



Message from the President . . .

Happy New Year!

Despite all the challenges 2020 presented to the Historical Society (and to each of us personally), we can now look forward to the hope and new promises of 2021.

I want to start my term as your new President by thanking Bob Williams for his leadership as President over the last 5 years. He has been instrumental to the success of this organization in countless ways. The good news, as he announced in the last newsletter, is that he is now Chairman of the Board and not only will stay very involved but will be my mentor (thank goodness).

For those of you who do not know me, I have served on the Board as Treasurer for 8 years. My Dad, John Chamberlain, was one of the founding Board members and served several years as Second Vice-President. One afternoon, he asked me to help out for a couple months keeping the books and financials, as the Board had some unexpected turnover . . . 8 years later, not only did I continue to serve as Treasurer, I now find myself President!

My history on Harsens Island is long. Today, I spend summers at the cottage my great-grandfather built around 1913, which makes my two young grandsons the 6th generation enjoying fun and family on the Flats. My parents both grew up spending summers on the Venice, just down the canal from one another. After they married, it was natural they continue to spend summers with family on the Island. I grew up with the luxury of having both sets of grandparents being neighbors all summer – swimming and / or boating between their cottages.

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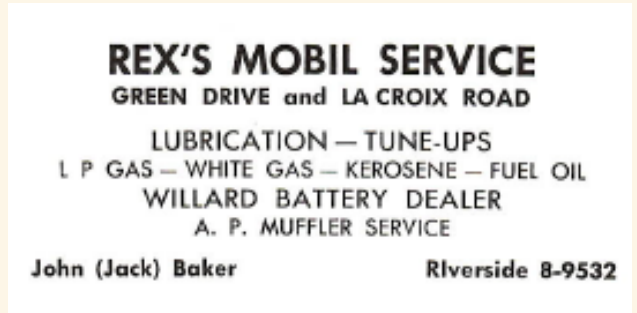
Feature Column

- Harsens Island Businesses -

This year our newsletter’s feature column will highlight island businesses from years gone by.

For the islanders who have been here for many years we pass the Mobil sign on the corner of Green Drive and LaCroix and there is a longing for the old days when you could get gas on the island.

This island landmark was built by Wes Herschelman in 1947 for Rex and Thelma Baker and they handled Mobil products exclusively. Its early local employees included Tom Yax and Alfie Dandran.



In 1954 their son Jack and wife Betty moved on to the island to 128 LaCroix just down the street from the station. Jack worked weekends for his father and then took complete charge of the gas station when his father retired. After Rex’s death in the mid-sixties, Thelma continued to reside in their home overlooking the Mobil Station.

Betty and Jack were well known on the island not just for competent automotive service but for their constant good humor as well.

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

I'm grateful to still have the cottage and that we have a multi-generational love of the Flats that comes from both sides of my family.

I look forward to the upcoming year with hopes that the museum can once again open, so everyone can see and celebrate the fabulous addition. Many have worked tirelessly and put in many hours to make that happen under sometimes challenging conditions. We now have a new floor, shelves, and the displays are starting to come together.

I also look forward to being able to again host the monthly Social Hour, and the special events like our First Anniversary of our 10th Anniversary Celebration. Stay tuned for more details as we move closer to the summer and understand how the pandemic may impact our plans.

Thank you for your support, I look forward to working with you as we continue the Historical Society's success together.

Joyce

Joyce Hassen, President

Update on Museum Expansion

Since our last update on December 1st, the electrical work has been completed. The flooring has been installed, yeah!



Museum board members and volunteers have started to move furniture into the storage room and the new exhibit space. The team is also validating and re-cataloging all the artifacts to ensure the master donation listing is up to date. Over the next few months, the team will be setting up the exhibits in the new space.

Harsens Island Businesses . . . continued from page 1 . . .



REX'S SERVICE STATION

3010 GREEN DRIVE

Corner LaCroix & Green Drive

748-9532



COMPLETE TUNE-UPS

MUFFLERS — BRAKES

LIGHT REPAIRS

CERTIFIED MASTER MECHANIC

LUBES — OIL CHANGE — FUEL OIL

Real Estate Ad Circa 1899

Found this real estate advertisement in the museum archives. There was no date, but it was probably in the early days of Tashmo Park's popularity.

A Home, and a Competence Summer Resort and Little Farm



LOCATED ON HARSEN'S ISLAND
IS A NEW DEVELOPMENT!

A chance for every man who works in Detroit to have for his own a place that which combines in a way never before achieved — a beautiful summer home on a wonderful river and garden spot, large enough to sustain a family year by year.



TASHMOO PARK LITTLE FARMS

The land, which is a rich, fertile tract, high and dry, is suitable for growing any product of which Michigan boasts. A wonderful spot for a poultry, fruit or truck farm. Each lot contains 5 ACRES. A real garden spot and home site.

