



volume 13 / number 6

August 2022

Message from the President . . .

Happy August!

As we get deeper into summer, the sounds and feel of the Island are changing. The birds are a bit quieter; the baby geese are indistinguishable from the grown-ups, and the heat / humidity has moved in along with warmer water for that refreshing swim.

We welcomed Brenda Williams to the museum last Saturday (7/23). She spoke about her extensive research on Frances Harsen, the lineage of Frances' husband Jacob Harsen II, and the disposition of his estate to the exclusion of Frances. Brenda's presentation was very informative and interesting. We thank her for spending the morning with us! We had a great turn out; it was exciting to see so many members and guests in the museum! Many attendees made a donation to the museum, and I thank them for their generosity.

Remember, the annual membership meeting is on August 13th at 10:00 AM in the museum. Please join us.

We have welcomed several new hosts to the museum and appreciate their donation of time. Thank you for volunteering!!

As always, thank you for your continued support!

Joyce

Joyce

Joyce Hassen, President

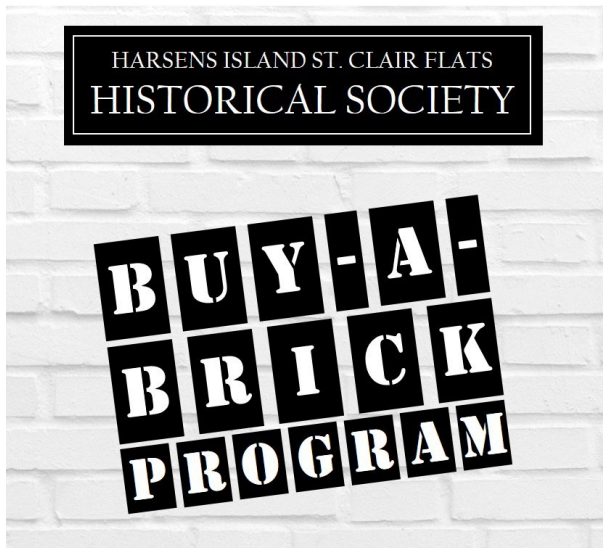


Joyce Hassen and Corinne Trexler introducing Brenda Williams

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 xharpsph@aol.com.




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

The Island Hotel

A relative of the Joe Garvin, owner of the Island Hotel, stopped by the museum asking for a copy of the hotel's brochure from 1939. Most of you have heard of Star Island, Grande Pointe and the Marshland Club. Have you heard of the Island Hotel? The Island Hotel was previously called Lemke's Hotel. Here is a little history on the Island Hotel.

ST-CLAIR FLATS
"The Venice of America"



**ISLAND
HOTEL**

Dine • Dance and Relax!

A rendezvous of distinction! Famous
 for Fish, Fried Chicken, Charcoal
 Broiled Steaks, Island Style Dinners

PHONE ALGONAC 217 for RESERVATIONS

★

JOE GARVIN, Owner

Modern Conveniences . . . but Old-fashioned Hospitality



FROM restful inner-coil mattress beds to the tasteful decorations of the cocktail lounge, the appointments of the Island Hotel are as modern as any city sophisticate could wish. But whether you're dancing to the latest hits played in big-time style by our smooth band, or settling down to a delicious meal in a dining room as modishly furnished as a country club's buffet, you're pleasantly aware of something that's not modern at all . . .

Old-fashioned, truly courteous, thoughtful *service!* And something a little more than service—a feeling of real, "homey" *hospitality!* It's hard to describe in words — but it's there, and you'll like it. Our staff is interested in *you* and your comfort—not in making an impression. Whether you are being served at a private dinner or meeting, being skillfully guided on a fishing trip, or whether you are simply resting—you'll enjoy the atmosphere! Our people are willing, alert, capable — but never obtrusive.

Our *food*, of course, is famous. Anyone who has had even one meal here can tell you what to expect. You'll find the realization comes up to the most glowing description. Thick and tender steaks broiled to a turn over charcoal fires, with all the fixin's. Real old-time American fried chicken—the kind you may think can't be had for love or money nowadays. And, of course, *fish*—right out of the cool deep waters of the lake, then prepared as only a born fish-cook can do it.

And with food that makes you want to say "more" after every course, you may have, if you like, choice beverages of the best names. Our cool lake breezes; the fresh keen air; restful sleep in country quiet; motor, boating or fishing trips in scenic surroundings—all these you'll remember long after your stay at Island Hotel. But you'll *never* forget the food!

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... *Island Hotel* ... continued from page 3 ...

Fire Razes Island Hotel, \$50,000 Loss – The Delta News, April 2, 1951

7 1/2 Hour Blaze Destroys Harsens Island Landmark

The Island Hotel, a historic landmark here, was destroyed by fire Saturday night. Flames shot 100 feet into the air and threatened nearby dwellings. Three fire departments from Algonac, Harsens Island and St. Clair Flats, sent trucks to the scene but the blaze was too far underway to curb. Damages were estimated to be \$50,000. The flames were discovered about 10:30 p.m. by Mrs. Mike Czantze, living next door. The alarm was turned in by Al Beaudoin, a tavern owner.

