



Coast Guard's Birthday – August 4

The Coast Guard is one of America's five armed forces and traces its founding to Aug. 4, 1790, when the first Congress authorized the construction of 10 vessels to enforce tariff and trade laws, prevent smuggling, and protect the collection of federal revenue. Responsibilities added over the years included humanitarian duties such as aiding mariners in distress.



Senior Citizen's Day – August 21

National Senior Citizens Day recognizes contributions senior citizens make in communities across the United States.



Source: <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/us>

Message from the President . . .

Hi All,

Building Addition Status

A combination of sandy soil and the high ground water delayed the start of work on the building addition. However, on Friday, July 26 our contractor was able to demolish the portion of the existing museum which needed to be removed before we could proceed with the new addition. The portion removed was an old wood and shingle addition which was added to the fire hall decades ago to make room for the rescue car. Unfortunately, the floor of that room was actually lower than the grade outside and it often flooded. It was very difficult to use that room for storage because of the humid conditions and the threat of damage to anything we were storing there. On the day of the demolition a test hole was dug to assess the ground water conditions for digging foundation trenches for the new addition. Though there was some ground water seeping into the excavation it was decided that we could attempt to pour foundations the following week.

On Tuesday, July 30 trenches were dug, and foundations were poured. All went well and the Township building inspector approved the foundations for us to continue with the work.

On the morning of Wednesday, July 31, 2019 the vegetation was stripped from the area of the new floor in preparation for a gravel and sand base for the concrete floor. By the afternoon some block was brought in and laying up of the walls was begun.

We still have a long way to go but the concerns over high water holding up the project are now behind us. The work has begun, and we are beginning to see the building rise out of ground. Drive by and take a look.

continued on page 2 . . .

Message from the President . . . continued from page 1 . . .

Annual Meeting

On Saturday, August 10th we will be holding our Annual Meeting for the membership at the museum. We start with a little social time at 4:30 pm followed by the official meeting at 5 pm. We hope you will decide to join us this year. This is an opportunity to celebrate our accomplishments, hear what is being planned and to give the Board your thoughts on our progress and the future of our organization. I hope to see you there.

Hosts Still Needed for the Museum

With the museum being open every weekend this summer and on weekdays for special visiting groups, the Society needs plenty of hosts to help out. Hosts open and/or close the museum for visitors and stay for a two to two-and-one-half hour session. No experience is needed. We are always happy to give new hosts a training session on the spot. Hosts learn about the opening and closing procedures and how to record sales from the museum store. Serving as a host is a great opportunity to meet and greet visitors to the museum which include your island neighbors as well as island visitors. Your time at the museum can also be a chance to become more familiar with our great collection of historical items on display or to sit down and read some of the great materials in the museum library (Meet our youngest host – page 9). If you would like to give it a shot, please contact Corinne Trexler at 810-512-4675.

Bob Williams, President (xharpspah@aol.com)

Building Addition in Progress



People of Harsens Island – Joe Bedore

By Chris Knight

I was looking in the Museum library and archives for my next Island Person to feature and came across an article about one of our famous former residents; Joe Bedore. For those of you who may not know Joe Bedore owned the Bedore Hotel, which is included in our Hotel Exhibit.

From article called “Joe Bedore and His Kingdom” written by William a. Moffett

Joe Bedore (1833 – 1921)

“Joe Bedore’s fame rests on his unique and distinctive personality, Joe Bedore – the well-beloved. He is to the Flats, the kingdom of his invisible reign, what William Penn is to Pennsylvania, what William Johnston is to New York – a character, a tradition that must inevitably be for the basis of any historical record of these places.

Joe, in a way, personifies the Flats, as the fountain head of all the lore of the Flats, the depository of all the traditions of the surrounding lowlands. Among Joe’s accomplishments was an uncanny faculty of divining where the fishes swam beneath the waters of Lake St. Clair.

