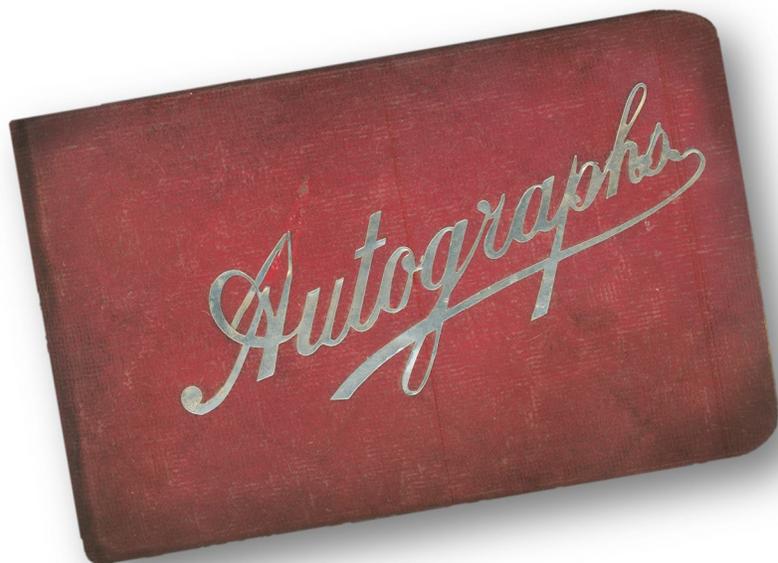


# The SOCIETY PAGES

HARSENS ISLAND / ST. CLAIR FLATS HISTORICAL SOCIETY



by Michele Komar

I recently came across several Autograph Books belonging to my mother, Dolores Harm, and grandmother, Minnie Harm, while perusing several boxes hidden at the back of a closet. The prose is quite amusing and opened a window to the past. I remember having an autograph book as a child but only had a few neighborhood girlfriends sign it.

Essentially, an **autograph book** is a book for collecting the autographs of others. They were popular among university students from the 1400s until the mid-1800s, after which their popularity began to decline as they were gradually replaced by school yearbooks. Traditionally they were exchanged among family, friends, and classmates to fill

with poems, drawings, personal messages, small pieces of verse, and other mementos. Their modern counterparts include yearbooks, friendship books, and guest books.

There was a trend among graduating university students of central Europe to have their personal bibles signed by classmates and instructors. Gradually these expanded from only signatures to include poetry and sketches, and publication companies responded to this trend by appending blank pages to bibles. Eventually they began offering small, decorated books with only blank pages.

The first true autograph books appeared by the mid-16th century in Dutch and Germanic cultures and were known as an *album amicorum* ("book of friends") or *stammbuch* ("friendship book"). The popularity of autograph books was generally confined to these cultures, and they appeared only sporadically in other countries. They began to fall out of favor in the academic community by the late 17th century, but rebounded a century later as they came into use among fraternity students and members of the expanding middle class. This new wave of autograph stewards included women as well as men.

German immigrants transported the tradition to American culture in the late 18th century, where their popularity peaked around the time of the Civil War. Thereafter the use of autograph books declined sharply in both cultures as they were replaced by school yearbooks, though they remained in vogue among young women for some time. Autograph books in their classic form eventually disappeared from American culture, but their usage endured among German schoolgirls, who know them as *poesiealben*.

My grandmother's autograph book has a red velour cover with "Autographs" spelled out across the front in a silver metal plate attached to it. As my grandmother was of German ancestry, many of the verses are written in German and sadly, I cannot read them.

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## The Society Pages

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## From the President

Dear Society Members,

The Society closed its fifth full year on December 31, 2014 and opened its sixth year on January 1, 2015. It is truly amazing how time flies! To all of our Members, whether you joined as a Charter Member or more recently, **The Society thanks you** for your participation and support.

What transpired in December:

Cookies were present in large quantities *for a very brief period of time* at the Museum on Saturday, December 6. It was a fun and festive day to kick-off the holiday season. Thank you to the cookie contributors and thank you to those who made donations to The Society in exchange for a tin or two of a wide variety of Christmas cookies ...it was a good day.

The launch meeting for **Tashmoo Days** was held December 13 and it is off to a good start. The Board has decided to expand Tashmoo Days to start Friday evening with a Banquet Gala at the historic Tashmoo Park Dance Pavilion. A Prohibition Style evening with Period Dress, Social Hour, Dinner, Dancing and Entertainment are being considered for this event. More information will follow as plans solidify. Please **Save The Date** for an evening of fun Friday, July 17 and a full day of activities July 18 for Tashmoo Days.

What to look forward to this cold winter month of January:

To continue The Society's efforts to bring educational and informational activities to the Island, we thought it would be good to start thinking spring early. To that end we have scheduled a **Lecture for January 17** titled **Hay Bale Gardening**. This program will be presented by Page Ligon Products. Jennifer Page and Wez Ligon of Almont, Michigan will be present at the Schoolhouse Grille 3:00 PM to teach us how to: **Work Smarter Not Harder** in planning and executing a garden in the spring. This method is touted as Weed-free Gardening. I for one am most interested in how this is accomplished. We have issued a special invitation to the Garden Club and its members to participate in this event. Call or write soon for a reservation to Nancy L at: 586-530-7100 or [nlicata@comcast.net](mailto:nlicata@comcast.net) and we'll hold a seat for you. A small donation of your choosing will be appreciated for this event.