Firemen believed defective wiring was responsible for the loss. The 22-room two-story structure was closed down for the season, but electricity was still supplied to light a portion of the building in the rear to discourage burglary. The fire is believed to have started in the kitchen. Firemen were able save only a cash register. Beds, furniture, refrigeration equipment and coolers all went up in flames.

A stiff west wind thwarted attempts of firemen to bring the blaze under control and for a while threatened dwellings on each side. Only a charred skeleton of the frame remained today. Firemen stayed until 6 a.m. Sunday putting out remnants of the blaze. The hotel was located near Tashmoo Park and was a favorite for Detroit and Southeastern Michigan vacationers. It was owned by Theodore Haddad and Tony Waked, both of Detroit. Shortly after the blaze was discovered, the Algonac Volunteer Fire Department was called to the scene and went over to the island by ferry boat. Some 300 persons watched the blaze. During the fire, Howard Rasch served coffee all night to keep up the spirits of the volunteer firemen.

Detroit and Algonac Steamboat Rural Free Delivery Service – The Delta News, 1954

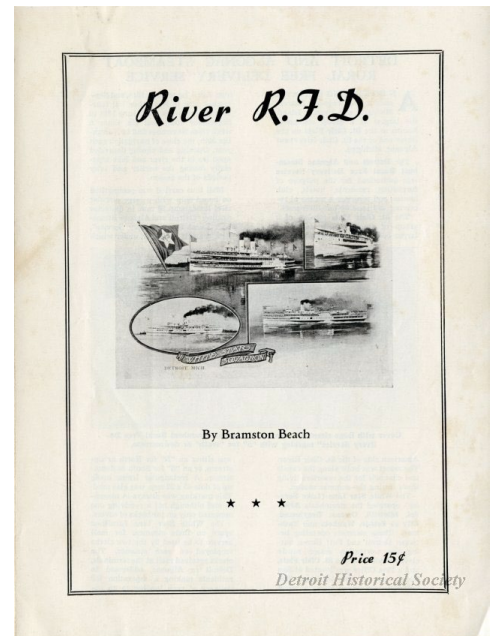
By Bramston Beach

An interesting mail service once existed between Detroit, Michigan and Harsens Island, the largest of a group commonly known as the “St. Clair Flats” on the lower end of the St. Clair River near Algonac, Michigan.

The “Detroit and Algonac Steamboat Rural Free Delivery Service” was authorized for the purpose of furnishing residents, hotels, club houses, and resorters a means of receiving and sending out their mail.

The “St. Clair Flats” consists of a group of small islands dotting a larger body of water on the American side of the St. Clair River. The resort was built along the canals and channels for the resorters living there during the summer season.

The “White Star Line” (Lake Service) operated steamboats “Arundel”, “Idlewild”, “Owana”, “Greyhound”, “City of Toledo”, “Wauketa”, and “Tashmoo”. These steamboats operating between Detroit and Port Huron during the navigation season made eleven landings at the “St. Clair Flats” and a Post Office was located at Sans Souci, one of the landings. The schedule was seven times a



Source:

<https://detroithistorical.pastperfectonline.com/archive/73F4C9B5-ABBE-44D0-B3E0-471922003425>

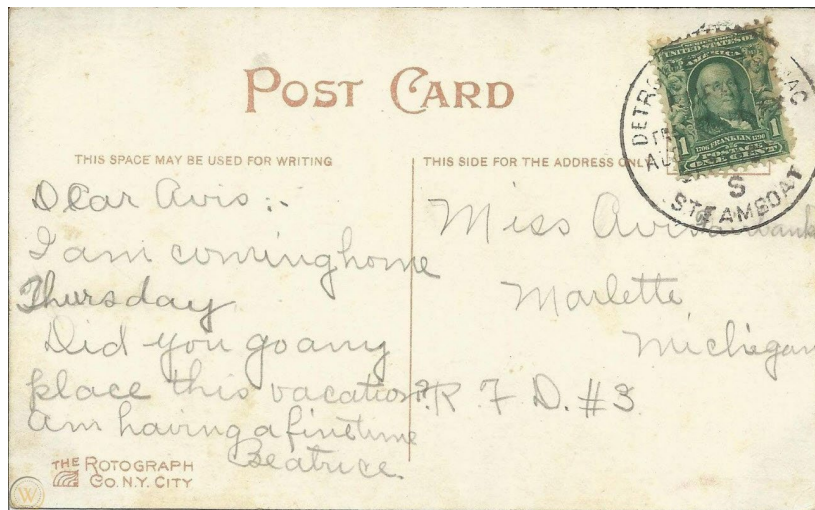
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... Rural Free Delivery Service ... continued from page 4 ...

week from April 1st to June 15th, and September 15th to November 1st; fourteen times a week from June 16th to September 15th; and six times a week from November 2nd to November 30th, the close of navigation each year. Opening and closing depended upon ice in the river and lake, especially during the earlier and later periods of the season.

