



*Message from the President . . .*

Happy Fall!

As the weather begins to change and the leaves begin to show their brilliant fall colors, our activities also change to reflect the season. Gardens are harvested, fallen leaves are raked, boats are put away and summer cottages begin to close.

Similarly, the museum is closing for the season, our last regular weekend hours were in September. I want to thank all the visitors we had this summer . . . well over 500! Our count is just an estimate because not everyone signs the guest log . . . either way a very impressive number. I also want to thank all the volunteers that allowed us to keep the doors open, without our hosts opening and closing the building, and hosting the visitors, we couldn't maintain regular hours. A special thanks to Linda Schoonover, who hosted many and most Sundays this summer.

The museum can still be shown by request or appointment; however, we will soon begin preparation for the renovations scheduled to happen over the winter. As previously mentioned, the 'old' section of the museum will be getting new flooring to match the addition, a fresh coat of paint among other improvements. In November, the large job of packing and organizing the displays to empty the space will begin. As with any project, it will be a lot of effort, but stay tuned for updates on our progress!

Remember the annual pie sale on October 9th and the annual Cookie Walk on December 4th that will wrap up the activities for 2021.

*continued on page 2 . . .*

*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.

Coulter's Grocery now known as Walker's Landing, located on the Maybury Cut was originally built by Charles Henry Coulter in the early 1930's. The waters of the Maybury Cut flows from the South Channel into the Muscamoot Bay.

The Coulter's Grocery was on the front of the canal and the family lived in the back. Charles Coulter's grandson, Bob Coulter, has written a book, "A Kid on the Flats".

*walker's Landing Originally Coulter's Grocery*



Although The Middle Channel party Store does not exist anymore, it is worth mentioning. It was established in 1991 and closed its doors in 2016. It was also known as Pennington's Market.

*continued on page 2 . . .*

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

I wish all of those traveling to warmer climates for the fall and winter safe and healthy travels.

As always, thank you for your support and a great 2021 summer!

*Joyce Hassen, President*

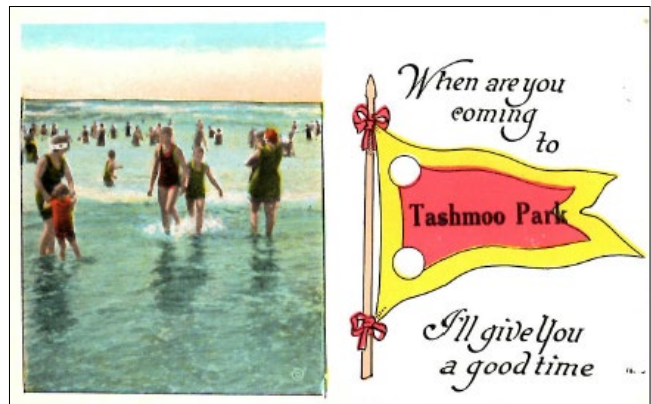
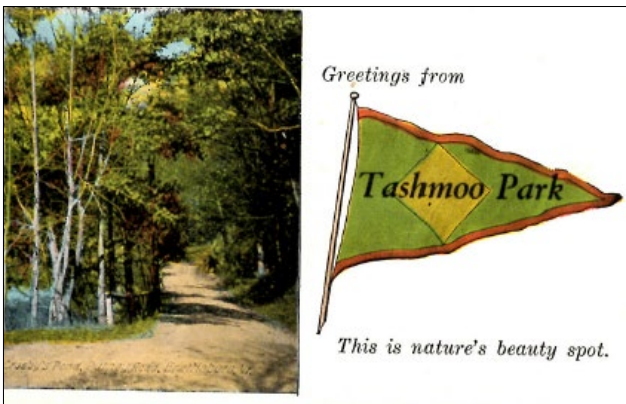
*Harsens Island Businesses . . . continued from page 1 . .*



Middle Channel Party Store

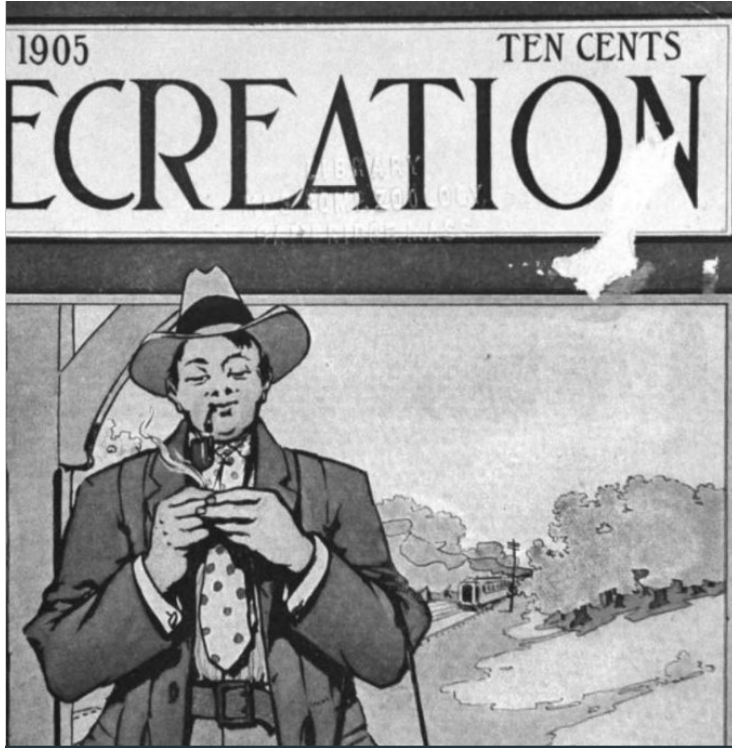
PENNINGTON'S MARKET  
3990 Middle Channel  
GROCERIES, MEAT  
BEER, WINE

