



Message from the President . . .

Hi All,

Building Addition Update

Since last month our insulation and drywall contractor, Alex Bugg, has installed metal furring and rigid foam insulation on the interior surface of all of the exterior masonry walls. His crew is now busy installing drywall over the insulation and by next week should begin the taping and sanding of the drywall. When that is completed, we bring in our painting contractors.

Our collections committee is excited to see the progress and is working on detailed plans for the storage areas and exhibits.

Eleventh Anniversary Celebration

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic about six months ago we haven't really mentioned much about it in the newsletter. It is on everyone's mind and there isn't much to say about how it had affected the historical society other than this year the museum has only been open by appointment for individual families. This past spring was the tenth anniversary of our historical society. We had to forego a celebration of that event. We are now planning a bang-up celebration next spring for our eleventh anniversary and the opening of our museum addition.

Museum is Open by Appointment

This is a reminder that at this time 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

continued on page 2 . . .

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.

Coffee . . . a vice or an indulgence? Whether you need a cup in the morning to get you going or just love the taste, you are not alone. In the US, coffee consumption dominates over tea. Based on 2019 National Coffee Trends Report, 63% of adults drink coffee daily.

Coffee's popularity is believed to have begun after the Boston Tea Party. It became patriotic to drink coffee instead of tea. During the Civil War a coffee drink was more pervasive because it helped energize tired troops.

Coffee, back in the day, did not come in all the varieties and flavors you see today.



continued on page 2 . . .

President's Letter . . . continued from page 1 . . .

newsletter and are posted on the front door of the museum. In August 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

What Was it Like Back Then . . . continued from page 1 . . .

The main method of making coffee prior to 1930 was boiling or decoction. The aromatic oils in coffee are released at 96 °C (205 °F), which is just below boiling. The bitter acids are released when the water has reached boiling point.

Stove percolators were popular in the 1930's and electric percolators were common in 1950's. (I remember when I was in grade school and visited grandma and grandpa. I distinctly remember the smell of coffee, very strong, in the morning. Grandma had percolator.)



Swan Savoy Coffee Percolator 1950



No matter how you brew your coffee and the type of coffee drink you prefer; a Latte, an Espresso, a Cappuccino, a Macchiato, a Mocha, a Vienna, a Café au Lait, iced, with or without sugar, with or without cream or just a regular black coffee . . .

I think you would all agree, coffee tastes best when sitting outside and watching the river.



International Coffee Day is September 29, 2020

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.

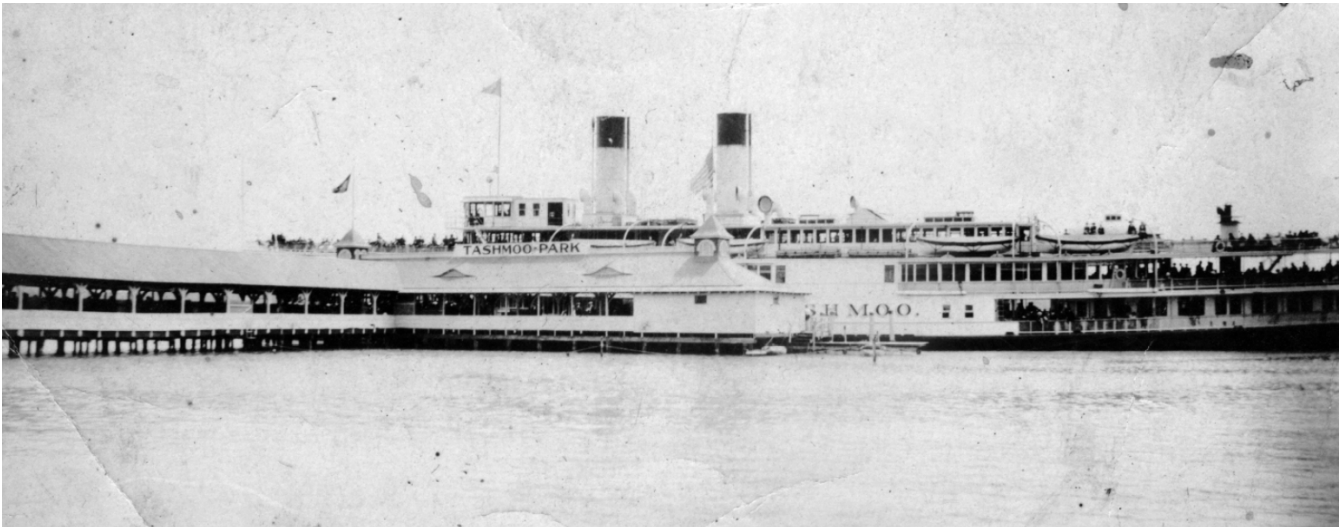
Please take the time each day to record your activities, thoughts, and/or feelings in diary form. The entries can be handwritten, typed, or in video format, and they can be as long or short as you want. Don't worry about handwriting, spelling, or punctuation. The goal is to capture your personal experiences.