In a narrow sense Joe was an innkeeper – the innkeeper of the Flats – the most famous innkeeper in the Great Lakes Region. For fully a half century he was a familiar figure to fishermen, duck hunters and summer excursionists from near and far – loved for his genuine hospitality, his natural love of the outdoor life, and his delightful yarns, garnished with the French-Canadian patois which he never lost. He built a wealth of friendships with men in every walk of life.”



Bedore Hotel St. Clair Flats

Source: Library of Congress <https://www.loc.gov/item/2016811594/>

Are you interested in learning more about Joe Bedore and the Bedore Hotel? Stop by the museum and see the Hotel Exhibit. For our boaters, you can take a water tour of all the former hotel sites. We have a map at the museum showing the locations of all the hotels and a brief write up about each.

What a great way to show your summer guests the Island Heritage!

People of Harsens Island – Marilyn Besemer

By Chris Knight

Summer is not just a time for swimming, fishing, and boating on the Harsens Island. It is also a time for families to get together for birthdays, graduations, barbeques, family reunions, and family traditions. This article is about one of those families; The Besemers. Marilyn Besemer (who turns 90 this month), shared some of her family's history with me. She told me that her husband's family began coming to the island in the 1930's. And over the past 80 years, the Besemers have had fun times on the water, many celebrations, and countless parties with family and neighbors.

This is a brief summary of her story . . .

It was back in 1936 when John M. Besemer bought property on the North Channel from a Harsen family relative. John M. Besemer and his wife Alice had two children; Tom B. Besemer and John S. Besemer. The Besemers lived in Royal Oak and came to the island for the summer and stayed in the cottage that was already on the land that John M. had bought. Even after John M. and Alice divorced in the 1950's, Alice continued coming to the island with the boys and her mother, Rose Crowley (Nana), her sister (Tulie Devoe) and brother-in-law (Ed Devoe). In her time, Alice became quite well known for her cooking and her sons were known for their parties.

When Alice passed away the Harsens Island property was left to the boys, Tom and John, who divided the property into two lots. Tom chose the lot with the cottage, which he later renovated into a year-round home. John chose the empty lot.

Note: Both sons served in the armed forces. Tom was in the army, serving during the Korean War and John was in the Navy, serving during World War II.

Tom married Nancy Himes and had two boys. John married Marilyn Melville in 1952 and had three children. For Marilyn this was the start of many wonderful trips to the island. The family would come to the island on weekends and stayed with relatives. In the 1980's the kids would stay in campers and/or tents on the empty lot. In 2004, Marilyn built her house.



Besemer cottage in the 1940's

Over the years, from the 50's to today, all the neighbors became quite close. In the beginning, it was the adjacent North Channel neighbors and other families near the ferry. The group had many Happy Hours and parties; Dexter and Doris Knight, John and Lois Davis, Ken and Barb Knight, Ed and Alice Rommeck, Tom and Nancy Besemer, Marilyn and John S. Besemer, the Rogers and McFaddins, Richard and Kuky Knight, and Jack and Joyce Bryson. It wasn't long before the Besemer family extended to the South Channel. Marilyn's sister, Connie married Robert Travis and they purchased a cottage on the South Channel. And not too much later Connie and Bob became good friends with the Cromies and the Camerons.

Wait for it . . . wait for it . . . you guessed it . . . the North and South Channel friendly rivalry was born. Competitions such as horseshoes, talent shows, the Olympics, volley games, roller blade hockey, and many more events became part of the annual summer festivities.

continued on page 5 . . .

People of Harsens Island – Marilyn Besemer . . . continued from page 4 . . .

