



Message from the President . . .

Happy Holidays!

I hope your Thanksgiving was full of good food, family, and friends. As we finish the last of the turkey leftovers, we turn our attention to the upcoming holiday season. Decorating, shopping, baking, celebrations, and family traditions are all on the agenda in my household, along with the normal day to day hectic lives we lead. It's no different at the museum, not only did we clear out the museum to prepare for the renovation of the original space this winter, but we were also decorating and getting ready for the Cookie Walk, which took place on Saturday, December 4th. Thanks to all of our supporters who stopped by the museum, it was a great way to kick off the season . . . with delicious cookies to share or keep.

With December here, I am reminded how quickly the year has gone and how much we have accomplished in 2021 and what we look forward to in 2022. The Board is already busy planning for 2022. We recently held our annual planning meeting and came up with several great ideas for the 2022 season. We have developed a tentative calendar of events that contains some new things, but we're also trying to bring back some of the old favorites. Stay tuned...

There is a lot that divides us today, whether its politics, COVID, vaccines, ferry issues, climate change, or understanding the tragedy of a school shooting, remember that regardless of what side of an issue we are on, everyone needs a smile . . . so give your spouse, friend, co-worker, deckhand, neighbor, or stranger a genuine smile when you see them . . . it will make everyone feel better!

continued on page 2 . . .

Historical Society Cookie Walk 2021

We had many great varieties of cookies this year . . . Oatmeal Raisin, Candy Cane Snowballs, Eggnog Cutouts, Ginger Snaps, Snicker Doodles, Butter, Decorated Sugar, Double Chocolate, Triple Chunk Cookie Bars, Biscotti, Molasses Cookies, and Pecan Pie cookies . . . to name a few.

All the cookies were packed in smaller bags with 2-4 cookies in each bag, an approach which received positive feedback.

It was a great turn out this year for the Historical Society Cookie Walk. A huge **THANK YOU** to all of our bakers and supporters!



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

However you celebrate the upcoming holidays, I hope that you will find health, happiness, and peace over the holiday season and in the new year.

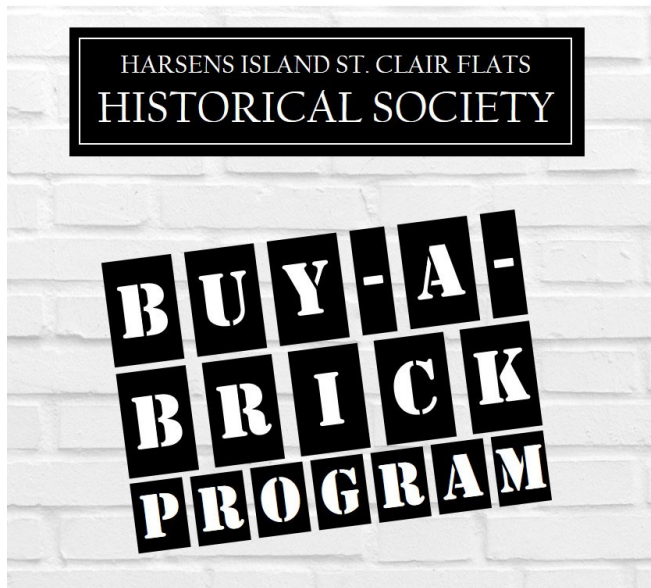
As always, thank you for your support!

Joyce Hassen, President

Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Historical Society Building Renovation BUY-A-BRICK Program

In 2020 we celebrated the completion of the Clayton Evans Room Addition and in 2021 the completion of the renovation of the Karen and Drew Peslar Library. We have now begun work on the final phase of our construction, the renovation of the large exhibit space at the entrance to the museum.

To help maintain a healthy financial position for our Historical Society, we are reactivating our BUY-A-BRICK Program.



Members and friends can support the Historical Society and assure the continuance of the museum by donating \$350 to our BUY-A-BRICK program. Donors will be recognized or may designate a memorial on one of the bricks inside the museum. Of course, they may remain anonymous if they wish. Donations of any amount to support the renovation efforts are welcome and appreciated. To sign up, or if you have questions, contact Bob Williams at 248-388-0465 or xharpshah@aol.com.