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

Sharing History

Gary Peavyhouse, the lifestyle editor and production manager of The Herald-News in Dayton, Tennessee sent the Sanilac County newspaper several photos taken by his late grandmother during a trip to Michigan. Gary was thoughtful and sent us a digital photo taken at Tashmoo Park. On the back of the photo is written: "Tashmoo Park one of the places we went on a picnic last week." She stayed in Michigan during the Spring and Summer of 1919, spending much of her trip in Sanilac County.

Gary said his grandmother was 21 years old at the time and worked for a telephone company. He believes the trip to Michigan may have been business-related. Her name at the time was Anna Buttram and she was unmarried. When she married a couple years later, she became Anna Buttram Peavyhouse.



*Photo taken by Gary Peavyhouse's grandmother Anna Buttram Peavyhouse in 1919,
Tashmoo Steam docked at Tashmoo Park*

The Grande Pointe Hotel luggage cart is now at the museum. You can see the cart displayed at the museum on the patio area by the anchor and propeller. The luggage cart is over 100 years old.



Harsens Island Bus Tour in 1996 – Notes from Bob Coulter

By Chris Knight

I was going through the Ann Grout collection in the museum library and I found this unique bus tour narrative of Harsens Island. It was written by Bob Coulter, the author of *A Kid on the Flats*. This narrative may have been used by the Algonac-Clay Historical Society. If anyone knows if there was an actual tour, let me know. The tour includes 24 stops. I included 13 stops in this newsletter. I will share stops 14 – 24 in the next newsletter.

1 – Harsens Island Elementary School, built in 1938. Just two rooms plus basement play area and cafeteria. Grades Kindergarten through Sixth. In the 1940's grades went up to the Eighth.



2 – Weaver's Market, local grocery store and fishing supplies. Operated by descendants of the original owners, the Persyns.

3 – St. Mark's Catholic Church, built in 1987. In the early days before the road was built from the church down through the Flats, people from downstream had to come by boat. Because the dock didn't reach out to deep water, churchgoers arriving by tug or launch had to disembark onto a scow tied to the dock and then the scow was poled in to the seawall. Those parishioners living north, or up on the island would arrive by horse and buggy and later by automobile.

4 – The large boat storage building on the left was once owned by the D'Eath family. They were noted for their power boat racing successes. Lately this establishment has been promoted as the Island Yacht Club offering condominium-type boat wells.

5 – Across the river you can see the Canada Club. Sitting at the source of the Basset Channel it has been a hunting club for over 100 years.

6 – Until 1938, this was as far as the road (Green Drive) came. The property to the left was once owned by Art Champion and was the base for his ferry service to the rest of the Flats, south of here. I remember well the Chris Craft speedboats he operated. There must have been 3 or 4 of them and they were all equipped with sedan tops for all weather operation. My family, like scores of others, would arrive at Champion's on Friday night or Saturday morning, having driven up from town. Mom and Dad would unload groceries, suitcases, kids and dogs from the car and pile same into one of Art's waiting boats. We'd enjoy the 3-mile run down the South Channel to my grandparent's cottage/store on the Maybury Cut. It was a special thrill for me to sit on the stern bench seat and lean over and catch the spray with my hand as we "roared" down the river. It would have been idyllic if my mother hadn't been so frightened of my falling overboard and had instead just enjoyed the ride. But the best thing was that we could do it all over again on Sunday evening on our way home.

continued on page 6 . . .

