



Message from the President . . .

Happy Spring?!

Happy spring...despite the cold, ice, sleet, snow, rain, thunder, and tornado watches we've been experiencing...and that's only this week! Hopefully we have made the turn so these April showers will bring May flowers...and everything else we love so much about Harsens Island and 'lake living' in the spring and summer.

The Board is working hard to ensure we have a great 2023 summer season. The Speaker Series last year was well attended, so we are working on several new speakers for this summer. Securing dates and topics are still being finalized, but we will have more information and announcements soon. I think you will enjoy the individuals and topics we are securing for this year!

The museum will open for the season on Memorial Day weekend, we will have a surprise special exhibit to show...

With the upcoming summer season, we will be looking for volunteers to host at the museum on Saturdays and Sundays this summer, please consider spending a couple of hours on a weekend this summer as a host. An orientation for new (and experienced) hosts will be held to show how easy and fun it is to help us at the museum!!

Thank you to those who have renewed your membership, we truly appreciate your support!

Joyce

Joyce Hassen, President

Evolution of the Pursuit of Pastime 1880 – 1910

From a Delta News in the Museum Library. This is Part 2 of Evolution of the Pursuit of Pastime 1880 – 1910. Part 1 was in the January/February Newsletter.

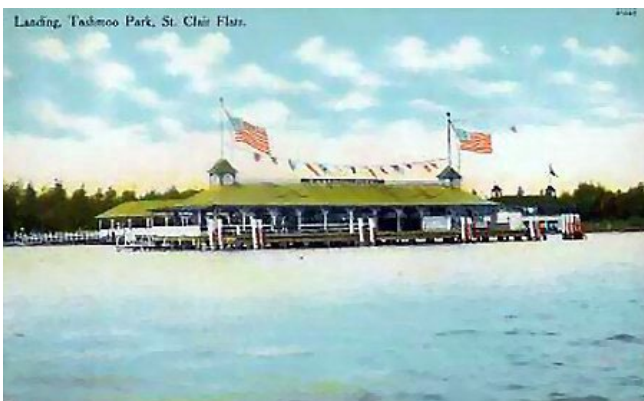
Passage to these clubs was necessarily by boat since other modes of travel were either too slow or lacked reliable access to the island. Transportation on the island itself was by boat and the various canals, which served as roads, earned the island its "Venice" sobriquet. Because of the popularity of the area various steamship companies began to schedule excursions to "the flats" in the mid-seventies. By the nineties, competition for fares between the Star and the Cole-Grummond lines was so intense that "... by May 13, 1894, both lines carried passengers free of charge and both vowed

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to persist in this until the other gave up completely. In a further attempt to attract customers, the lines provided food at cost: "The management is satisfied if patrons are acceptably served." The White Star Company was the eventual victor in this rivalry monopoly and by the 1900s she held a virtual monopoly on the Port Huron to Detroit runs. During the period preceding 1900, the line operated under such names as The Star Cole Line, Red and White Star Line, and the Star Line. The "Star" appellation interestingly enough was derived from the steamer "Evening Star", a pioneer in the island service, having begun her career there in 1873. In 1896, control of the Star Line was assumed by Aaron and Bryon Parker, wealthy coal, and insurance magnates in Detroit.

With the launching of their new steamer "Tashmoo", in 1900, the White Star Line opened a new frontier of entertainment at Harsens Island. Prior to the launching of the new steamer, the company had developed an amusement park bearing the same name. Tashmoo Park, located between Maple Leaf and Sans Souci on the island's south channel, soon replaced Star Island Hotel as the principal attraction of the White Star pamphlet. It quickly became ". . . the most popular rendezvous for society, church, family and Sunday School picnics out of Detroit." With the advent of Tashmoo Park, Harsens Island became a place where for ". . . two dollars a day . . ." one ". . . may mingle freely with bankers and merchants and millionaires as well as the common herd." This was to be the third and final stage in Harsens Island's development as a popular resort of the day. No longer was America's Venice the exclusive playground of the rich, for now it provided sanctuary for all social elements. Exploiting this concept, the Tashmoo Park brochure philosophized: "The old refrain 'all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy' is still as true as when it was written. Too much attention to business no matter what that business may be, fags the brain and wearies the muscles."



