



Message from the President . . .

Happy 4th of July!

The summer is heating up and getting into full swing, and so is the HISC Historical Society planning. We are working on the 1st anniversary celebration of our 10th anniversary...since our 10th anniversary was in 2020, we couldn't officially celebrate due to pandemic restrictions, so we will do something this year. Stay tuned for more information as we finalize plans.

The *Tashmoo* Bell is our main attraction at the museum this year and is getting a lot of attention, but we also have several new things for our young visitors. A grant, courtesy of Clay Township, has provided enough funds to create a Kid's Corner. The museum now has a special spot with seating, tables and quite a few hands-on activities. Check out the fun learning experience created for the young visitors . . . and the young at heart . . . because who doesn't like to color once in a while.



We had our first Social Hour on June 11th that was

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Feature Column

- Harsens Island Businesses -

This year our newsletter's feature column will highlight island businesses from years gone by or have withstood the test of time.

In this issue I thought I would highlight one of the island's oldest businesses, The Old Club. Some of the information in this column was originally published in the 1928 St. Clair Flats Association Newsletter (Volume 1, Number 4).

The Old Club organized in May 1872 as the "St. Clair Fishing and Shooting Club of Detroit". The object of the organization was the "improvement and perfection of Marksmen". This was under an old state law of 1869.

Over the a relatively short amount of time (7 years), the Fishing and Shooting Club completed several new buildings and ground improvements. Some of these included:

- 1890 – Built Old Boat House
- 1892 – Double the size of the dock and put in lawn and trees
- 1893 – Remodeled the lower floor, Office, Ladies' Parlor and Billiard Room. Put in hardwood floors and carpet
- 1896 – Built veranda around House, new Boat House, new Café, new sail boats, row boats and canoes

In 1902, after the expiration of their charter, it was re-incorporated as the "The Old Club", it being the first Club House at the Flats. In 1921, the Old Club Improvement Association built a nine-hole golf course.

In April 1926, a disastrous fire wiped out the main Club

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

attended by several people. Although we weren't large in numbers, we had fun with some great conversation. It was cut short, however, because we all scampered home to close windows as an unexpected storm and heavy rain caught us off guard. Join us Friday, July 9th from 6 PM – 8 PM for our second Social Hour of 2021.

We are always in need of volunteers and have many opportunities for all different talents. Please help support the HISC Historical Society with some time, be a Museum Host, help sort / organize documents for the library, attend an event, or let us know how you would like help . . . and visit the museum!

As always, thank you for your support.

Joyce

Joyce Hassen, President

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

House and adjoining buildings. The temporary Club House proved to be so satisfactory that in July 1926 it was decided to move it to the old site and build additions and a swimming pool.



This was the third Club House, which was destroyed by a fire in 1926.

The Old Club provided every facility needed for shooting and fishing. Nothing was lacking for the enjoyment of its members and their guests.

An 1891 Article - Life At The Flats

Excerpts copied from Detroit News Tribune – July 12, 1891

LIFE AT THE FLATS

HOW THE COTTAGERS ENJOY THEMSELVES

“Two pictures of life on the Flats present themselves, both pleasing to contemplate, but distinct. One is a group or composite of the hotel and club colonies. The other represents the cottage element. The cottager is entirely unconventional. He and his family and his guests make their own pace.

He entertains his friends from the city. He visits the owner of a neighboring cottage, and the visit is returned. In the morning he fishes, or loafs, or sails; in the afternoon he sails or lolls in a hammock, and in the evening he fishes, or visits, or sails. It is quiet, restful, and altogether a delightful life.

The cottager is patient; he seldom loses his temper – a quality he acquires during his sojourn at the Flats if he did not possess it before. To illustrate, note how he takes out his ark and gives his visitors an excursion on the water. Note with what fortitude he furnishes motive power for the overloaded boat. He is even patient when a dozen city friends drop in upon him and his equally patient wife without warning. The company is undisturbed while the hostess prepares an extra meal for the unexpected. The cottager is a liberal host, he is never without company, but he prefers to pay his social debts by invitation, and to entertain his friends in his own time.”

* * *

THE GAIETY THAT IS THE ATTRACTION OF THE CLUBS AND HOTELS

“The Rushmere

Beyond here is the imposing Rushmere club. The graceful structure reflects the characteristics of the organization and their property. Its members are about right socially. And the comfort and elegance of their summer retreat is in keeping with their tastes and plainly shows that money has not been spared in securing all that is to be desired.

As your boat touches here for a moment, a lively company is seen on the dock; well-groomed men and ladies in fetching and natty summer conceits, are the moving pieces of a pretty picture.



Rushmere Hotel

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Life At The Flats . . . continued from page 3 . . .