Bus Tour 1996 . . . continued from page 5 . . .

7 – Just down that fork in the road is the location of one of the original businesses on the Flats. That's where Jimmy Clay had his grocery store. Clay's Landing was established circa 1894.



8 – As you may or may not have heard, the St. Clair Flats had a few hotels sprinkled throughout its marshy length. And, believe it or not, in addition to housing guests and serving meals, they also served alcoholic beverages. Yup, that's the truth. Didn't matter whether the Federal Government said you could or couldn't do it, they did it. And at times, in a big way! One of the best known and oldest of those dens of iniquity was Joe Bedore's. This is the site. Well the old hotel has long since been torn down, but the memories linger on, as they say.

9 – Off to the right is Little Muscamoot Bay, in the old days it was a duck hunter's paradise.

10 – To the left, beyond the marina, down the river is the site of Gus Trautz's Hotel, circa 1898, later it was known as Forester's, Kulow's, the 4-B's and Seaway. I remember it well as Kulow's during the 1950's.

11 – Tashmoo Marina South, began life a long time ago as a simple boat yard. Mr. Stokey built many Naphtha and gasoline launches for the people of the Flats. Later Mrs. Stokey opened a grocery store on the property. John Upmal eventually developed a marina and boat storage facility. Peter Henkel purchased the property and made a reputation by restoring old Chris Craft, Garwood and Hacker Crafts. A few years ago, he sold the marina and store to Bobby Bryson who has refurbished the property and docks.

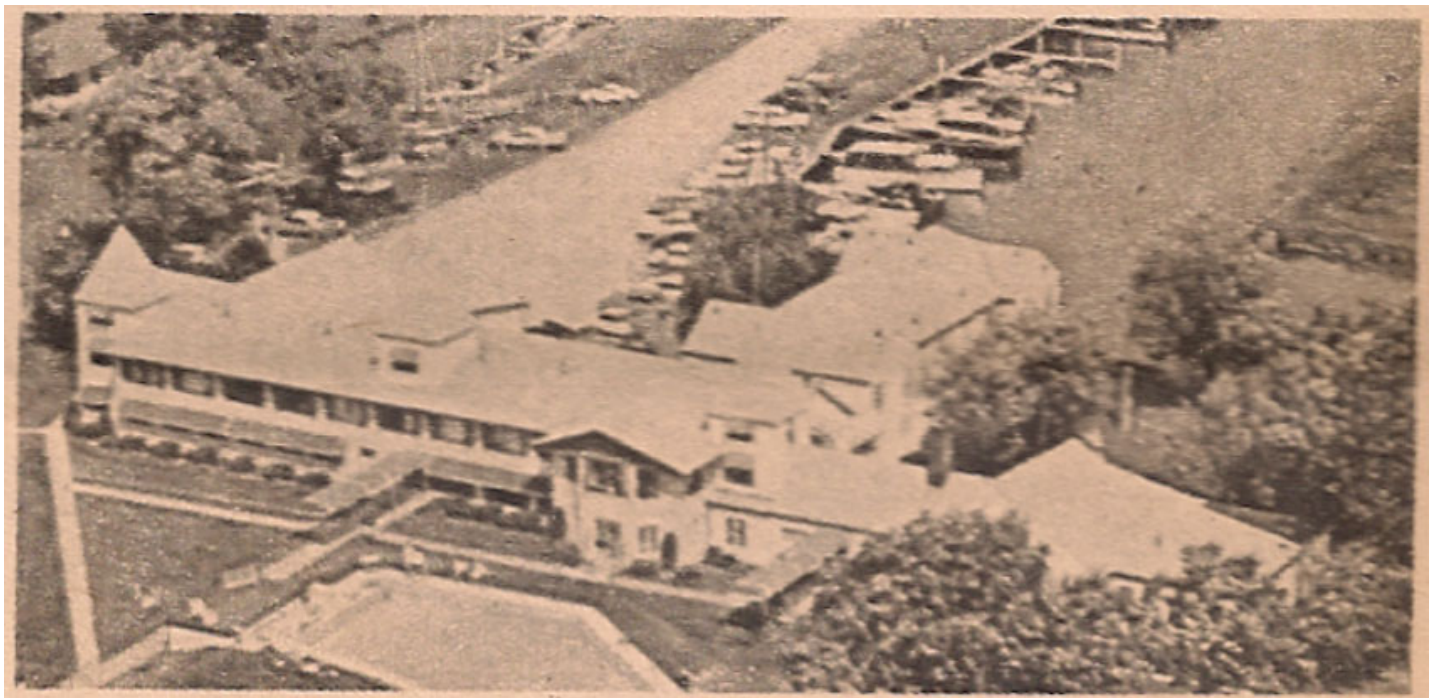
12 – The next point of interest is my second favorite place on the Flats. It's now the Idle Hour Yacht Club. No, I'm not a member and I'm not selling memberships. Way back in 1891 one Charles Coulter and a partner built a hotel on this site and named it the Riverside. Charles Coulter was my great grandfather, I never knew him, but photographs show him as a big, shiny-headed man with a huge handlebar moustache. He operated the Riverside for about 4 years before selling his share. He subsequently went down the river about half a mile to the big, wide Maybury Cut and claimed squatter's rights to a small island which is currently known as Walker's Landing. We'll see it in just a couple minutes.