Tashmoo Park, Harsens Island

*Tashmoo and City of Erie Steamers*

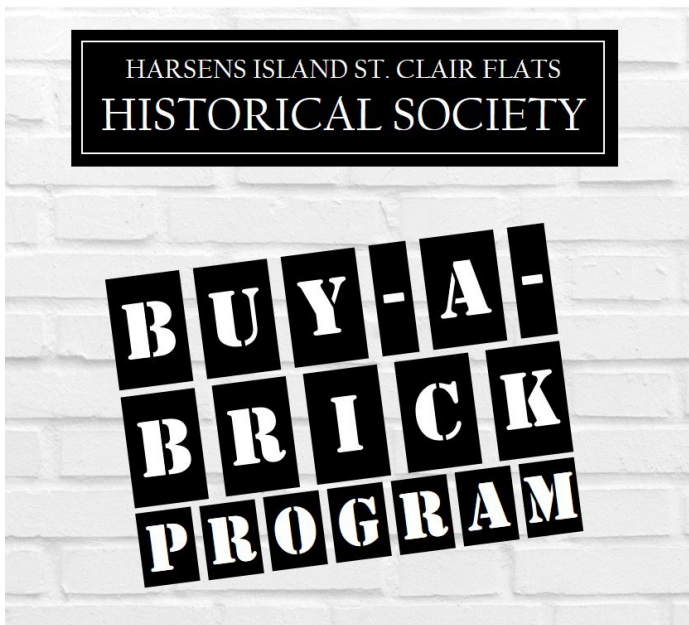
An examination of the various attractions of the island and flats area suggests that each stage of the island's development arose from a natural phenomenon. The first attraction, fertile soil, was a consequence of the region's delta origin. The next enticement, fowl hunting, was successful because the island was situated in the middle of the migrating routes of such birds and, therefore, served as a rookery and resting place for them. Fishing was also successful because the marshy nature of the terrain provided food for a multitude of fish species. The resort era of the island developed as a consequence of the desirable hunting and fishing conditions plus the allure of pure water and sandy beaches. The fact that the area was located on natural waterways made it all the more provocative since transportation was readily available.

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

The past three years we celebrated the completion of several renovation projects; in 2020 the Clayton Evans Room Addition, in 2021 the Karen and Drew Peslar Library and in 2022 the large exhibit space at the entrance to the museum named the Nancy Boulton / Gary Grout Room.

To help maintain the museum's infrastructure and 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 xharpspah@aol.com.

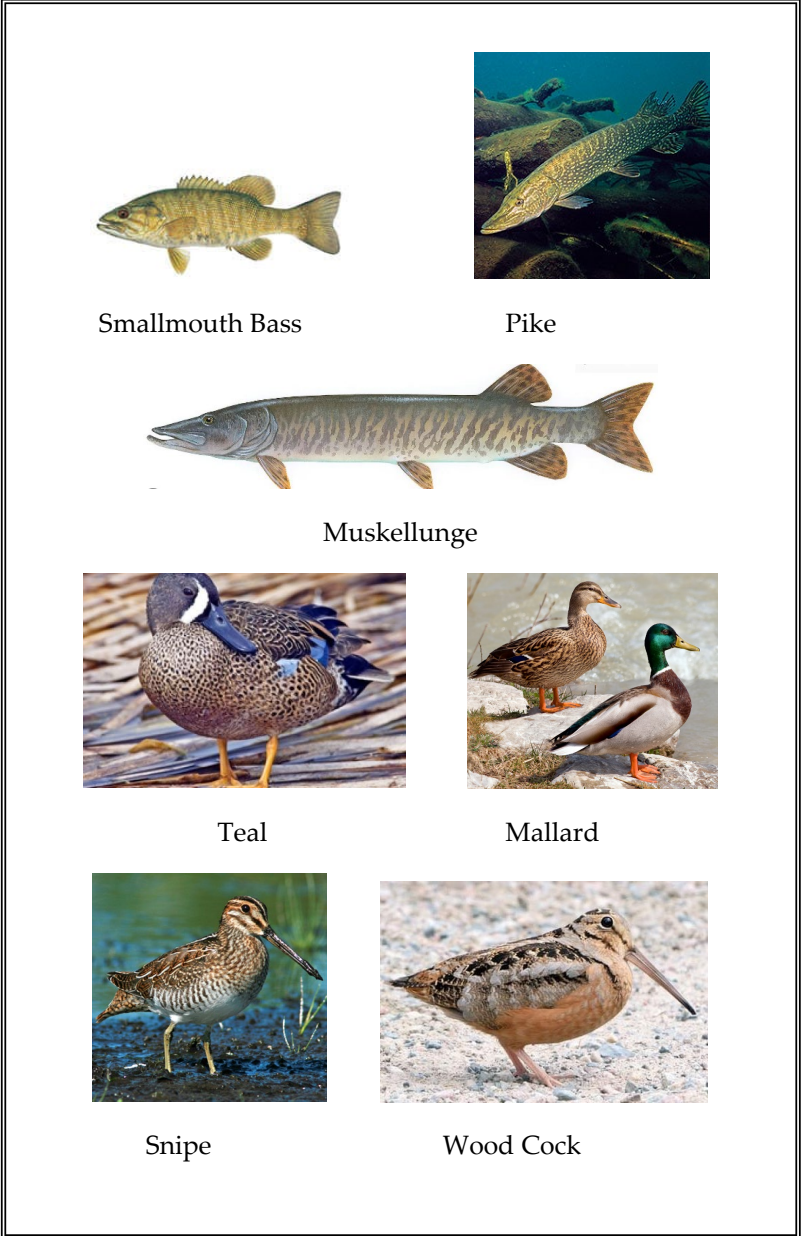
BUY-A-BRICK Order Form is included at the end of this newsletter.