Varney, the architect, is responsible for this tasty club house, and so pleased was with his work that he has erected a cozy little cottage between the Mervue and the Rushmere for a summer home. It is not large, but presents an exceedingly pretty appearance from the river, and the interior is delightful.



Star Island

Star Island House

As noted elsewhere the catch of forty-two-pound muskellunge was the sensation of the week at the Star Island House. Nothing else was talked about, and people came from nearly every landing along the river to see the monster. Others will go there today to taste his flesh. Manager Slocum has other attractions, however. He has just completed a big aquarium which was constructed adjacent to the dock and is constantly flushed by the current of the river. In the aquarium are many varieties of fish and water fowl."



By Definition

Content sourced from "Towns at the Turn" by Gene Scott, Livonia, Michigan, Fall 1999

No one can argue Harsens Island / St. Clair Flats is a fun, interesting, and unique place to live. When you tell people that you live on an island, how do you describe it? A village, a city, a settlement, a community?

The author, Gene Scott, found varying definitions of what constitutes a place, village, or town. Read through the descriptions below which I replicated from his publication and decide how you would define our little island.

- Bedroom Community – a town or place that is primarily residential, with no business or activity center.
- City – a town or place, incorporated, larger than a village with a defined community center, schools and churches, government offices, and business center.
- Community – a town, place, or locality where a group of people live or do business or other activities together.
- Farming Community – a town or place that has no center of activity, comprised mostly of farms.
- Four-corners Town – a town or place generally confined to the intersection of roads or highways
- Ghost Town – a town, place, village, or settlement where no one lives anymore. Abandoned, with empty structures and no sign of human activity.
- Hamlet – small town or place, unincorporated.
- Historic Town – a former town, place, or village that has been preserved and restored for its historic significance.
- Logging Camp – a temporary place which preceded development of a logging town or village.
- Logging Town – a place, settlement, or village where logging and cutting timber and hauling logs to sawmills are principal activities.
- Mill Town - a place, settlement, or village where a lumber sawmill or ore-processing plant is the principal activity.
- Mining Camp – a temporary place preceded development of a mining town or village.
- Mining Town – a place, settlement, or village where mining is the principal activity.
- Place – town or settlement where people live or earn a living. Used interchangeably with the term town.
- Resort Community – town or place inhabited mostly by cottage owners, motels, or other transient lodging.
- Settlement – location where a town, place or village first began.
- Town – place or settlement where people live and do business or earn a living. Usually incorporated but could be either. Also used interchangeably with the term "village" or "city" when appropriate to the text connotation.
- Townsite – location within a place, settlement, town, village, or city where first development was centered.
- Village – town or place smaller than a city, incorporated or unincorporated. Usually refers to a town or place where there are one or more centers of activity such as a school or church, stores, or a business section.


I admit that some of these definitions don't apply to our island, but I thought they were worth including. I know which one I would pick.

Which definition would you pick?

Michigan's Venice (Published by Detroit News Tribune August 18, 1895)

Every time I look in the museum's library, I find a new treasure of historical information. It is especially exciting when the document is over 125 years old!! I scanned parts of a 14-page document and added them to this newsletter for your reading pleasure.

THE "NEW VENICE."



To convert a portion of the delta of the St. Clair into a New Venice, with hundreds of islands, lagoons, bays and canals, interlaced by bridges, has been thought of by many men at many times. That the plan is feasible, as explained in today's Sunday News-Tribune, constitutes the most important piece of information concerning the Flats that has been recorded in years past.

At present the squatters at the Flats have built along the line of the South Channel, which comprises the lower arm of the great delta. The properties are easily worth half a million dollars, distributed somewhat as follows:

The Old Club.....	\$ 30,000
Outbuildings	5,000
Alger cottage	10,000
Joy cottage.....	7,500
Sampson cottage	7,500
Mervue Club	20,000
Rushmere Club	25,000
Star Island property.....	75,000
Boydell and Coats.....	20,000
Marshland Club	5,000
Various cottages	12,000
Riverside Club	10,000
Eleven cottages	18,000
Willow Grove	2,500
Joe Bedore	5,000
Five cottages	5,000
Muir House	4,000
Considine	1,500
Maple Leaf	60,000
Sans Souci	25,000
Grand Pointe Club.....	50,000
Fourteen cottages	20,000
Pearl Beach	4,500
North Channel Club.....	8,000
Vicinity	5,000
Total estimate	\$445,500

The natural position for the New Venice is that strip of marshland inclosed between the South and North Channels. In size, it is about one and one-half miles wide on one end, three and one-half miles on the other, and four miles long, or, in all, nearly 6,000 acres. The possibilities of the New Venice being suggested to that professional landscape artist, Anton Ekstrom, general superintendent of the Park and Boulevard Commission, he carefully examined the government chart with an eye to practical work. He began by saying that he was familiar with the region, and was convinced that The Sunday News-Tribune plan for a New Venice was entirely practicable.