continued on page 7 . . .

Bus Tour 1996 . . . continued from page 6 . . .

The Riverside (burned in 1934 and was rebuilt) had a number of owners and a number of names, but the one most people remember is Idle Hour. The Idle Hour was quite active and prosperous during the 1950's, the years that I was tearing around the Flats in convertibles and sports cars in my early twenties. I tried my best to help keep the Idle Hour in business, at least in the bar business.

Not many people know or remember that during World War II, the government took over the hotel from the owners and converted it into a basic training camp for Coast Guard recruits. It just happened that the son of the Commander and I were the same age and became best friends. We had some fun experiences with the recruits in training. The Idle Hour closed its doors in 1970's. Now Ken Baker has developed it into a club.



Idle Hour

13 – The skeletal steel tower ahead on the right is the rear range light used for guiding the freighters up into the river. Now however, they don't come up the South Channel since the "Cut-Off" was dredged back in the '60's. When I lived on the Maybury Cut, just ahead, that bright green light was like a full moon most every night until the Coast Guard boys turned it off after Christmas every year. Then it was lonely, like losing my best friend for about three months. It was always a happy day when it was turned on again, usually in late March, we knew then that spring had arrived for certain.

Stops 14 through 24 will be in next month's newsletter.

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 - Cancelled	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 17	Saturday	5:00 PM	Board / Membership Meeting on ZOOM Details will be emailed prior to meeting
December 5	Saturday	10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Cookie Walk at the Museum

Annual Membership Virtual Meeting

Saturday, October 17

5:00 PM

Instructions for a Zoom Meeting will be emailed a few days before the meeting

Museum Hours (Subject to change)

Winter Schedule

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

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



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).

**Mark Your Calendars
Annual Pie Sale at the
Harsens Island Museum
October 3 10:00 to 1:00 PM**



**Drop off your pie donation
between 9:00 and 9:45 AM**

Additional COVID-19 safety
measures will be instituted for the
Pie Sale

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: _____

Annual Dues:

- { } Individual (1 Member Only) \$20.00
- { } Family (1-2 Adults plus children
under 18 years) \$30.00
- { } Business \$50.00

Life-time Dues

- _____ Life Individual \$300.00
- _____ Life Family \$500.00

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 \$ _____