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One area had kept aloof from the rest of the island and developed at its own pace. The Lake St. Clair Fishing and Shooting Club, which had been officially renamed the “Old Club” in 1906, remained an exclusive and private club for the wealthy. Located at the island’s southern tip, within the confines of its seclusion the Old Club set the style trends for the area and was the first spectacle to greet upbound steamers. Its attractive shingle-style club house built in 1887, was the pride of the island until its destruction by fire in 1926. Its replacement, while perhaps not as impressive, is none the less appropriate for its surroundings.

The achievement of an Old Club member, Mr. Isaacs, of Niagara Falls, New York, can be used to illustrate a less attractive aspect of late nineteenth century life. On October 16, 1887, Mr. Isaacs caught “25 bass, three pike, two large muskellunge; he also shot 22 mallards, nine blue bills, 30 teal and 79 red heads, four snipe and wood cock.

Obviously, concepts of conversation were yet in the future, and it is no wonder that 16 years later, on September 29, 1892, James Richardson mournfully exclaimed: “Bass about killed in these waters, wall eyes going fast. . .” A Detroit Times article of February 19, 1941 complained “Legislation and other inconveniences have taken some of the kick out of a visit to the mecca of the duck hunter and fisherman”, suggesting that wholesale slaughter of these creatures was good entertainment!



Smallmouth Bass

Pike

Muskellunge

Teal

Mallard

Snipe

Wood Cock

Just as the island’s development the product of diverse elements, so was its decline the consequences of a variety of causes: the automobile, legislation and suburbanization all contributing to the deterioration. One form of restrictive legislation, prohibition, ironically contributed to a brief revitalization of the island. A *Detroit News* article, November 13, 1950, reflects the case in which rum runners supplied the various hotels. A more thoughtful appraisal, however, reveals that each of these factors, though some more than others, contributed to an overall change in the habits of the population in general. The ride in the country replaced the boat ride to the flats, suburban living eliminated the need to escape from the sweltering city. The final blow was delivered by the depression when individuals were no longer interested in amusement

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but rather with survival. As a result of these factors, “the Whoopee days” of the Venice of America came to an end and the flats region lapsed into a state of stagnation from which it is slowly emerging. While fishing and boating are still much enjoyed, the attractions now are “peace and quiet”, freedom from crowds, and the romance and nostalgia ever inherent in the passing by of ships.