A GRAND IDEA.

"It would make the delta of the St. Clair the most famous resort in the world," he said, "and in a short time even a city would grow up there. Why, it is one of the grandest ideas ever presented to me. The marshland could be transformed into hundreds of large and small islands, canals, lagoons and bridges. The New Venice would then outrival this country as a unique resort.

"The way the work should be done is this: Soundings would have to be made all through the strip, to determine the depth of the water. This settled, the next thing would be to draw the plans for the islands, bridges, lagoons, etc., arranged according to a grand, comprehensive scheme, so that the work could be harmoniously carried out. I see by an examination of the chart that there are three or more large channels leading down toward the delta. These should be extended and made the foundation of all future improvements. By dredging in this direction the continuous flow of the current will not be impeded, through the reserva-

NOT A LONG JOB.

"The work could be pushed very rapidly, I am sure, and would offer no serious problems. As to the cost, no one could say without the necessary surveys. I would advise that an association be formed, and that the company do its own dredging. That would be cheaper than contract work. Then, it occurs to me that a good deal of the property could be dyked and pumped out, and teams of horses and hand labor introduced for a large part of the dredging. This system would tend largely to decrease the cost. The rich black earth would be spread very easily so that no extra cost would be entailed on that score. Now, then, this job would run up into big money, but it would prove one of the very exceptional attractions of this country. The brilliant prospects of such a scheme carried out are assured. I wonder if there are 500 men in Detroit who are enough interested in this magnificent project to subscribe \$2,000 each?. If the enterprise ever was carried through, I would be glad to own some of the stock myself."

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Michigan's Venice . . . continued from page 6 . . .

TRUE FISH STORIES.



AUGUST is the best month for fishing at the Flats, but the natives fish all winter, and some of these stories have a cold weather flavor.

"When I was a little fellow only about 8 years old," said a well-known young man who lives at the Flats, "my father had a shanty on the ice and was fishing through a hole for pike. One day I went out to stay with him a little while, and taking a spear with a six-foot handle I walked out toward a hole in the ice, thinking no doubt that I was going to do great things. Coming to the hole I leaned over and peered in. Something like a shadow showed itself from under the ice and went back again. I looked closer and again the ghostly thing appeared and vanished. I dropped the spear and ran as fast as my legs could carry me, for the shanty, screeching for my father to come and see what the uncanny thing was. He went out and found it to be an enormous pike, but the spear with its six-foot handle was not to be found. The fish had swallowed it."



EQUAL TO THE EMERGENCY.

Here is another from the same source:

"One time we were spearing fish in a narrow channel and all of a sudden we saw two enormous logs, as we supposed, floating toward us but on closer inspection discovered that one of them was a fish. As we saw the fish he saw us, and made as though he would turn around, but, although the channel was six feet wide, it was not wide enough for that fish to turn in, and one of the party up with a spear with a 14-foot handle, and let fly. What did that fish do but calmly open his mouth and swallow the spear, slick and clean."

WORSE AND MORE OF IT.

That will do very well, but here is another. A party went fishing, and having cast anchor, and the anchor was a large one, they found no luck and thought they would move on. But to their surprise they could not pull up the anchor. They drifted about some and after several attempts and a united pull the anchor line was lifted, and behold they landed a monstrous muscalonge, the fish having swallowed the anchor without bait.



Harsens Island Historical Society Calendar 2021

Date	Day	Time	Event
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 13	Friday	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Social Hour at the Museum
August 21	Saturday	4:30 PM – 5:00 PM 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM 6:30 PM	Wine and Appetizers at the Museum Annual Membership Meeting (Election results) Board Meeting
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

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

Volunteer to be a Host at the Museum this Summer

Volunteer for 3 (2 hour) shifts
and get a **Free T-Shirt** from
the Museum Gift Shop

Contact Corinne Trexler for additional information 313-530-9173



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

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The historical society is looking to add to its collection. We accept donations of artifacts, photos, documents, and stories related to the island and surrounding area. If you would like to add your family history to the museum archives, we can help you capture your memories for future generations.

Please contact our curators; Chuck Miller and Chris Knight (chris.knight@comcast.net).

Preview of Museum Exhibits

Visit us to see the new and improved exhibits and displays. Check out the new Harsens Island Schools Exhibit.



A huge THANK YOU to Lucy Burby for donating a child's desk (far left) to the museum.

Building the Future ~ Preserving Our Past