



volume 11 / number 6

August 2020

Message from the President . . .

Hi All,

Building Addition Update

As you will recall in June, we got the floor poured, after months of waiting for ferry dock repairs to allow cement trucks on to the island.

Now in July we got the property graded out and will soon be planting grass. A week ago, our carpenter contractor, Alex Bugg and his crew, began work framing out and insulating walls. When that is completed in the next week or two, they will begin installing drywall, door frames and doors. It's exciting to see progress again after a long winter of being patient. I have included a couple of photos here of the interior to show you the work in progress.



Board Meetings Have Gone Virtual

Just like so many things in this strange world we are living in now, our Historical Society Board meetings are going virtual. I'm writing this article on July 29. We have our first board meeting, since the pandemic began, scheduled for early August. We plan to meet online using Zoom. We are all keeping our fingers crossed that we can make this work. Wish us luck. I'll let you know how it goes.

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.

Baseball in the 1800's

Baseball has been one of America's favorite pastimes since the mid-1800's. Tashmoo Park on Harsens Island hosted many baseballs games and tournaments in its heyday. I thought it would be interesting to research how baseball rules have changed over time. The rules that were very different than the ones we know today. Here are some differences from the 1860s:

- A walk was six balls, not four.
- A "bamboozle" is when a foul ball is caught after the first bounce and results in the batter being out.
- If a batter is hit by a pitched ball, it only counts as a ball.
- There is no infield fly rule.
- No gloves.
- Pitchers were called hurlers.
- Catchers were known as "the behind"
- Fans were called cranks.
- Hurlers threw underhand (they did not throw overhand until 1880).
- No spitting, swearing, or acting in a manner that is unacceptable to a lady.
- If a batter did not swing at five or more hittable pitches, he got a warning.
- If a pitcher failed to throw enough strikes, he got a warning, and then the umpire would begin to call balls



Source: <https://www.thoughtco.com/baseball-stars-of-the-19th-century-1773997>

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.

Update of the Museum Improvement Project

By Chris Knight

We are excited to announce that Michele Komar updated our list/index (with help from Ellen Probst) of *The Delta News* and *St. Clair Flats Bulletin* (predecessor to The Delta News) articles. We now have an 80+ index showing the volumes by year, the articles in each volume, and the author of the article. This index allows *The Delta News* to be better utilized as a research tool and reference guide to Harsens Island’s past. It will enable researchers, historians, students, and magazine readers to find material and information on the history of Harsens Island and the St. Clair Flats.

A RECORD OF HISTORICAL ARTICLES IN HARSENS ISLAND PUBLICATIONS

THE DELTA NEWS
ST. CLAIR FLATS BULLETIN

COOPERATIVE EFFORT OF:
Arline Ann Grout, Donna Krippl, Jean Osgood Nelso, Marion Wright

Updated:
September 23, 2000
July 9, 2001
November 4, 2003
January 16, 2004

Updated:
July 1, 2020
By Michele Komar
Ellen Probst

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THE ST. CLAIR FLATS BULLETIN
Published by the St. Clair Flats Association

ST CLAIR FLATS BULLETIN - 1928 - JULY, VOLUME I, NO. 4

- The Old Club
- *Wauketa* Schedule Changes
- Record Breaker – Roy T. Gilbert, Supervisor of Clay Township Unanimously Elected
- John Vimr in Europe
- Road News – Green Drive and Sam Gore
- David Osgood's Fire
- Fred W. Harding Runs for State Senator
- New Members
- Port Huron Run Oldest Lake Route
- Be More Helpful and Boost, by Mary Trueman Post, St. Clair Flats
- Says
- Resorts Need Airports
- Mid-Channel Golf Club
- Secretary's Notes
- How Ford's Boats Are Salvaged
- A Good Suggestion
- How to Catch Bluegills by Albert Stoll, Jr.
- Great Lakes Rising
- Committee to Study Commercial Fishing
- Fishing Reports
- For Sale or Trade

ST CLAIR FLATS BULLETIN - 1929 - JULY, VOLUME II, NO. 6

- Short History of St. Mark's Church
- Jul. W. Berns, Our Secretary
- Secretary's Notes
- Some Acrobat, Ralph Rogerson, A Regular at the Flats
- The Record Bonefish, In Southern Waters After Bonefish by Geo. J. Hilsendegen
- High Water a Menace to Flats Properties
- The High Water, Spring 1929
- A Service to Our Members
- Green Drive Extension
- Boat Season Opens (photo *Tashmoo* Steamer)
- Jack Miner Approves Belle Isle Bird Sanctuary
- Describes Catch in Smelt Run
- Relict Land Fight is Opened
- Fishing Good
- A Good Purpose
- He Does Not Choose to be Interviewed (Marriage of Colonel Lindbergh and Miss Morrow)

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The museum’s Exhibit Improvement Project Team took a brief break due to the COVID shut down. This past month the team picked up where it left off in March and continued taking inventory of the exhibits in preparation for the exhibit moves when the new expansion is ready. Taking the exhibit inventory makes you appreciate the number of artifacts donated and collected since the museum was founded 10 years ago. The collection related to the Steamer Tashmoo and Tashmoo Park is impressive. I have many favorite artifacts and the *Tashmoo* model is in the top 10.