BUY-A-BRICK Order Form is included at the end of this newsletter.

Donations



Rosalie Reha donated this beautiful bench which came from the *Tashmoo* Steamer. The Reha family restored this amazing artifact. It will make a great addition to the museum.



The Tug Champion painted in 1878 by Seth Arca Whipple, recalls a vanished era when sailing ships piled the waterways from the Huron to the Erie. This 19th century lithograph, reproduced by the Calvert Company, depicts the steam tug *Champion* towing eight sailing vessels.

This lithograph was donated by Art Woodford.

continued on page 7 . . .

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

By Stephen Hadden

SHIPWRECK AT THE SNOOKS HIGHWAY (started by Gordon Sears)

"In the 1950's or 60's, I was always asking about different stories of the Flats. But there was something about the story of the shipwreck at the Snooks Highway that caused Grandpa to shy away from it. His comment was that it was a very evil place and that many people had lost their lives in that ship. Snooks Highway, I should add, is not a road but the name of the channel of water in the Flats.

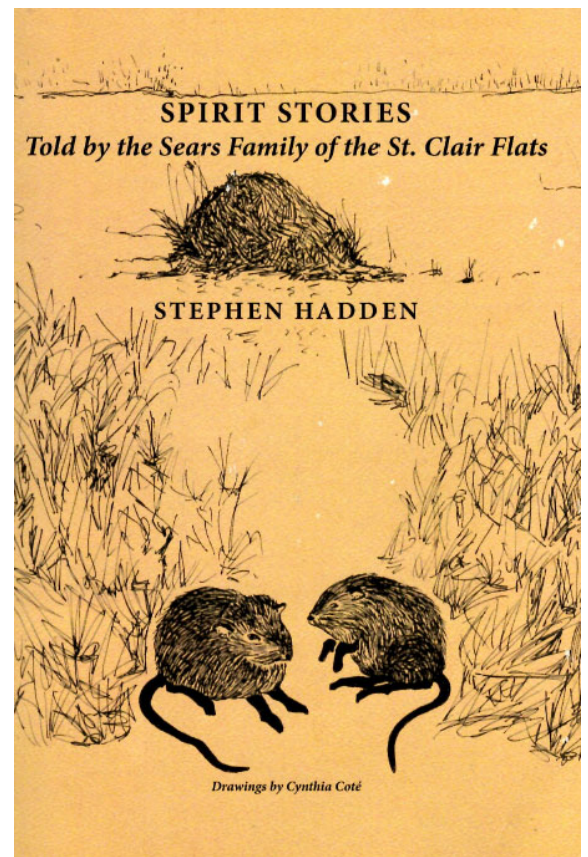
As Grandpa told it, pirates that had taken control of a ship with as many as seventy passengers and crew still on board and the hold full of bullion. The pirates started by taking anything and everything of value on board and removing it to their own ship. Finally came the biggest chore: removing of the barrels of bullion in the hold. After completing the unloading, the hostages were ordered into the hold and locked in. Then the pirates scuttled the ship and watched her sink as they were sailing off. Just before she went to the bottom the men were able to pry open one of the hatches and started to scramble out of their watery grave. Nearly half made it out before she settled to the bottom, but not one woman or child was among them.

Grandpa said that there was nothing but bad spirits in that area and that the fish wouldn't even go close to the shipwreck. He would say, think about where we fish, it's always on the west side of the Middle Channel, the far side of the river – never close to the shipwreck.

He continued by saying, "Watch the ducks when they are flying down the east side of the river along the channel bank. It seems as if they turn east before they get to the site of the wreck and head into Muscamoot Bay. Or, if the ducks are flying up the channel bank, they turn west most of the time and head back into Long Point Bay before they even get close to the wreck. I don't think I have ever seen any seagulls flying around there either."