Not any of our members identified the photos of the two presenters published in the December Issue of *The Society Pages*. We hope you will mark your calendars for March 14 and April 25 and the return of Tony Gramer, world famous diver and Roger LeLievre publisher of *Know Your Ships*. Both were sellout crowds last time so make your reservations early.

As always, let us know if you have any questions or would like to become more active, we always have lots of things to do.

May 2015 bring you a Happy, Healthy and Fruitful Year.

Warm regards,  
Bernardo Licata

**AUTOGRAPHS** *continued*

Most prose reflects the sentiments of the writer. Family members often try to impart wisdom or personal sentiments while friends and school chums dwell on love, marriage and not-so-nice wisecracks (all meant in fun, of course!).

*Remember me in friendship,  
Remember me in love.  
Remember me dear Minnie,  
When we meet above.*  
- January 26, 1903

*Minnie is on the ocean,  
I was on the sea.  
Minnie kissed a little boy  
And blamed it on me.*  
- January 28, 1908

*When you are old and cannot see,  
Put on your specs and think of me.*  
- Detroit, March 27, 1903

My mother's autograph books (from 1941) were clearly signed by school friends and immediate relatives. Mom was raised on Harsens Island and attended the Harsens Island School. In 1941, she would have been 12 years old. Her classmates were Leona Persyn, Gilbertia Yax, Dick Becherer, Jimmy Yax, Dorothy Sampier, John Wykoff, Joyce Champion, Arthur Andrews, Laura Clark, Doreen Dandron, Harry Yax, Kenneth Diem, George Johns, June Sears, Keith Wright, Ernestia Stapley, Lillian Soulliere, Mary Ann Smith, Avery Dandron and John Goulette. ♦

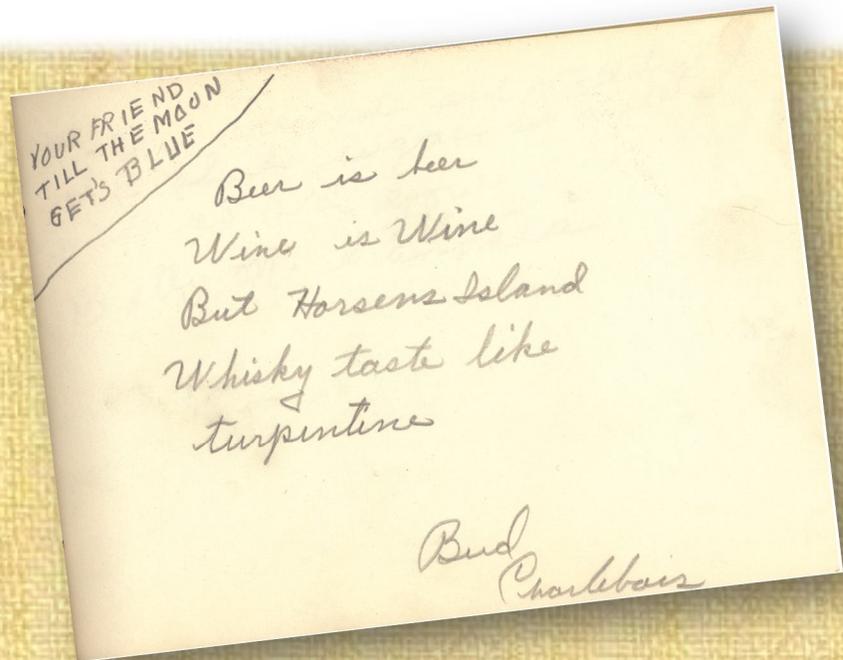
*Roses are red  
Violets are blue  
Onions are strong  
And so is my love of you.*  
- Doreen

*I love bacon,  
I love eggs.  
I love girls  
With pretty legs.*  
- Bernard Hill

*Be kind and be gentle,  
To those that are old.  
For kindness is dearer  
And better than gold.*  
- Mom

*When you get married.  
And have twins  
Don't come to me  
For safety pins.*  
- Dick Becherer

*When you are married  
And live by the river  
You can send me  
A piece of your liver.*  
- Sam Steffens



*When you get married  
Don't marry a fool.  
Marry a boy from the  
Harsens Island School.*  
-Keith Wright

*Roses are red  
Violets are blue  
Dill pickles are sour  
And so are you.*  
- Harry Copp

## Hay Bale Gardening

**Work Smarter Not Harder . . . *Planning and Planting Your Garden Next Spring***



Jen Page and Wez Ligon enjoy gardening but do not enjoy all of the manual labor involved. After extensive research they devised a method that requires little maintenance and is virtually weed free. The two will share their gardening techniques that will make your gardening easier. There will be a question and answer/discussion session after the presentation.

This event is scheduled for Saturday, January 17, - 3:00 p.m. at the *Harsens Island Schoolhouse Grille* located at *2669 Columbine Rd, Harsens Island, MI 48028.*