The *Tashmoo* definitely piqued my interest. See the next article about some of its history.

The Steamer Tashmoo

By Chris Knight – Information and excerpts from Ladies of the Lakes by Jim Clary

In the early 1900's, recreation in the summer included excursion boating. Various steamship lines offered a variety of schedules and were modestly priced. One of the most well know and much loved was the *Tashmoo* owned by White Star Line. In 1898, Frank Kirby, a noted marine architect, was commissioned to draw up the *Tashmoo* blueprints. By June of 1900, the *Tashmoo* was ready for service and she began her 36-year career.



Source: Detroit Historical Society - <https://detroithistorical.pastperfectonline.com/archive/0EE2CA7A-5547-41A9-99D6-651373487572>

continued on page 6 . . .

The Steamer Tashmoo . . . continued from page 5 . . .

During her career she maintained an unbelievable pace from mid-June through September. Day after day and weekends she would leave Detroit at 8:30 a.m., make several stops and arrive in Port Huron by 3:45 p.m. She would then reverse her morning schedule and arrive back in Detroit by 8:30 p.m. An amazing feat to maintain her, and have food and fuel replenished between excursions.

Over time the *Tashmoo* was also known as “the White Flyer”. A true test of her speed took place in 1901 in Lake Erie.

“In the early 1900s one of the most thrilling and famous races on the Great Lakes occurred between the *Tashmoo* and the *City of Erie*. Most certainly it was an interesting encounter since both boats boasted excellence in speed. In fact, the *City of Erie*, just two years older than the *Tashmoo*, acquired the reputation of being the fastest ship on the Great Lakes. Nicknamed the “Honeymoon Special,” she had attained some speed records while carrying newlyweds east of Detroit and Cleveland on regular voyages to Niagara Falls. But speed also was an attribute of the *Tashmoo*, and she was frequently called “The White Flyer.” Naturally, a race had to take place.”

“The Stage had been set in September 1990, when a friendly race between the *City of Chicago* and the *City of Milwaukee* took place on Lake Michigan. The *City of Chicago* had been triumphant and was hailed by her supporters as the fastest ship on Great Lakes waters. To refute his claim, one Detroit newspaper maintained that at least nine ships could surpass the *City of*



City of Erie (Source: Wikipedia)



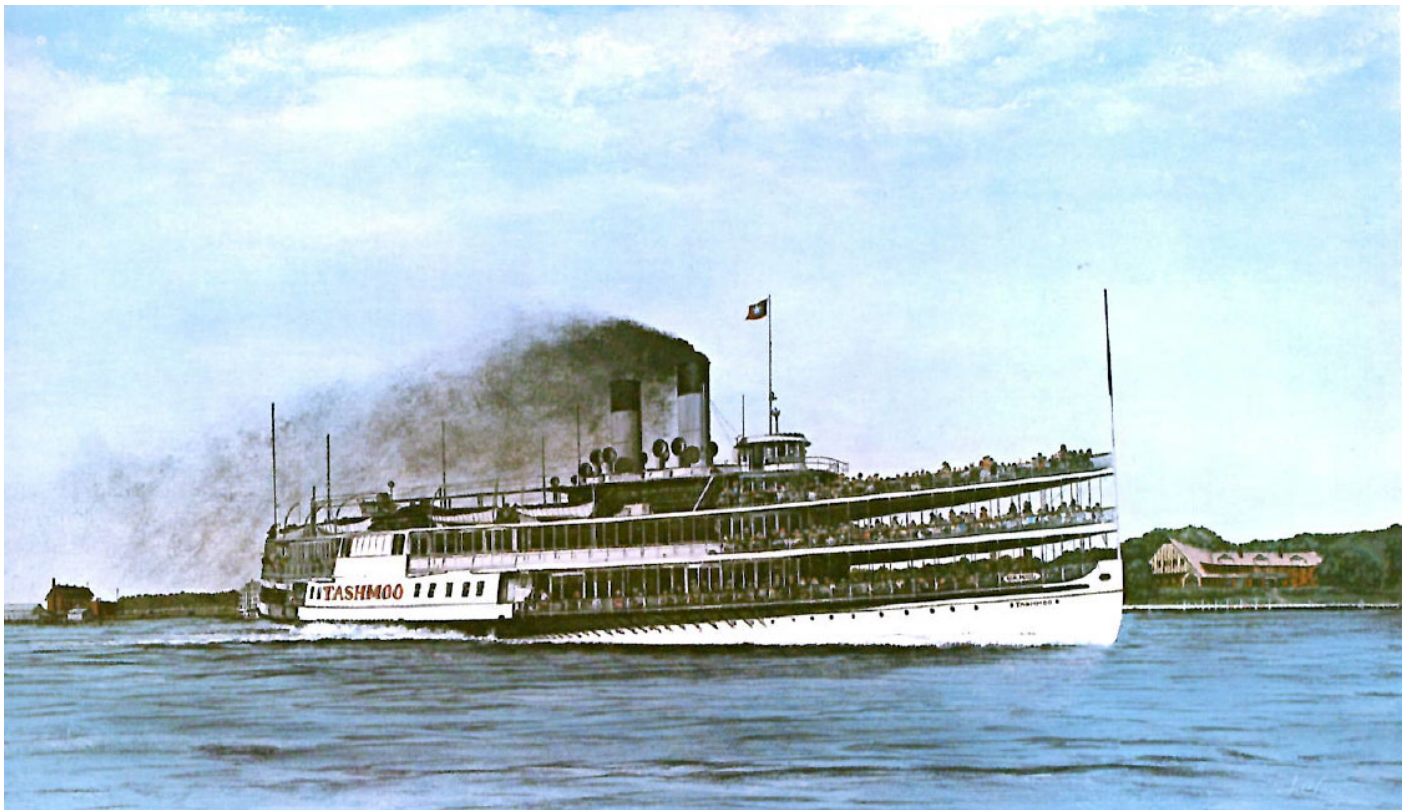
Tashmoo (Source: Wikipedia)