"You must remember," Grandpa continued, "when Junior lost his outboard motor the time when it jumped right off his boat." (Junior was married to Grandpa's oldest grand-daughter, Rosemary Vernier). "That happened right alongside of that wreck after he was told to stay away from there. You know that he never did find his motor even after spending days dragging with a magnet and triple-hook dragline, and then he even had a friend skindive to find his motor, but it was gone."

This is much of the story of that wreck that Grandpa told. I don't even the ship's name.



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

continued on page 5 . . .

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

ADDITION TO SNOOKS SHIPWRECK STORY (as told by Louie La Ferniere)

In the 1990s, while visiting Louie at his home in Republic, Michigan, of course our conversation got around to reminiscing about the St. Clair Flats. After all, his grandfather, Moses Sears, and my great grandfather, Joe Sears were brothers, and both of us had spent a lot of time at the Flats in our younger years. I started asking about the wrecks and if he could tell me more about them. We spent a considerable amount of time talking about the ship *Harlow*. It was the closest wreck to our houses at the Flats and it was owned by the Harlow family, one of the original families who settled in Marquette, which is close to Republic. It was also used by Ford Motor Company at their Pequaming plant in Baraga County.



Joseph and Harriet Sears



Moses Sears

As I changed the subject from the *Harlow* to the shipwreck at the Snooks Highway, Louie was reluctant to talk about it, as if he didn't know anything about it. But after a bit he started by saying that his grandfather was very averse to going near the site of the wreck. Like Gordon Sears, Moses also said that it was a very evil place with lots of bad spirits there. Louie continued by saying that he understood many people were drowned in that shipwreck, including women and children. He continued by saying that you could still hear their cries for help on the wind during the fall when you were out in the open marsh duck hunting or trapping. He said that he had heard the cries himself on more than one trip into the marsh. He continued by saying no matter how the weather was, on the days he heard the cries it would always haze over, and the wind would come up sharply, at least around the wreck. The haze would be so dark it was as if there was heavy smoke in the air and that you could even smell it. This happened even if the sun was shining and the wind calm just a short distance away.

Louie continued by saying that he was under the impression that pirates captured that ship with the passengers and crew. After looting the cargo and taking anything of value from the passengers, they locked their captives in the hold to let them

continued on page 6 . . .

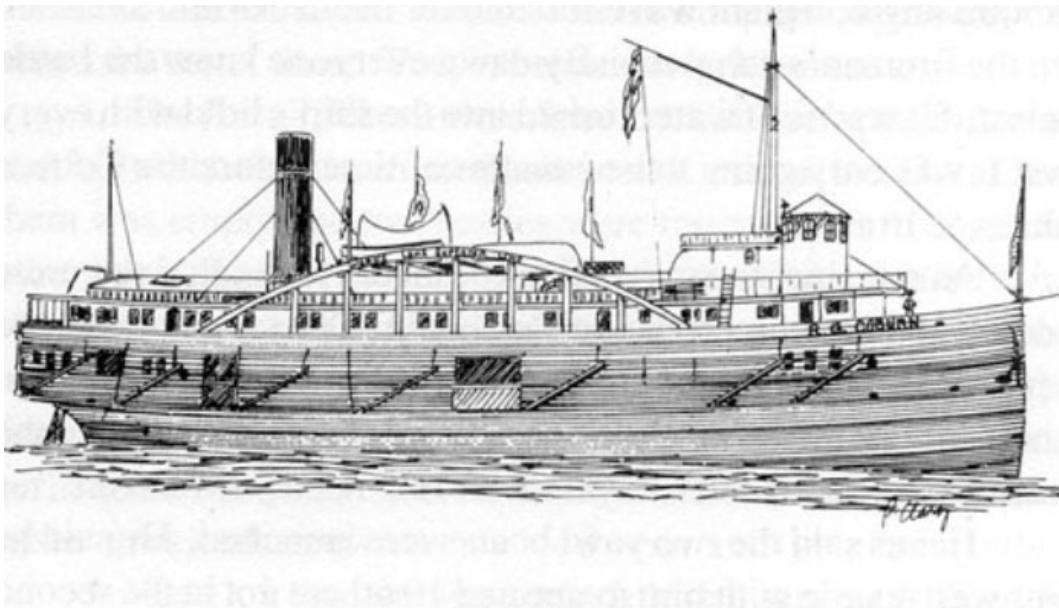
Spirit Stories . . . continued from page 5 . . .

drown after they sunk the ship. I was interested in knowing when she went down, but the only thing Louie said was that his grandfather always said it had been on the Flats as long as he had, and that he couldn't remember it not being there.

