



Message from the President . . .

Happy Summer!

Hope you had a great 4th of July weekend. Mine brought family together for BBQ, laughs, great conversation, and swimming as we dodged the raindrops. As my grandfather used to tell us . . . 'You'll have to swim in the boathouse because it's raining, and you don't want to get wet' (insert eye rolling emoji). Regardless of the weather, it's hard to have a bad time on Harsens Island. The 4th of July weekend also brought in many visitors to the museum, and we were very glad to see everyone. The Kids' Korner gets lot of traffic and seems to provide enjoyment and entertainment to kids of all ages. Of course, the new Lego model of the museum in the Korner gets a lot of attention.

A special thank you to Stacey Williams who is not only one of our new hosts but posted a fabulous video of the museum to showcase our displays. It was wonderful publicity as I saw it over several social media sites. Stacey did a great job . . . thank you!!!

As always, thank you for your support!

Joyce

Joyce Hassen, President

Volunteer to be a Museum Host

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.

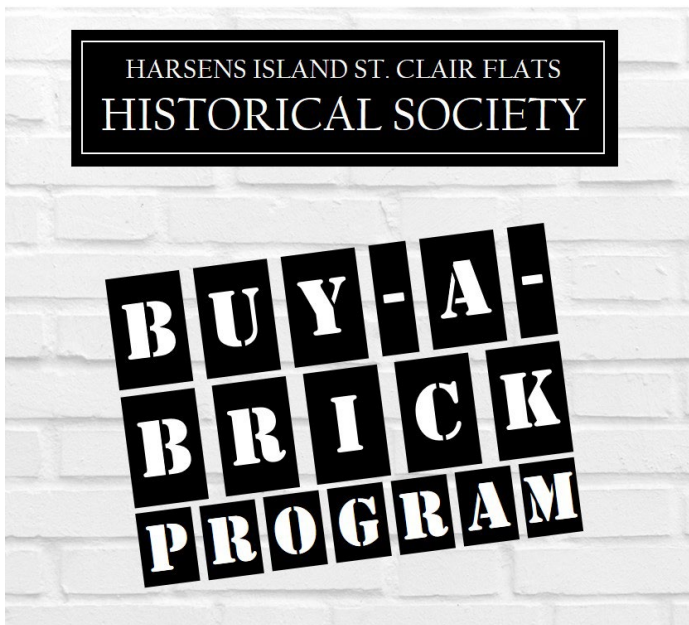
Hosting simply means being there to greet visitors, answer questions if you can, and record sales in our Museum Shop. Many volunteers have found that it is also an opportunity to spend a little time learning more about our interesting Island history!

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

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.

The First Week in July - Many Enjoy the Cool, Blue Waters

Each 4th of July holiday, residents around the St. Clair River host numerous friends and family members for countless barbecues and picnics. Hundreds of boaters also enjoy the blue waters of the river and the lake. In over 100 years, not much has changed. People have always left the heat of cities to enjoy the cool, blue waters around Harsens Island.

July 5, 1906 – *Detroit Free Press* - Page 1

LEFT NOISE BEHIND

EXCURSION RECORDS BROKEN

**Bois Blanc, Tashmoo and Other Resorts Rivals for Largest Crowd—
New Steamer Britannia Makes Maiden Trip—No Accidents Mar
Day's Outing.**

Over 30,000 persons spent the Fourth of July on the excursion boats and all records for local boat excursions were broken when the passenger and Belle Isle boats took out the largest crowds in the history of the business. W

Most of the boats left the docks with their full capacity and hundreds were turned away. When the steamer Tashmoo left her dock she had on board over 2,800 persons bound for the Flats, Tashmoo Park and other points up the river.

The steamer City of Toledo took over 600 persons on her afternoon trip and many spent the evening at the Flats returning early this morning on the steamer Owana. The Frank E. Kirby carried her limit and hundreds were turned away. The annual Fourth of July excursion of the D. & C. line was a huge success and the Detroit carried over 1,800 persons to Put-in-Bay for a day's outing.

The Newsboys' band was on board and furnished music going and returning from the bay. Over 600 persons went to Sugar Island and Toledo on the steamer Owana and fully that many went on the moonlight trip to Flats on the same steamer.

All records for crowds at Bois Blanc park were broken and fully 10,000 persons spent the day at the down river resort. The new steamer Britannia made her maiden trip to the park in the morning and when she pulled away from her dock she had on board over 2,700 persons, and the Columbia had on board over 2,500 for the same resort.

The two boats made trip every two hours during the day. Four boats were on the Belle Isle run all day and were taxed to their utmost capacity.