continued on page 7 . . .

The Steamer Tashmoo . . . continued from page 6 . . .

Chicago, and listed the nine in the article, however, the list for some reason failed to include the *Tashmoo*. The president of White Star Line, Aaron A. Parker, was furious at the oversight and in a public statement the next day offered \$1,000 to any ship that could beat his *White Flyer*. In fact, he said, the *Tashmoo* was the swiftest boat on fresh waters. That was too much for Thomas F. Newman, general manager of the Cleveland and Buffalo Transit Company, who readily accepted the challenge on behalf of the *City of Erie* and quickly matched the wager. The winner would earn the right to donate the money to the charity of his choice in his home city."

"That winter it was decided that the race itself would cover a predetermined course covering 94 statute miles from Cleveland to Erie, Pennsylvania along the south shore of Lake Erie. Public excitement grew because both boats were fairly evenly matched. The *City of Erie*, for example, weighed 2,500 gross tons, had a length of 316 feet and a beam of 44 feet. The *Tashmoo* was smaller, but very trim. With a weight of 1,344 gross tons, the ship was 308 feet in length and had a beam of 37 feet. Still, the *City of Erie* held a territorial advantage, for she was racing on home grounds and was totally familiar with the course. The *City of Erie* also held a tactical advantage because her crew usually steered by compass, a skill seldom used by the pilot of the *Tashmoo*, who was accustomed to steering daytime courses by sight. Both of these factors would be significant in the outcome of the race."