As I continued researching this shipwreck, it left me with as many questions as ever. The first and possibly most important was, what is the ship's name? The answer to this came quite by accident after spending a year or more of looking. I was in lower Michigan visiting my oldest daughter and her family in Algonac. It happened that I was sitting on one of the benches at the waterfront park and a gentleman came up and asked to sit next to me. We started a conversation, but it wasn't long before a freighter going down the St. Clair caused us both to take notice. This led me into telling of trying to write the stories I was told as a kid by my grandfather, including a chapter or two of sunken ships in the area. By now we had introduced ourselves and he was aware of my growing up in the area and graduating from Algonac High School. He also learned that I had a lot of family who were still in the area, and it turned out that he even knew some of them. He introduced himself as Fred Duffy. He moved to the area when he retired. He continued by saying that he spent a lot of free time skin diving on the old wrecks in the area. This caught my attention. I would have been excited even if I had not spent much time recently on the stories of the wrecks.

We soon were into a deep conversation about the shipwrecks that Fred had dove on, some of which I wasn't even aware of, mostly on the North and the South Channel. Finally, I asked if he had ever dived on the wrecks in the Middle Channel, and this brought up the *Harlow*, which as I said earlier was the closest to Grandpa's house at the Flats and the one, I was the most familiar with. The next shipwreck that I brought up was the one at the Snooks Highway – the one whose name I didn't even know. I asked if he had ever dived her. He said he had, and that he was able to read her name from the side of her hull when he dove on her. She was the *Coburn*. Just having the name was going to be a big help, for it gave me the starting point that I needed to be able to research her. That same day I accompanied Fred back to his home and he showed me some of the treasures that had been found on some of his dives, including dishes with the *Coburn* name on them. He also stated that there were two ships lying right next to each other sunk in the water at that site.

. . . this story will continue in the January/February 2022 Newsletter.

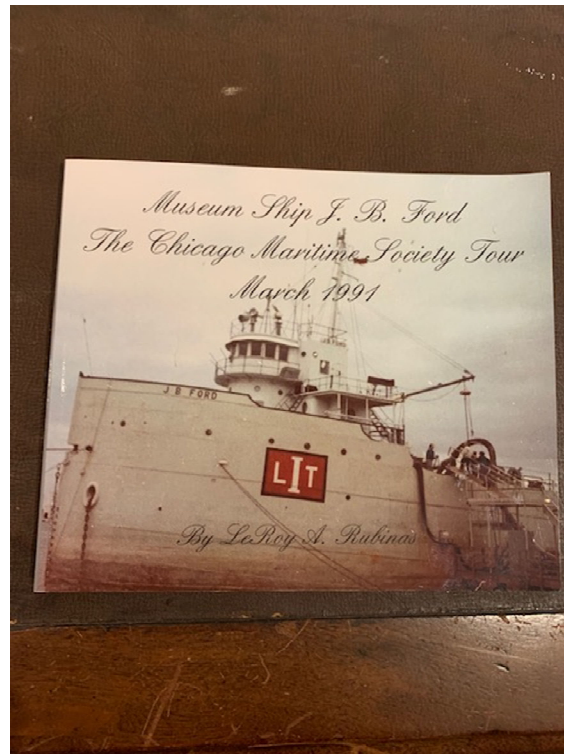
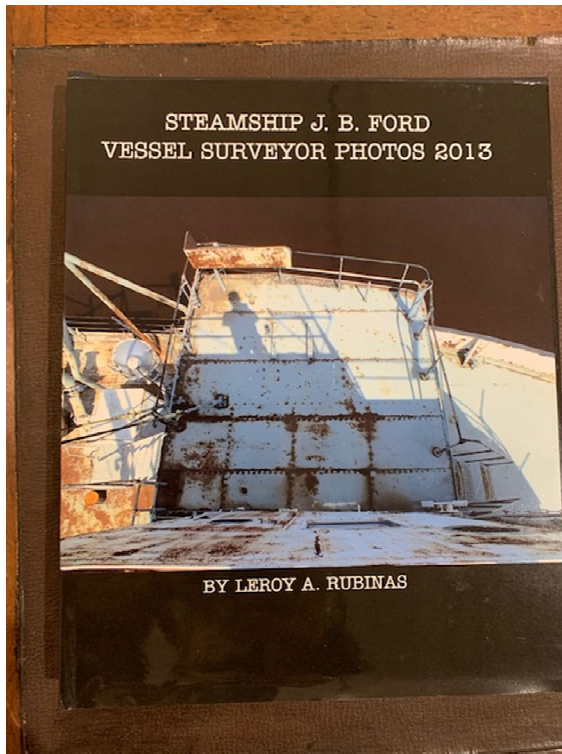