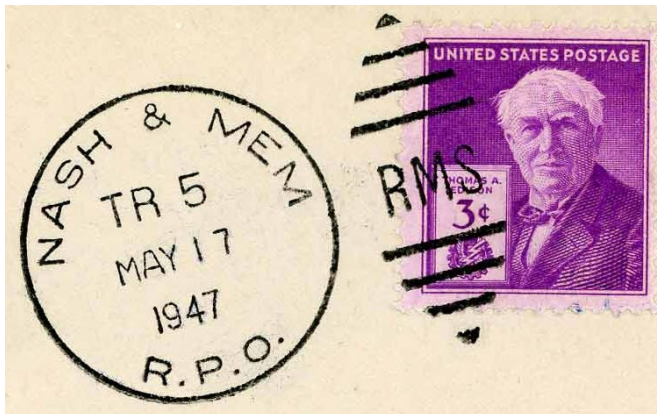
Mail thus carried was postmarked on board ship with a large circular steel hand stamp 35 mm in diameter reading "Detroit and Algonac Steamboat Rural Free Delivery Service" with the date and hour, under which was either an "N" for North or upstream, or an "S" for South or downstream. A rectangular frame made up of dots 45 mm x 22 mm was also used. This marking was always in magenta and although not a receiving one, appeared only on the backs of covers.

The White Star Line furnished space on their steamers for mail service to be used by the two clerks employed on each steamer. The clerks received mail at the terminals, Detroit and Algonac, addressed to residents making a separation for delivery at each landing to an authorized person at each landing. They also received mail for a return trip in the same manner. The clerks delivered registered and special delivery mail upon request.



The post marks described in this article according to local collectors who have given the subject much study, point to the beginning of their use as sometime in the Spring of 1898 and their termination in 1913. Thereafter the steamboat postmarks were discontinued and substituted by the regular postmarks of Detroit, Algonac, and Sans Souci, Michigan. Starting in 1927 the mail was (and still is) carried by the Railway Mail Service.

Source : <https://detroithistorical.postperfectonline.com/archive/73F4C9B5-ABBE-44D0-B3E0-471922003425>



The **Rail Mail Service** of the United States Post Office was a significant mail transportation service in the US from the mid-19th century until the mid-20th century. The **RMS**, or its successor the Postal Transportation Service (PTS), carried the vast majority of letters and packages mailed in the United States from 1890s until the 1960s.

Source : https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Railway_Mail_Service

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Donation

A big thank you to Art Armstrong for donating this minnow trap.



This minnow trap has made a comeback and is now being made by Stream and Lake Tackle Company. The minnow traps were originally called Orvis Traps around 1885. The Orvis company started marketing a glass device used to catch minnows. Other than the glass wine bottle traps in Europe, this was the first example of a glass minnow trap, certainly the first one in America. The original design used a swing-away lid that clamped on to the front opening of the jar. There were two types of lids used on these: a 9-hole lid and a 6- or 7-hole lid. Later, probably in the 1930's (?) a screw-on lid was used, but the basic design remained the same until it was discontinued sometime in the 1960's. The Orvis design was sold to the Stream and Lake Tackle Company in the 1970's and is still being made today, and it is basically the same.

Volunteer to be a Host at the Museum this Summer

The Harsens Island Historical Museum is open every weekend through the summer, Saturdays from 10-3, and Sundays from Noon – 4pm. Volunteers are needed to work as hosts this summer to maintain these hours. If you can volunteer for two or three hours on any Saturday or Sunday this summer, please contact us.

Hosting simply means being there to greet visitors, answer questions if you can, and record sales in our Museum Shop. Many volunteers have found that it is also an opportunity to spend a little time learning more about our interesting Island history!

If you are interested in volunteering, or would like more information, please contact Corinne Trexler at 313-530-9173, or Linda Schoonover at 313-671-6663.

Harsens Island Historical Society Calendar 2022

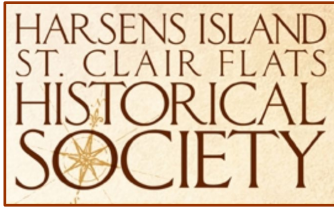
PLEASE NOTE: All events and locations in the following schedule are **tentative**

Date	Day	Time	Event
August 13	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
August 13	Saturday	10:00 AM	Annual Membership Meeting at the Museum
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 6	Sunday	2:00 PM	Remembrance Edmund Fitzgerald
November 12	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Planning Meeting via Zoom
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

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3058 S. Channel Dr.

www.harsensislandhistory.org

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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 curator; Chris Knight at
chris.knight@comcast.net

Is your house more than 100 years old?

The Michigan Heritage Home™ program recognizes houses that were constructed at least 100 years ago and are in substantially original condition. That designation comes with a handsome cast-aluminum plaque that lets everyone know that your home has its own rich heritage and historical significance. This distinguished plaque, authorized by the Historical Society of Michigan, will remind both new and longtime community members of your home's contribution to your shared heritage.



For more information click here to go to the

[Michigan Heritage Program](http://www.hsmichigan.org/awards/michigan-heritage-home)

<https://www.hsmichigan.org/awards/michigan-heritage-home>

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.

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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.