



Message from the President . . .

Hi All,

Building Addition Update

Yea!!! We got the concrete floor in the addition. Wow . . . has that been a long wait.

The work can now continue. Our next steps are to install wall insulation, furring and drywall, an interior partition and doors. Then we can paint and add floor finishes and lights. Unfortunately, it has become obvious that we will not complete the addition during this summer season.

Museum Opens July 1, by appointment only

We are opening the museum by appointment starting July 1. To gain access you can call Bob Williams at 248-388-0465 or email to xharpspah@aol.com. Below is a list of requirements for visitors.

- No donated items are being accepted at this time.
- Admission to the museum will be by appointment only.
- The museum will be available for appointments on Saturdays and Sundays from Noon to 3 pm.
- Appointments can be made by calling Bob Williams at 248-388-0465 or emailing xharpspah@aol.com.
- When the museum is opened for a pre-arranged appointment, no additional walk up visitors will be admitted.
- At each appointment time only one family of no more than five persons will be admitted.
- Each person wishing to enter the museum must first pass a health screening questionnaire.
- Museum appointment visits are limited to 20 minutes unless special arrangements are made in advance.
- All visitors over the age of two must wear face masks at all times in the museum.
- Visitors must come prepared with their own face masks.
- Gloves are optional for visitors. Optional gloves would be the responsibility of the visitor.
- Hand sanitizer will be available at the door as you enter.
- All visitors must use the hand sanitizer upon entering the museum.
- We ask that all visitors refrain from touching displays, objects and surfaces, except the door handle and the hand sanitizer bottle.
- Toilet facilities will not be available to visitors.
- Visitors should maintain social distancing from the museum host.
- Sales from the gift shop will be at the discretion of the host on duty. Any purchases made should be done with exact change.

Stay safe,

Robert Williams, President

What Was It Like Back Then?

This year our newsletters are going to feature a new section called "What Was It Like Back Then?". Each month this section will highlight how people lived in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Edison invented the first incandescent light in 1882. It was the first practical light, that would light for hours and hours. Most Americans still lit their homes with gas light and candles for another fifty years after the invention of the incandescent lightbulb. It wasn't until 1925, that only half of all homes in the U.S. had electric power.

Life without Electricity

Kerosene lamps, candles, fireplaces, and gas lamps were some of the ways you could light up your home after dark. If you were eating, reading a book, or taking a bath after sunset, you needed to carry your lamp or candle with you to make sure you didn't trip over or end up fumbling in the dark.

Cooking - Without electricity, you had to cook over an open fire, such as on a metal stovetop or over a fireplace. There weren't any appliances either, so bakers relied on labor-saving devices like manual mixers to make batter and dough. Ovens, for making bread and other baked goods, relied on firewood-powered fires.

Indoor Heating - Sitting by an open fireplace and draping an extra blanket over yourself, was the only option for heating indoor spaces. Hence in the winter months, firewood was essential and keeping a fire going throughout the day served two purposes: you could cook meals over the fire while you heated up the space.

Ironing Clothes - People used charcoal clothes irons and even petrol clothes irons. The charcoal models could be heated on top of a hot surface like a stove, or it could be filled with hot coals from the fireplace before you did your ironing.



Here is something to think about . . . what would you miss most in a world without electricity? And not just for a brief outage due to a storm. What if you did not have electricity for months?

<https://www.clickenergy.com.au/news-blog/life-before-electricity>

Help Us Record This Historic Time

By Bob Williams

This is truly an historic time in the world and right here on the island. The island, as you know, is also dealing with the high-water crisis and the ferry dock problem, which led to a lack of being able to bring sand to the island to aid in shoreline protection.

I have a favor to ask.

Decades from now people visiting our museum will be asking what was happening on the island during the pandemic and how did it affect the islanders. I believe that, as a Society, we need to not only make available the history we know of but also to record history as it happens.

Recently I received an email from the Historical Society of Michigan (HSM) describing a project they have undertaken for the Library of Michigan, to record stories of this time in Michigan's history. Some of the text from that email is copied for you at the bottom of this message. HSM is asking Michiganders to write their story of their experiences during this historic time.

Being quite involved in family tree research, I have many times wondered what my ancestors were doing and thinking during events such as the Great Depression, the world wars, or the pandemic of 1918. As a result, I began a diary about eight weeks ago, for the purpose of leaving a record for my descendants. I also plan to leave a copy of that diary in the files of our museum. I would like to encourage you to add to that file by writing a bit about your experiences during this time in your life on the island. It is our intent to collect all of the articles received and compile them into one document that will not only be on file at the museum but will also be submitted to the Library of Michigan to become a part of their project.

If you are interested in being a part of this project, please send your writings to me at xharpspah@aol.com . If you would like a few ideas to get started, you can see the HSM webpage about their project at: <https://bit.ly/2ynT8rj>

Thank you and stay safe.