R. G. Coburn

Is this the ship that
lies at the bottom of
Snooks Highway?

Source: <https://perdurabo10.tripod.com/ships/id153.html>

Donations . . . continued from page 3 . . .



The museum received two books about the *J. B. Ford* from the author LeRoy A. Rubinas. LeRoy's donation is a great addition to our library, complimenting *J.B. Ford's* Steam Whistle which was installed on the museum's roof in 2019.



This sign was donated by Gerald Gordinier. It came from one of the island hotels (he will try to find out which hotel it came from).

Harsens Island Historical Society Calendar 2022

PLEASE NOTE: All events and locations in the following schedule are **tentative**

Date	Day	Time	Event
January 8	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting via Zoom
March 12	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting via Zoom
April 9	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum or Zoom
May 14	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum or Zoom
May 28	Saturday	TBD	Museum Opens
June 11	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
June TBD	TBD	TBD	Special Event – Speaker TBD
July 9	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
July TBD	TBD	TBD	Special Event – Speaker TBD
August 13	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
August 13	Saturday	TBD	Annual Board Meeting at the Museum
August TBD	TBD	TBD	Special Event – Speaker TBD
September 3	Saturday	11:00 AM	Labor Day Parade
September 10	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
October 1	Saturday	10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Annual Pie Sale
October 8	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
November 12	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Planning Meeting via Zoom
November ??	TBD	TBD	Remembrance Edmund Fitzgerald
December 3	Saturday	10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Cookie Walk
December 10	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting via Zoom



Museum Hours

Summer Schedule (June, July, August, September)
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

Mailing Address:

PO Box 44
Harsens Island MI 48028

Museum Address:

3058 S. Channel Dr.

www.harsensislandhistory.org

HISCFHS Board of Directors 2021

Chairman of the Board
Bob Williams

President
Joyce Hassen

1st Vice President
Chris Knight

2nd 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).

Phase 3 Renovation Started

At the end of November, we started Phase 3 of the museum renovations. The main room has been packed up and all large artifacts have been moved to the other rooms. The next step is to apply a fresh coat of paint, then the carpet will be removed, and new flooring will be installed.



Building the Future ~ Preserving Our Past

Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Historical Society Building Renovation BUY-A-BRICK Order Form

I / We would like to 'BUY-A-BRICK' to support the Museum.

Indicate on the three lines below the inscription you would like on the brick using up to 25 letters, spaces, or special characters per line.

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Print Your Name _____

Your Phone Number _____ - _____ - _____

Your email address _____ @ _____

_____ **Enclosed is my check for \$350 made payable to HISCFHS.**

_____ **I will not be purchasing a brick at this time but have enclosed a donation for the renovation.**

Payments should be made payable to "HISCFHS" with "BRICK" on the memo line and mailed to the HISCFHS at P.O. Box 44, Harsens Island, MI 48028.