The company has spent several thousands of dollars to provide boat anchorage, four miles of canals being available to residents of TASHMOO PARK LITTLE FARMS. You can start from a Detroit dock and moor your craft at your own wharf.

FISHING, HUNTING, BOATING AND BATHING FACILITIES ARE UNPARALLELED!

5 Acres, Equivalent to 50 City Lots, from \$400 to \$850


MAKE YOUR OWN TERMS

The Campbell & Harding Realty Co.
12820 East Jefferson Phone Hickory 0051

Without any obligation to me, send me further information about TASHMOO PARK LITTLE FARMS, or send a representative to
Name.....
Address.....
Phone.....

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Real Estate Ad Circa 1899 . . . continued from page 3 . . .

<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; text-align: center;">Tashmoo Park Little Farms</p> 	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">FARM LAND Is the Fundamental of all Real Estate Investments</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">WHY?</p> <p>Every investment of any nature is dependent on the success or failure of our farmer.</p> <p>Farming offers a greater diversion for mind and body than any other known occupation.</p> <p>Alm Houses and Charitable Institutions Do Not Exist for Farmers!</p> <p>We all dream of the time when we can settle down on a little farm with modern conveniences.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HERE IS YOUR CHANCE— START NOW! Call Campbell & Harding — HICKORY 0051 —</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Tashmoo Park Little Farms Are Adapted to The Growing of Fruit</p> <p>The average fruit farm is worth \$500.00 per acre, and costs very little to establish.</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">POULTRY</p> <p>Average hens earn a profit of \$1.25 to \$2.00 per year. The prize breeds earning from \$5.00 to \$8.00 per year.</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">TRUCK GARDENING</p> <p>Your market is Detroit, Port Huron and Algonac, and everything you raise can be sold to the resorters of Harsens' Island and the St. Clair Flats.</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">A PLACE OF PLEASURE</p> <p>Hunting, Fishing, Bathing, Boating, and in fact any kind of recreation is possible within five minutes walk from the farm sites.</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">PRICE AND TERMS</p> <p>Cannot be equaled within 50 miles of Detroit in any direction.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Call Campbell & Harding — HICKORY 0051 —</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Where, When And How to Get There</p> <p>Three forms of transportation are available and the possibility of a fourth in the very near future.</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">BY BOAT</p> <p>Three steamers leave daily from the foot of Griswold Street to Tashmoo Park and return.</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">BY TROLLEY</p> <p>Every hour from the D. U. R. Waiting Room at Bates and Jefferson, by the way of Mt. Clemens and Algonac.</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">BY AUTO</p> <p>Out Jefferson Avenue and along the beautiful Lake Shore Drive to Pearl Beach or Algonac.</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">BY AREOPLANE</p> <p>This service is a possibility in the very near future.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">For Further Details Call Campbell & Harding — HICKORY 0051 —</p>
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Memories of Harsens Island – My Earliest Recollections

By Jane. M. Wright

Jane Wright, a local historian, donated copies of her writings which were compiled by Gray Grout into handsome brochures. For your reading pleasure one of these brochures has been replicated in this newsletter.



My earliest recollections of Harsens Island go back to the 1920's and 1930's. The car was loaded with provisions and, leaving northwest Detroit, we struck out for Gratiot Avenue. The route was Highway U.S. 25 going through Halfway (which is now known as East Detroit) and Roseville, and then through Mt. Clemens. At that point, we were frequently greeted by the aroma of the world-famous Mt. Clemens mineral baths, an odor that permeated the entire area.

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Memories of Harsens Island . . . continued from page 4 . . .

Old Gratiot took us through the heart of the city, passing the old Medea Hotel and the Colonial (which was burned in recent years). Guests in the city for mineral baths, were often seen on the Medea Hotel porch, spending the leisurely moments in rocking chairs and watching traffic go by, cars so close to the porch one could almost reach out and touch them.

Next, we turned onto Highway M-29 toward new Baltimore and the first glimpse of the water. At that time the highway followed the city's Main Street and then, as now, progressed through Anchorville and Fair Haven finally reaching Pearl Beach and the Pte. Tremble area. When driving through this region, the Interurban cars would oftentimes be whizzing on tracks that were laid in what is now the open strip of land between M-29 and the present-day garages on the river side of the highway. This was prior to the construction of the Dyke Road through St. John's Marsh.

With improved roads and the increased use of the passenger car, the Interurban was discontinued. However, the tracks remained for some time, and it is possible a portion of the tracks still remain buried beneath



the paving of Michigan Street in North Algonac, the route the Interurban traveled toward Marine City on its run northward.

Continuing on our way, the destination was Sam Gore's car ferry. The boat landing was located on the North Channel at the foot of what is now Island Drive. The ferry was a wood scow which held approximately four or six cars, with a gangplank at one end only. It was not a steel ferry, as we have today, and was not constructed to go through the winter's ice.