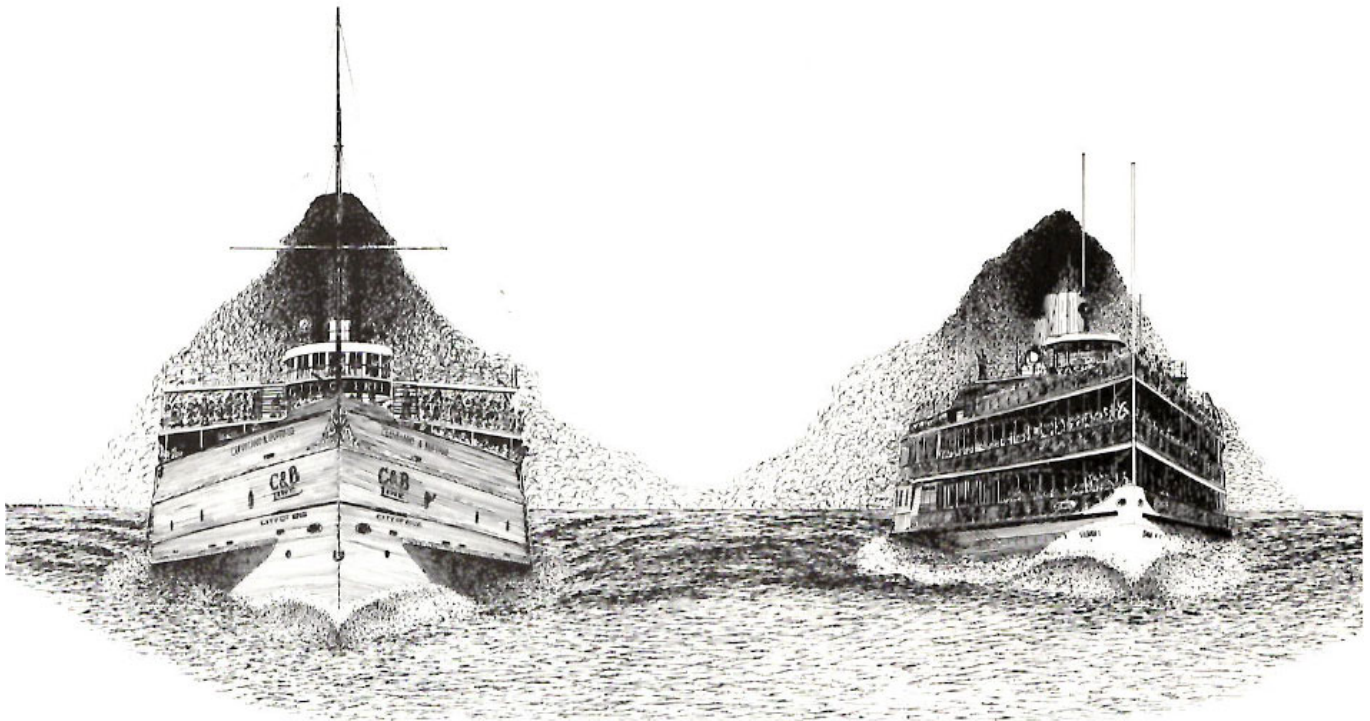


The Steamship Tashmoo

Source: Jim Clary, *Ladies of the Lakes*, 1981 Volume III of Michigan Heritage Series. Michigan Natural Resources Magazine

The Steamer Tashmoo . . . continued from page 7 . . .

“On the morning of the big event an air of excitement was evident in Cleveland as throngs lined the city’s docks and enthusiastic boaters in the harbor awaited the race. The two ships headed for the starting line and when a cannon signaled the start of the race, the *City of Erie* immediately took the lead. But the *Tashmoo* came up fast and in the open waters of the lake, forged ahead to take a three-length lead. But being five miles from shore and in a shallow lake, the *Tashmoo’s* handicap soon became evident. Her helmsman’s inability to steer by compass and his unfamiliarity with the water depth caused him to falter. This might have been overcome, but a greater misfortune now befell “The White Flyer.” One of her condensers began to overheat and she was forced to reduce speed while her crew worked to correct the problem. The *City of Erie*, puffing along behind, was quick to capitalize on the *Tashmoo’s* problems and soon took command of the race by twelve lengths. With her condenser repaired, the *Tashmoo* again steamed up to full speed and began to gain on her opponent. With the *City of Erie* in the lead, the *Tashmoo* now accelerated to even greater speed than before, and to the obvious relief of her supporters she began to rapidly close the gap. Closer and closer she came, and the expectant crowd watched anxiously for a photo finish. But the big lead the *City of Erie* had developed proved too much and she crossed the finish line 45 seconds ahead of the *Tashmoo*. Although she had lost the race, she had shown herself to be faster at full speed and on this basis, her owners offered \$10,000 for a rematch. But the *City of Erie’s* owners sensed they’d be better off not to try again and rejected all future confrontations at any stakes.”



Sketch of famous race between the Tashmoo and the City of Erie that was held on Lake Erie in 1901

Source: Jim Clary, Ladies of the Lakes, 1981 Volume III of Michigan Heritage Series. Michigan Natural Resources Magazine

Harsens Island Historical Society Calendar 2020

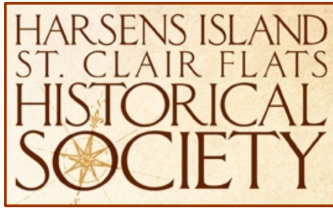
All events and meeting are subject to change due to
Stay-at-Home orders from the State of Michigan

Date	Day	Time	Event
August 14 - Cancelled	Friday	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Social Hour at the Museum
August 15 - Cancelled	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
August (by appointment)
Saturday and Sunday Noon to 3 PM
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>

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Christine Knight



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).

Museum Open by Appointment

This is a reminder that the museum is open by appointment. We have a list of rules we are following in keeping with State law to help reduce the spread of the Covid-19 virus in our State. The details were published in our July newsletter and are posted on the front door of the museum. In July we had three groups visit by appointment. It was nice to be able to continue to share our island history despite the pandemic.

For an appointment for your group of up to five persons you can call Bob Williams at 248-388-0465 or email to xharpspah@aol.com

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 \$ _____