No accidents marred the day, every one of the many thousands who passed over the gang planks being returned to the dock in safety.

4 Excursions July 4th



STEAMERS TASHMOO and CITY OF TOLEDO
To the FLATS, TASHMOO PARK, and PORT HURON way ports,
9 a. m. and 2:30 p. m., returning on the Tashmoo, 8:30 p. m.
Finzel's Orchestra on board and at Tashmoo.

STEAMER OWANA
To SUGAR ISLAND PARK and TOLEDO, 9 a. m., returning 7 p. m.
Music and dancing at Sugar Island.

MOONLIGHT TRIP TO THE FLATS,
7:30 p. m., returning midnight. Finzel's Orchestra.

TICKETS. Sugar Island or Toledo, 50c; Flats or Tashmoo,
75c; Port Huron, \$1.00. Moonlight Trip, 25c round trip.
Griswold St. Wharf.

These articles and advertisements were sourced from *Tashmoo Park Timeline* by Michele Komar. It is a chronological compilation of articles, booklets and photos that are mainly about Tashmoo Park, the White Star Line and its properties, people, and boats. Originally estimated to be 500 pages, it turned into 1,916 pages comprised of 4 volumes with thousands of articles and took 2 and a half years from start to finish.

Continued on page 4 . . .

Continued from page 3 . . . Many Enjoy the Cool, Blue Waters

Here are some other interesting articles published around the 4th of July of different years.

July 5, 1907 – *Detroit Free Press* - Page 3

BOATS CARRY 30,000

GREAT CROWD SPENDS FOURTH OF JULY ON WATER.

**Bois Blanc Park Steamers Take 11,000
Passengers on Board. Belle Isle Ferries
15,000 and the Other Excursion
Lines Follow.**

**Steamer Tashmoo, 3,000.
Steamer Frank E. Kirby, 1,100.
Steamer Owana, 1,000.
City of Detroit, 1,400.
City of Alpena, 300.
City of Chatham, 300.
Bois Blanc park boats, 11,000.
Belle Isle boats, 15,000.**

Over 30,000 persons spent the Fourth of July on the Belle Isle boats and excursion steamers and so far as known all local records for boat excursions were broken.

Most of the boats left their docks with almost their limit, while the Frank E. Kirby had on her limit a half an hour before she was due to leave. Hundreds were turned away from this boat. When the steamer Tashmoo pulled away from her dock she had on board in the neighborhood of 2,000 persons, and when she arrived home last night she had over 3,000 passengers. The majority of the passengers spent the day at the Flats and at Tashmoo Park. The steamer City of Toledo took up a crowd of over 700 passengers in the afternoon for the Flats and Tashmoo Park and last night the steamer Owana took up about 500 passengers on a moonlight trip and did not return 'till about midnight.

The annual excursion of the D. & C. line to Put-in-Bay was a huge success, about 1,400 persons making the trip. The Newsboys' band furnished the music going and coming. Over 300 persons went to Toledo on the steamer City of Alpena for a day's outing and had a merry time at the Maumee city.

The Owana took 500 to Toledo. The steamer City of Chatham took about 300 to Chatham for a day's outing. The Belle Isle boats did a big business, four boats being on the run, it being estimated that over 15,000 persons made the trips. Charles Sullivan, of the customs service, had nine of his men at the docks to keep check on the boats and with his men he saw that the boats were not overcrowded. He sent two men to Port Huron the steamer Tashmoo.

July 4, 1915 – *Detroit Free Press* - Page 8

Island is Transfer Point.

Russell Island has been made a transfer point for passengers who go up on the late afternoon boat of the White Star line and wish to return to Detroit on the Tashmoo. By transferring at Russell Island the crowd at Tashmoo is avoided. Many people are becoming familiar with the attractive bungalows built and building at Russell Island because of this transfer, and the Hannan Real Estate exchange says many inquiries are received in regard to bungalow sites still available.

July 3, 1929 – *Detroit Free Press* - Page 9

CHILD BOARDS WRONG BOAT, 'GOES FOR RIDE'

Shirley Dell, 7 years old, 415 Elm avenue, made a trip to Port Huron on Monday as a guest of the White Star line.

Shirley went to Tashmoo Park on the annual Sons of England excursion. Friends whom she accompanied missed her when the party gathered for the return trip. While they were making a

fruitless search she was being entertained on the upriver boat, on board which she wandered by mistake when it docked a short time ahead of the Tashmoo.