The development of this resort area in Michigan may be considered reflective of the development of similar areas throughout the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is, moreover, reflective of the age from which it emerged. By examining the leisurely pursuits of the various social elements at this resort area, it is possible

Examples of Resorts from the Gilded Age (1877 – 1896)

The Grand Hotel
Mackinac Island, MI



Old Faithful Inn
Yellowstone National Park, WY



Hotel del Coronado
Coronado, CA



Ocean House
Watch Hill, RI

Source : <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/stay-night-in-gilded-age-hotels-180955940/>

Harsens Island Resorts

Rushmere Hotel



Star Island Hotel



Grande Pointe Hotel

to obtain a fuller understanding of life during that era. Henry Adams, a historian, and social critic of the age, reflects in his autobiography that “The men who commanded high pay were not as a rule ornamental . . . “hence” . . . the country needed ornament – needed it very badly indeed . . .” Such ornamentation manifested itself at Harsens Island in the architecture of the many clubs, cottages, and resorts, in the types of entertainment offered, and in the habits of their clientele. Their tendency to over fish, over hunt, and overindulge reveals a habit of “conspicuous consumption” carried over to the various strata of the social composition and bears a close relationship to the ornate and gilded atmosphere associated with the earlier part of the era. If a “honky-tonk” quality prevailed later in the period, it can at least be assumed that a multitude of people thoroughly enjoyed themselves even though they may only have been grasping at the fringes of the “good life” of their day.

The author of this article, Mr. Richard King, was a history major at Macomb Community College and was a part time resident on Harsens Island. He had tremendous interest in the island and its history.

Island Memories Written by Astrid Delitzsch (Del) Heleotis 1925 – 2021

In 2009, Del wrote down some of her favorite island memories. These memories were short, thoughtful, and funny. I want to share some of these with you. This story is entitled **Houseboat Summers I**, written in June of 2009.

A new aspect of our Harsens Island life began in the summer of 1968. Anne-Marie was newly 10 and Harry 8. Previous summers had been filled with my camp stint, weekends at Club Island and a three-week cruise to the North Channel, Mackinac, Les Cheneaux and the Canadian Lake Huron Shore aboard a 30' lap strake New Jersey Fishing boat. The property on the Island, after 8 years of work, was "finally, bridged and sea walled" and the cottage dream coming closer to a reality. "Let's give Island living a try."

New house trailers were not permitted at the time, but boat houses were. We had the whole winter of '68 to scour boating magazines, sales brochures, shopping and finally purchased a 32' yellow Drift-R-Cruise. Next came the outfitting and land arrangements for telephone and electric service and launch time. It was family operation all the way.

The boat was roomy compared to her predecessor with a very adequate galley, dining table, 4 berths and a head below. Above was the wheelhouse with sleeping for 2, space for seating, with a hatch to access an empty space below (more on that another day). Detroit Edison had installed a pole by the sea wall in the back canal where we tied up for electricity and telephone service. All systems were "go."



Example of Drift-R-Cruise - Source : <https://houseboatmagazine.com/2016/12/the-driftrcruz>

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We easily slid into our new venture. Breakfast was followed by routine chores and a run to Hershelman's Market, Morrison's Hardware (a mini-Home Depot plus free consultation with Fred Morrison) and, finally, the big TREAT: Hashker's Bakery for hot Potato Bread and a sweet or two. The bread never made it home intact. At home it was frequently anointed with butter while still hot. Lunch was always fun with a new Hershelman deli choice on the fresh bread and a Hashkar goody. The dishwasher was a brown paper shopping bag for the paper plates.

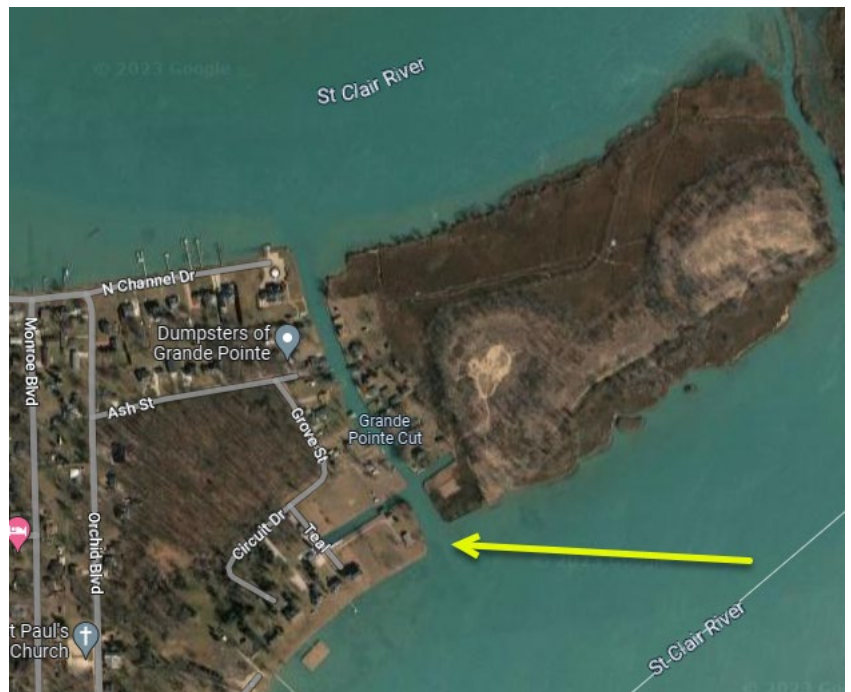
Each day as we were finishing lunch and I was calling "load the dishwasher" order, Ken Cameron (Kenny), a handsome blonde eight-year-old, came cruising by boat in the back canal calling out "Hello Heel-ee-otis". So started the story that we had a dishwasher aboard.