Original Postcards sold at Tashmoo Park. Donated by Sue and Jack Masters in 2015. Originally given to the Masters by the daughter of Bill Harms, whose parents worked at Tashmoo Park.



## Recreation (1905), Volume 23: Fishing at St. Clair

By Harry C. McKee



The St. Clair Flats, "The Venice of America," has long been known as the haunt of the black bass. They are in Lake St. Clair, nine miles from the mainland. The Flats are reached from Detroit, Michigan, by steamer, three times a day, the distance being twenty five miles. In order to achieve success as a bass fisherman it will be necessary to employ a guide, or punter, as they are called; these punters formerly used a row or sail boat, but now each is the owner of a gasoline launch, making it very easy to reach the fishing grounds. A punter charges for his services and use of boat for four dollars per day, and the start is usually made at daylight or earlier.

The day's catch will depend much upon the skill of the punter, as black bass are continually moving in schools from place to place, and it is only by long experience that one can tell where to find them. In the spring they



Michigan Bass

are found only in shallow water, moving into the deep channels about the end of August. The best fishing at this time of year is on the Canadian side of the lake, the open season beginning there on June 15th. In order to fish in Canadian waters it is necessary for an American to have a license. This will cost five dollars, and can be secured from the game warden, who will no doubt appear on the scene just after one has started to fish.

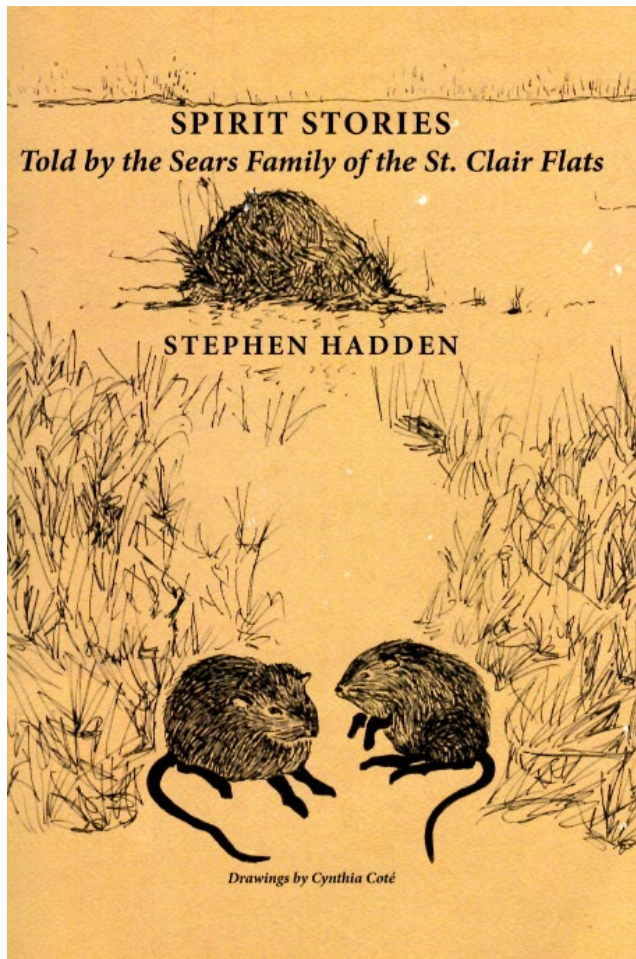
The baits used for black bass are chubs and shiners; the small craw is also used by many fishermen. For those who do not care to indulge in the more strenuous sport of bass-fishing, there are perch, pike, rock bass, silver bass, and pickerel. These can be caught in large numbers. Punters are not required to fish for other than black bass, as anyone can give information as to where they can be caught. There are many good hotels on the Flats, and a telephone cable connects with the mainland. Mail is delivered by steamer four times a day.