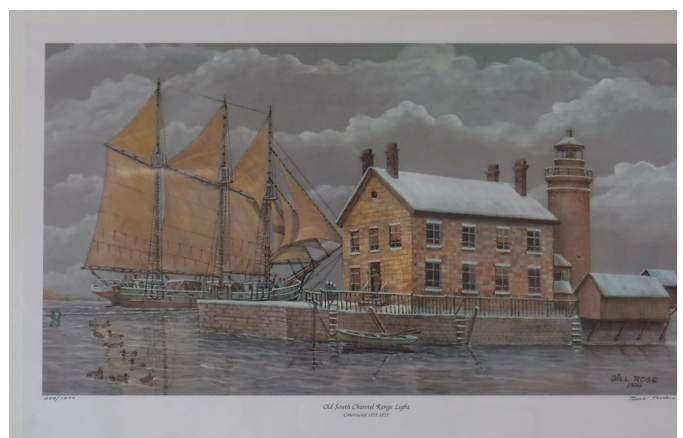
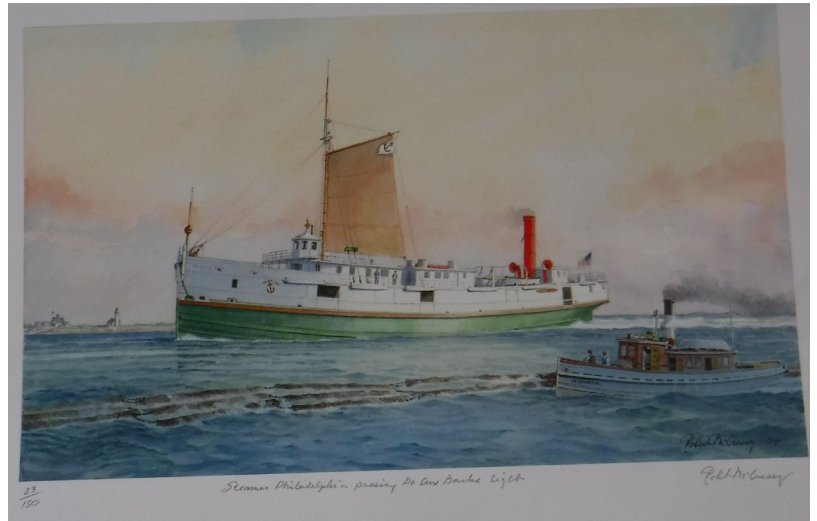
Officials of the White Star line wired Windsor police and parents of the little girl received word of her safety before the Sons of England party returned home without her.



Tashmoo and Idlewild at the Griswold Street Dock in Detroit around 1905.

Donations from the Estate of James MacDonald

The museum received some generous donations from the estate of James MacDonald (Sheila MacDonald). Here are a few; a painting by Bill Rose of the Old South Channel Range Lights and prints by Robert McGreevy.



The Harsen Family

I was hosting at the museum the Sunday before the 4th of July, and we had a visitor who thought she might be a distance relative of Jacob Harsen. Our visitor was in the beginning stages of her research, spending many hours in the New York Public Library looking over documents. Interestingly her last name was spelled Harsin which is not surprising. Older documents and maps do have spelling variations of some of the older island families. Our visitor said her dad told her that there were a lot of Jacobs in the family and some relatives lived in states where some of the original Jacob Harsen relatives settled. I provided copies of some documents to help with her research.

Harsen Family Acquires Island from Natives


By David Odziana
ThumbPrint News Staff Writer and Field Reporter

Today, the picturesque island nestled in St. Clair County at the mouth of the St. Clair River offers visitors a tranquil escape from the fast-paced life taking place just across the river. However, the settlement of the island was anything but peaceful.

Prior to the white man settling the area, the island was inhabited only by Native Americans, although it was not heavily populated. During this time, the island was covered with all types of wildlife, which were the Indian's livelihood, both to feed their families and trade for other goods. The first white man didn't come to the island until the early 1780s, when the population was said to be in the 30s. Jacob Harsen traveled to the island to seek permission to trade furs with the Chippewa and Mississauga Indians who lived in

the Algonac area. By 1797, two of Jacob's brothers, William and Bernardus, came to the isle as well. By February of that year, the three brothers met with Chiefs Nangue and Weronis to seek ownership of the north end of the island. The Harsen brothers signed a deed with the two Indian chiefs to record the deal. It is not known if this was a legal transaction because a Royal Proclamation banned private deals with Indians. The final deal was deemed legal with authorization from the government, which took place on March 17, 1797, involving Chiefs Chachapenepish, Myskeass, Wesancy, Pechekee, Kinsk and Nangue. This was not an all-out purchase of the island that the Indians referred to as Soy-ge-wong, but instead was a 99-year lease on the property.