Robert Williams

BELOW IS PART OF THE EMAIL I RECEIVED FROM HSM ABOUT THEIR PROJECT

The Historical Society of Michigan is sponsoring an effort of the Library of Michigan to collect your stories of life during the coronavirus pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all of us in many different ways, and we are all eyewitnesses to the events that have been unfolding in the last few weeks. This is a time for us to record our daily experiences, thoughts, and feelings in diary form, either in writing or video.

The Library of Michigan and the Historical Society of Michigan envision collecting and preserving these stories of our daily lives during the crisis to provide future historians, researchers, and students with information and data on life in Michigan communities during the pandemic.

Please take the time each day to record your activities, thoughts, and/or feelings in diary form. The entries can be handwritten, typed, or in video format, and they can be as long or short as you want. Don't worry about handwriting, spelling, or punctuation. The goal is to capture your personal experiences.

Please consider saving and sharing your story of life during this pandemic for the Library of Michigan.

Excerpts from the Evans Family History

By Chris Knight

While going through the museum archives, looking for some inspiration for this newsletter, I came across the Evans Family History. It was written by Clayton and Beulah Evans in 1993. Clayton Evans was born in 1917 in Missouri and came to the island in 1922. Charles Walter Evans and Frances Gregory were Clayton's parents. Clayton was their third child and married Beulah in 1951.

I included some sections from the 11-page history, which I thought were interesting. Clayton Evans tells his story . . .

"The writer has no recollection before the age of four when the family came to Harsens Island, Michigan in 1922. Harsens Island is located at the mouth of the St. Clair River which flows between Lake Huron and Lake St. Clair. It is the largest of the islands where the river splits into three channels. How and when they moved from Missouri to Michigan very little is known but we do know that they came from Detroit to the island on the Tashmoo Steamer. The Tashmoo was an excursion boat running from Detroit through Lake St. Clair and up the St. Clair River to Port Huron. It stopped at Tashmoo Park at noon to unload most of its passengers who enjoyed the day at the Park then returned at five P.M. to continue back to Detroit.



Tashmoo Park was an excursion park located on about 30 acres and had slides, merry go-round, dance pavilion and other shelters to make a place where people could come to enjoy themselves. The powerhouse at the rear of the park was always a source of wonder. I can remember the bringing of the coal for the boiler, which ran the electrical power generators. The coal was brought from Detroit in large steel wagons with steel wheels and was pushed off from the boat to the dock by two men. It was then pushed along the dock and back to the powerhouse. The empties were then returned to Detroit for reloading. There was a refreshment booth about 40-foot-long that supplied all kinds of soft drinks, candy and ice cream. Just beyond that was a cafeteria that served food for those who did not bring a lunch.

On both sides of the Park there were Hotels which served chicken and frog leg dinners to those who came up on the boat. The one to the right as one came off the dock was run by a man named Johnnie Frank. One could get a dinner there but also have drink even though this was during the Prohibition. The one on the left was run by Jim German and his wife and was the only respectable one where families could go. Most families brought their lunch with them because of the cost."

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Excerpts from the Evans Family History . . . continued from page 4 . . .

"We do know that my parents were not working at the time, so they took employment at the Park. We lived above the nursery where Mother took care of small children who came to the Park with their parents. Even though the writer was only four and half he soon found a way to get a piece of pie by crawling under the fence and going to Mrs. German's hotel. It wouldn't be long before Dad came after me and then tied me to a tree so that I wouldn't do that again, for I did like pie."

"In early December the folks always went to town to stock up on the staples, like flour, sugar and canned goods. During the week between Christmas and New Years the ice would flow out of Lake Huron, come down the St. Clair River and block the channel so that the ferries could not cross. After the ice had frozen hard some of the men on the island collected Christmas trees and used them to mark a safe road across the frozen river. There was one winter that we went to the show at Algonac every Wednesday night. That night featured a serial which always left us in suspense until the following week. We also got to see some of the early movies featuring Tom Mix, Hoot Gibson and several others."



"I can remember the wiring that was installed in the house when electricity came to the island. It was a knob and tube job with a pull chain light in the center of each room. Later I rewired some of it and added more outlets. The electricity came to the island about 1926 and the power came from the mainland through an underwater cable. This was done during the winter when the cable and trucks could cross the ice. A channel was cut about a foot wide and the cable was laid through that cut. All of the poles and wires were installed during the winter when the ground was frozen solid for it was impossible to do so in the summer for the marshes then were all under water."

Stop by the museum and read more about Clayton's life on Harsens Island. For those of you who may not know, Clayton is the benefactor of the new museum expansion.

Excerpts from the Harsens Island Memories of Doris Knight

By Chris Knight

Some of you may remember my grandparents, Doris and Dexter Knight. My cousins were recently on the island getting their mom's home (Barbara Knight) ready for sale and they gave me many of the family historical papers and some photos of great, great grandparents, uncles and aunts (from the early 1900's). This got me reminiscing. I got the interview with Doris Knight from the museum and copied some of the excerpts for your reading pleasure.