## Spirit Stories Told by the Sears Family of the St. Clair Flats

By Stephen Hadden

### THE ISLAND

Call it Blood Island, Haunted Island, Ghost Island, Sears Island, Brown Island, or Club Island (for the Clinton River Yacht Club) – take your pick. The area we will be talking about has been recognized by all these names and more, depending upon which generations of family's living at the Flats. It is the southernmost island on the southeast side of the Middle Channel of the St. Clair River. An important part of a major Great Lakes shipping route, the river drains out of Lake Huron at the city of Port Huron and then flows south into Lake St. Clair, a large body of water northeast of Detroit that separates the state of Michigan from the Canadian province of Ontario. The area where the river flows into Lake St. Clair is a watery delta of low-lying islands and wetlands called St. Clair Flats. I will mostly call it Blood Island, though it's also called Sears



Read more stories like this from the book in the museum library.

Island, after my ancestors, and in one story I will call it Haunted Island.

This island, along with the area of the Flats surrounding it, has the most recognition for supernatural happenings and hauntings in the St. Clair Flats. It is also the area with the most stories and legends of the Middle Channel. I want to share some of them with you in this book.

### MUSKRAT HUNTING (as told by Gordon Sears)

Trapping and hunting of muskrat played a large part in local people's survival. Late in the fall they would sell the fur they acquired, and this would give them cash that would be used for purchasing items to help them get through the winter. By spring, they had pretty much spent all their money, and so at the first signs of spring coming and there was open water, traps went back out and they would go hunting for muskrat. Spring was muskrat mating season, and they would travel quite openly. Of all the locals, none would let an opportunity pass without trying to take a muskrat pelt due to the money that could be made from it.

One particular early morning, Moses was watching the sun come up and enjoying his first cup of coffee. To his delight he saw a couple of large muskrat, almost black in color, which he had seen on a regular basis for several years, playing along the open strip of water across the canal between the edge of the ice and the bulrushes. Moses

*continued on page 5 . . .*

*Spirit Stories . . . continued from page 4 . . .*

grabbed for his .22, hoping to get enough muskrats to pay for his next can of coffee. Leaning against the column that held the roof of the porch up, he took careful aim and pulled the trigger. He immediately racked his gun to put a second shell into it to shoot the other muskrat. During the few seconds that it took to perform this task, the window to the right of him shattered. He completed his second shot and as he began to focus his attention on the broken window, another piece of it broke. He couldn't understand what would cause the window to break; possibly Clara was standing inside next to the window and either leaned into it or hit it with something. As he walked back into the house to investigate the broken window and put gun away, he yelled to his wife to see what happened. As he proceeded through the house, he found her in the kitchen, which was a considerable distance from the window. She had no idea what he was talking about.



Source: Spirit Stories Told by the Sears Family of the St. Clair Flats

He put on his boots to go retrieve his prize. As he walked out onto the front porch, he could see two large muskrats. They looked just like the same two he had shot, playing across the canal. By this time Clara had come into the front room and had started cleaning up the broken glass. Moses retrieved his gun and reloaded it. By the time he got back onto the porch, the muskrats had moved down the canal a bit and were still well within shooting range. As he took careful aim again and squeezed the trigger, he heard crashing of more glass. He went into the house thinking that Clara had dropped the glass back onto the floor that she had been cleaning up. She stated she hadn't but told him that another window had broken. While cleaning up the glass they found three pieces of lead shot, exactly the same size as a .22 shell would be. After cleaning the glass and looking over the lead, Moses proceeded out of the house and across the canal to retrieve the game he had just shot. There should have been three muskrats lying there for him. To his surprise there were none whatsoever. Upon turning back toward home, he saw two large, almost black muskrats watching not far from where he stood. Could this be the third time he had seen the same two muskrats?

After that, whenever Moses shot his rifle around the house, he could hear the lead hit either the house or other windows, so he gave up shooting at muskrats from the house. Especially so, because up until then he rarely missed his mark when shooting, and besides, he already had to replace windows. On many occasions that spring, he saw those same two muskrats and felt they were taunting him., daring him to shoot at them. But the cost of replacing glass was more that the muskrat hides would bring, not mentioning the time it took to install the glass or the trip to town to buy it.

# Harsens Island Historical Society Calendar 2021

Date	Day	Time	Event
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



## Annual Historical Society Pie Sale October 9 10 AM to 1 PM

Bakers who would like to donate a pie to the sale can contact Chris Knight at 586-242-4560



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.

[www.harsensislandhistory.org](http://www.harsensislandhistory.org)

**HISCFHS Board of Directors 2021**

Chairman of the Board  
**Bob Williams**

President  
**Joyce Hassen**

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
**Chris Knight**

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
**Ellen Probst**

Treasurer  
**Corinne Trexler**

Secretary  
**Nancy Bonacquisti**

Directors  
**Terry Wiggins**  
**Sue Wrobel**



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](mailto:chris.knight@comcast.net)).

**Museum Exhibits**

We are closed for the season, but you can still make an appointment for a private tour. Contact Chris Knight (586) 242-4560 or Corinne Trexler at (313) 530-9173. In November we will be starting Phase 3 of the museum renovations. The main room will get a fresh coat of paint, the carpet will be removed, and new flooring will be installed.



*Building the Future ~ Preserving Our Past*