The afternoons quickly became an endless frolic in the water with Kenny, Donna Chute, the Raynal boys and other in and outers. The south end of the canal had been narrowed causing an onrush of water (small rapids) with each passing freighter. Kenny rode the rapids in his aluminum outboard with our bright orange Sport Yak dinghy loaded with kids in tow. The air was filled with happy sounds of whoops, screams, screeches, and laughter. I was often reading on the foredeck as lifeguard and snack dispenser.

While exploring the island on Kenny's boat, they found an abandoned dry rotted wooden rowboat and somehow brought it ashore on our property. The threesome, Kenny, Annie, and Harry removed all the metal hardware leaving a heap of scrap wood. The only reasonable solution was . . . "Let's have a bonfire" (with marshmallows, course). Kenny had mentioned earlier that I was like his mother because "she read books too". I called Helen Cameron for the bonfire and an enduring friendship began on that summer night.



Example of Sport Yak Circa 1968



Where the kids rode the "small rapids" from the passing freighters.

Harsens Island Historical Society Calendar 2023

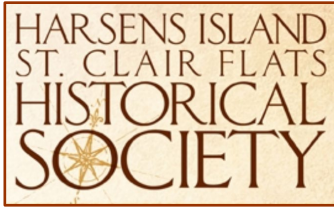
PLEASE NOTE: All events and locations in the following schedule are **tentative**

Date	Day	Time	Event
May 13	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at Museum
May 27, 28 and 29	Saturday	10:00 AM – 4:00 PM	Museum Opens and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony
	Sunday	12:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Museum Open
	Monday	11:00 AM – 2:00 PM	Museum Open
June 10	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at Museum
June TBD	TBD	TBD	Special Event – Speaker TBD
July 8	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at Museum
July TBD	TBD	TBD	Special Event – Speaker TBD
August 12	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at Museum
August 12	Saturday	10:00 AM	Annual Membership Meeting at the Museum
August 20	Sunday	2:00 PM	Speaker – J.B. Ford
September 2	Saturday	11:00 AM	Labor Day Parade
September 9	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
October 7	Saturday	10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Annual Pie Sale
October 14	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
November TBD	Sunday	2:00 PM	Remembrance Edmund Fitzgerald
November 11	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Planning Meeting via Zoom
December 2	Saturday	10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Cookie Walk
December 9	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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Harsens Island MI 48028

Museum Address:

3058 S. Channel Dr.

www.harsensislandhistory.org

HISCFHS Board of Directors 2023

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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>



PO Box 44
 Harsens Island
 MI 48028
 www.harsensislandhistory.org

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2023

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____ Spouse: _____

Primary Mailing Address: _____ Member No. _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____ Spouse Cell: _____

E-Mail Address: _____ Spouse E-Mail: _____

Additional Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Additional Phone: _____ Membership Type: _____

Annual Renewal Dues:		Lifetime Dues:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual (1 Member Only)	\$20.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime Individual	\$300.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Family (1-2 Adults + Children < 18)	\$30.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime Family	\$500.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Business	\$50.00		

Building Donation: \$ _____ Other Donation: \$ _____

If desired, please specify use: _____

Newsletters are emailed to members. If you require newsletters via postal mail, please write a note on your returned application.

Please complete and send with a check made payable to: **Harsens Island Historical Society.**

Mail to: Harsens Island St. Clair Historical Society, P.O. Box 44, Harsens Island, MI 48028

OFFICE USE ONLY:

Date received: _____

Check # _____ Amount \$ _____