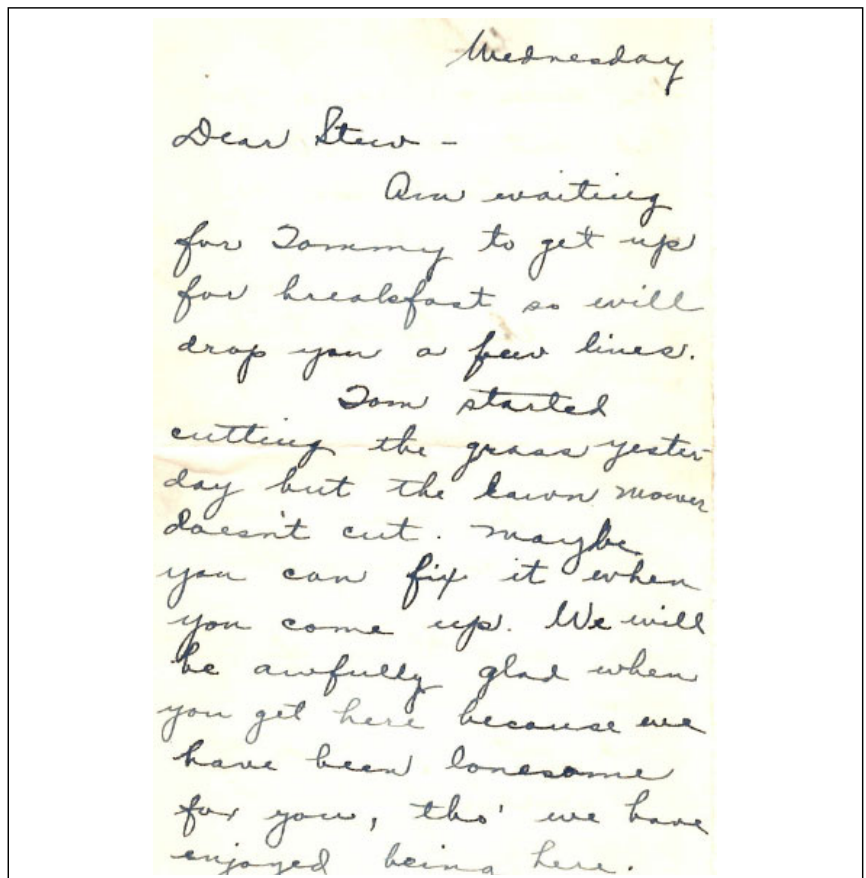
With the friendly rivalry, you also get numerous pranks on each of the Besemer, Travis, and Cromie clans. One memorable prank involved an outhouse being delivered to the Cromie's front lawn just in time for a garage sale. Well, the Cromies had the last laugh. The outhouse was sold to a local fisherman as an ice shanty (cha-ching \$\$).

In 1984, the Besemer family had their first Fourth of July Champagne Breakfast, inviting extended family and neighbors. Now 35 years later the Fourth of July Champagne Breakfast is still happening and being attended by many generations.

Marilyn let me take a copy of a letter sent to John Stewart Besemer from his mother Alice in 1941. Look at the post mark . . . it is from San Souci and the postage was 3 cents! Thought you might enjoy reading this note from a mother to a son. Even 78 years ago, people still had problems with lawn mowers and worried about keeping the island cottage clean.



Ed Devoe, Alice Besemer, John S. Besemer, Tulie Devoe, Rose Crowley (Nana), Marilyn Besemer (kneeling), her youngest daughter Susie and her other daughter Cindy.



continued on page 6 . . .

People of Harsens Island – Marilyn Besemer . . . continued from page 5 . . .

When you go home
be sure & make your
bed Sat Dec. as I
want the house nice
& clean - Also if you
take a bath be sure &
clean the bath tub.
Tom says to bring
up the Big Business
game.

The man hasn't
started painting the
house in fact I haven't
seen any thing of him
since I have been here -
Dad got a hold of
Mr Hill's father & he
is going to finish

putting the supports
under the house. So
Dad want he crawling
under the house.

I am going down
to play bridge today
and hope I have some
good cards. You know
Wednesday always was
my day off.

Well Steve guess
I'll close for now as
there isn't a great deal
of news Love from us
both

Mother
B&B is fine too

I am curious about the reference to the Big Business Game. Has anyone played this game?



Curator's Report

We had a surprise donation we wanted to share. Michael Stewart was diving in the Middle Channel near Dickinson Island and found this double barrel muzzle loader. The only information we have at present is that it appears to date from the early to mid-1800's. The design of the stock is uniquely British. This item could date back to the War of 1812, but that is still unclear. We are still researching and will share once we know more.