During the severe cold weather of winter, Island residents crossed the river on the ice, and when it had reached sufficient

depth, a path would be marked carefully with discarded Christmas trees to enable cars to drive across to the mainland. In those early years, the ice seemed to freeze over with some degree of smoothness, in contrast to today's rough and chunky ice formations in the North Channel. In the summertime, cars bound for Harsens would drive onto the ferry, where an attendant would use blocks of wood to brace car wheels against motion, particularly in times of rough water.

The wood scow of that day had no power. At one side, it was joined by cable to a power launch. The loaded scow was drawn away from the ferry landing and, at midstream, the launch swung away from the scow, and then carefully pivoted the scow around to enable cars to back off the ferry at the landing dock. The maneuvering of scow with a load of cars in the middle of the channel was tricky and a bit unnerving at times to car occupants, especially in times of wind-swept water. In the earlier days they must have used a two-car ferry, as I recall seeing one stored up on blocks beside the Island ferry landing.

Prior to the era of automobiles and the car ferries, islanders came to Harsens Island via the steamer Tashmoo during the

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Memories of Harsens Island . . . continued from page 5 . . .

summer months. The boat made multiple stops at docks along the South Channel, including hotels on the Flats, Maple Leaf, Tashmoo Park, Sans Souci, and the Grande Pointe Hotel. Then it continued on to Algonac and points North. At the close of the summer season, the Tashmoo stopped running, and resorters made the trip on the Interurban. My grandfather at the time, stored a duck boat on the mainland and rowed across the North Channel to the Island.

In the early years of automobile travel, before the 20's, it was a hardship to make the trip by car. My parents spoke of riding in an open "touring" car, with only a car roof and sometimes side curtains to keep out rainy weather. It was easy to get stuck on the dirt roads, with the worry of breaking a spring or an axle.



On one occasion, they had to go for help when they had gone down in the mud. There was a fresh supply of baked goods in the car and, since there was no means of locking the vehicle, upon their return their bakery goods had vanished.

Those were the days of real pioneering, with no electricity on the Island. Kerosene lamps had to be used for lighting, and these had to be cleaned often. Prior to electric service on the Island, it was necessary to prime a hand pump to get water for drinking and household use. Cooking fuel had to be purchased and, without lawn mowers (the hand-pushed variety), the grass was allowed to grow very long. There were many frogs, turtles and garter snakes, and mosquitos flourished.

The only means of cutting grass was with a hand-held scythe, the same heavy long handled tool farmers used to harvest crops. It was approximately the early twenties when electricity was brought to Harsens and the Island entered the era of the electric lights and water pumps. At this point, many islanders began to use river water for household use and purchased drinking water in glass bottles from Silver Springs (or similar company) by the case to transport to their cottages.

At the turn of the century, we began the time of the Steamer Tashmoo and Tashmoo Park, and that continued for almost four decades.



Harsens Island Historical Society Calendar 2021

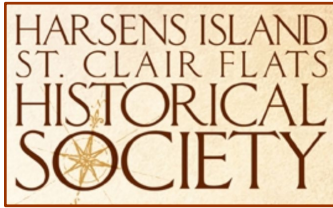
PLEASE NOTE: As of January, all events and locations in the following schedule are **tentative**. This schedule will be updated in the spring as more is known about COVID safety guidance from the State of Michigan.

Date	Day	Time	Event
January 9	Saturday	10:30 AM	Board Meeting via Zoom
March 13	Saturday	10:30 AM	Board Meeting via Zoom
May 8	Saturday	10:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum or Zoom
May 29	Saturday	TBD	Museum Opens
June 5	Saturday	9:30 AM	Museum Host Orientation at the Museum
June 11	Friday	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Social Hour at the Museum
June 12	Saturday	10:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum or Zoom
July 9	Friday	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Social Hour at the Museum
July 10	Saturday	10:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum or Zoom
August 7	Saturday	5:30 PM	Board Meeting at the Museum or Zoom
August 13	Friday	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Social Hour at the Museum
August 14	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 10	Friday	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Social Hour at the Museum
October 9	Saturday	10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Pie Sale at the Museum
October 16	Saturday	10:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum or Zoom
December 4	Saturday	10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Cookie Walk at the Museum
December 11	Saturday	10:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum or Zoom



Museum Hours - Tentative

Memorial Weekend May 29 – 31
Saturday 11:30 AM – 3:00 PM
Sunday 12:00 PM – 4:00 PM
Monday 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM
Summer Schedule (June, July, August, September)
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



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

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www.harsensislandhistory.org

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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).



Results from the New Year's Eve Treat Sale

Our designated bakers contributed homemade cookies, chocolates, and a savory snack mix. The museum sold 30 tins.

A special thanks to The Island Grind for donating a gift certificate for a free small brewed coffee (when they open in 2021)!