"Doris has been on the island since 1919. The family across from them in Detroit, introduced them to the island. These neighbors had found their way to the Middle Channel. Apparently, this sparked a desire in her own family for a summer place on the water. When she was 16, they spent the summer having Doris drive the family around looking for a cottage to

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Excerpts from the Harsens Island Memories of Doris Knight . . . continued from page 5 . . .

buy. She was the only member of the family to try that new thing of driving. They came across on the ferry which was, at that time merely a barge with a boat motor alongside. It held four cars. Doris was not afraid to drive onto the barge the first time even though there was no ramp and they had to put a wooden chock in front and behind the tires to keep the car from rolling off. She really did not understand why she was not afraid. Mr. Dougal piloted the ferry and Burt Johnson was the deck hand. These two men owned the ferry. Burt Johnson was a descendent of the Harsen's. Doris' Dad asked him if he knew of any place that was for sale and he quickly sold them the house he was living in just up from the ferry a little way."

"In 1923 in Sans Souci, Doris met their Detroit neighbors again and they asked her to come to their home that night. That's where she met Dexter Knight. He was on vacation, so for the next two weeks they went to Tashmoo Park and danced all afternoon. At that time the band got off the boat while the Tashmoo went on to Port Huron. They continued to date and in 1927 were married."

"Doris' uncle bought the lot next door and built a boathouse before he built the cottage. He put a lovely wooden dance floor upstairs in it. His children didn't use it very much, but Doris used it often. She got acquainted with other teens on the island by inviting them dancing there to old phonograph records. Doris met Norma Watson Champion, of ferryboat fame at that time, and they remained close friends for many years."

"Art Champion, from Dickinson Island, came courting Norma. He ran a speedboat ferry from Clay's corner in the flats to the island cottages and Pt. Tremble. He picked up people from Dickinson Island also. The Champion family lived on Dickinson Island until their daughter Joyce was seven years old. They drove across the ice in the winter and boated across all summer.

During cold winters, the ferry workers decided when the ice was thick enough to drive on and they marked a safe trail with branches or Christmas trees. In 1933 her family drove across the ice several times. Dexter came up on the interurban (railways) as he didn't always have a car and came across often on the ice.

One New Years Eve they found out a car had gone through the ice. The people at the ferry, Witmillers (maybe), told them it was not safe to go across, but they tried anyway. These people were the Hill family; mother, daughter Annie, her husband, and Annie's younger brother Bill. At the time of this incident, the family lived on Stewart Road. The carload had gone to Algonac to celebrate and when they came back, they hit a soft spot or airhole. Annie, the sister, got out of the car but couldn't get out of the water. Bill held onto the ice and was saved but the rest drowned. They found Annie's body far down Middle Channel later in the year."

There are many more little nuggets of history in my grandmother's interview, which is available in the museum's library. Many island families are mentioned in the interview . . . I think she knew everyone on the island. Doris was very involved in the Harsens Island Garden Club. I have Doris' notebook with her monthly tips on gardening. It is in cursive, so I typed it up for easier reading.

Doris Knight's Gardening Hints for July

Check your entire garden weekly for weeds, poison ivy and unwanted tree seedlings. Plant a few gladiolas for late blooming. Give your chrysanthemums their last pinching of tip growth for better branching. Check all plants for spider mites, aphids, and other insects. Malathion is a good insecticide for these. A fine spray on the plant gives the best spread and control. Cut back any perennials that have finished blooming unless you want to save some seed. Some may give a second bloom.

If you had trouble growing annual verbenas, as spring started flowers, try sowing seeds in June or July for a fall display. Verbenas can take a lot of coolness and the steady temperatures from September to November will produce vivid blooms from them late in the year.

Harsens Island Historical Society Calendar 2020

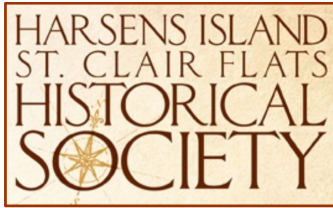
All events and meeting are subject to change due to
Stay-at-Home orders from the State of Michigan

Date	Day	Time	Event
July 3 - Cancelled			Board / Membership Meeting at the Museum
July 10 - Cancelled			Social Hour at the Museum
August 14	Friday	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Social Hour at the Museum
August 15	Saturday	4:30 PM – 5:00 PM 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM	Wine and Appetizers at the Museum Annual Membership Meeting (Election results)
September 11	Friday	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Social Hour at the Museum
October 3	Saturday	10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Pie Sale at the Museum
October 10	Saturday	10:30 AM	Board / Membership Meeting at Museum
December 5	Saturday	10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Cookie Walk at the Museum



Museum Hours (Subject to change)

Summer Schedule
July (by appointment)
Saturday and Sunday Noon to 3 PM
August
To be Announced
Winter Schedule (September through May)
Closed but Open by appointment



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

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The historical society is still collecting photos and stories about the high water of 2019 and 2020. Or if you would like to add your family history to the museum archives, I can help you capture your memories for future generations.

Please contact our interim curator, Chris Knight
(chris.knight@comcast.net).

Thank You for voting!

The ballots for the two three-year positions on the Board of Directors are being tabulated.

Stay tuned for the results.

Membership Application 2020

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: _____ Current Membership Type _____

<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 \$ _____