Donation of Tashmoo Playing Cards from Bob and Rosslynn Foster delivered by Mike Darling (pictured at left)

Letter from Mike and Roberta Darling – July 30, 2019

These play cards were donated by attorney Bob Foster and his wife Rosslynn. Both have lived in Marine City from the time they were a young married couple until Bob's passing in 2016. Bob and Lynn loved playing cards. Over 30 years ago, one of Bob's clients gave him the deck. That client and his wife frequently enjoyed the Tashmoo and their stays at Harsens Island and played cards with another couple for years. When his wife passed away, he gave the set to Bob Foster who had them framed and displayed in his law office on Parker St. in Marine City. They hung on his office wall for over thirty years until he retired in 2015. Lynn recently moved to Cincinnati and asked us to donate them to you.

Harsens Island Historical Society Calendar 2019

Note: The Annual Membership Meeting has been moved to August 10 (same time – 4:30 PM)

Date	Day	Time	Event
August 3	Saturday	5:30 PM	Board Meeting/Dinner at Board member's home
August 9	Friday	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Social Hour
August 10	Saturday	4:30 PM 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM 6:00 PM	Wine and Appetizers at Museum Annual Membership Meeting at Museum Board Meeting to Elect 2019 Officers
September 13	Friday	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Social Hour
October 5	Saturday	10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Pie Sale at Museum
October 12	Saturday	10:30 AM	Board / Membership Meeting at Museum
December 7	Saturday	10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Cookie Walk at Museum
December 14	Saturday	10:30 AM	Board Meeting at Museum

Museum Hours

Summer Schedule (June, July, August)
Second Fridays 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Saturdays 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Sundays 12:00 PM – 4:00 PM
Winter Schedule (October through April)
Closed but Open by appointment



The historical society is collecting photos and stories about the high water of 2019. Or if you have a story like Marilyn Besemer, would love to hear it.

Please contact our curator, Chuck Miller, to share your stories.

(cmiller5179@gmail.com)



A publication of the Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Historical Society

Mailing Address:

PO Box 44
Harsens Island MI 48028

Museum Address:

3058 S. Channel Dr.

<https://harsensislandhistory.org/>

HISCFHS Board of Directors

Chairman of the Board
Open Position

President
Bob Williams

1st Vice President
Sue Wrobel

2nd Vice President
Corinne Trexler

Treasurer
Joyce Hassen

Secretary
Nancy Bonacquisti

Directors
Terry Wiggins
Donna Krispin
Christine Knight

~

**Stop By our Table
at Field Day
August 3rd**

Browne's Field

**(check out the Museum's Goodie Basket at
the Auction Table)**

~

**Don't Forget
Annual Membership Meeting
August 10th**

Harsens Island Museum

Wine and Appetizers 4:30 PM

Membership Meeting 5:00 – 6:00 PM

Board Meeting to Elect Officers 6:00 PM

~

Meet Cole – One of the Hosts at the Historical Museum. He greets Museum guests at the door and shows them the exhibits.



He is 12 years old and his favorite part of the Museum is everything about Tashmoo. His favorite food is Little Caesars Pizza and Michigan Pot Hole Ice Cream.

Membership Application 2019

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____ Spouse Name: _____

Primary Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone _____ Spouse Cell: _____

E-Mail: _____ Spouse E-Mail: _____

Additional Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Additional Phone: _____

<u>Annual Dues:</u>		<u>Life-time Dues</u>	
{ } Individual (1 Member Only)	\$20.00	_____ Life Individual	\$300.00
{ } Family (1-2 Adults plus children under 18 years)	\$30.00	_____ Life Family	\$500.00
{ } Business	\$50.00		

BUILDING ADDITION DONATION: \$ _____ **OTHER DONATION:** \$ _____

If desired, please specify use: _____

Newsletters are emailed to members. If you require newsletters via postal mail, please write a note on your returned application.

Please complete and send with a check made payable to: **The Society**. Mail to: The Society, PO Box 44, Harsens Island, MI 48028

OFFICE USE ONLY:

Date received: _____

Check # _____ Amount \$ _____