Once Jacob Harsen received permission to settle on the island, he began constructing a house, barn and a blacksmith shop on the property. Garret Graveraet, a silversmith who came to the island when Jacob took up residence, married Jacob's daughter Sarah. After Garret's death in 1789, she and her children moved in with Jacob on the island. It is said that the Harsen and Graveraet



Jacob Harsen (The New York Public Library Digital Collection)

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Save the Date – August 20 at 2:00 pm

Author LeRoy A. Rubinas Shares History of the Steamship J. B. Ford

Join us to hear LeRoy A. Rubinas discuss his observations over the years of the Steamship J. B. Ford. Mr. Rubinas has a couple books out on the vessel and will be joined by well-known marine historian and author Wes Oleszewski who will talk about his tour of the vessel in 2001. Mr. Rubinas has had a website about the J. B. Ford since 2006 www.steamshipjbfordhistoricalsurvey.org. Mr. Rubinas studied & photographed the ship from 1991 after his first tour with the Chicago Maritime Society, until 1993 when he left Chicago to study engineering at Great Lakes Maritime Academy. Since those early years he has toured the vessel various times and watched it change over time. This is a chance to meet and greet the authors and learn what they know from touring this once proud ship.

Election of Board of Directors

The process of electing the Board of Directors for the Historical Society is officially underway. All Historical Society members should have received their ballots in the email. Complete your ballot and return using the mailing envelop provided. Ballots must be completed by July 7, 2023.

Continued from page 6 . . . The Harsen Family

HARSEN FAMILY families were the first white people to settle anywhere between Detroit and Mackinaw. Jacob's involvement in fur trading required him to make the long trek to Chicago's trading post three times a year. Since he was on the island, he had to first swim his horses across the river, and then return to load up his furs before returning to his horses on the mainland to begin his trip. Aside from selling animal pelts, which was the main income for much of the Harsen family, Jacob was also a gunsmith and farmer. The exact date is not known, but it is said Jacob Harsen passed away between 1799 and 1802.

Since development around the island wouldn't begin until the mid-1800s, life on the island was anything but easy, especially if an accident took place. During the early years, the Harsen family was no stranger to misfortunes. One Sunday afternoon Jacob's oldest son, Bernard, was taking aim at a duck when the gun flashed, but it didn't fire. Trying to reload his gun before the ducks flew away, he ran into the house and accidentally hit the butt of the gun on the door, which caused it to discharge. The bullet struck Jacob's seven year old granddaughter, Mary, in the arm. She was rushed to Detroit and survived, but had to have her arm amputated. Another tragedy transpired on August 3, 1802, while the Harsen family was preparing the house for visitors. There was a massive explosion in the unused fireplace, where they had stored a large package of gunpowder. Some of this powder is thought to have spilled out. Although it is not known exactly what caused the spark, it is believed that either a candle or visitor's pipe ignited the powder. Not only did the blast destroy the family's home, it also injured Bernard and Sarah so badly that they eventually passed away

from the trauma; other family members were not seriously hurt and eventually recovered. It was said the blast was so immense, it blew a mirror from the house over a mile away, where it was recovered in the South Channel of the St. Clair River.

The name Jacob Island remained until approximately 1809, when it received its current name of Harsens Island. Shortly after the name change, the island became home to one of Michigan's first distilleries when two businessmen from Detroit started Mack & Conant, which was run by Harvey Stewart. The whiskey from the distillery was often used to trade with the Indians for fur and meat. Life on the island came to a standstill when the War of 1812 broke out, and at this time the distillery was used as a British fort. After being run off by a group of Indians while trying to harvest his crops on Harsens Island in 1812, Harvey Stewart quickly left the island. During this time, everyone on the island deserted their homes and took everything they owned, including

livestock, and relocated to Detroit because of the threat Indians posed to them. While in Detroit, Mary married Harvey Stewart and they had six children together. During the war, Harvey was a guide for General Harrison up the Thames River, where he is believed to be the first person to identify the body of Tecumseh on the battlefield. Much of the Harsen family remained in Detroit until the War of 1812 ended. By April of 1815, Mary and Harvey's family returned to Harsens Island and resided on the land his wife abandoned during the war. The Stewart family remained in the area and continued to farm the lot, which encompassed 640 acres. Although it only covers approximately 53 acres today, the farm has been awarded a historical marker and believed to be the oldest farm on Harsens Island.

Continued on page 8 . . .

Continued from page 7 . . . The Harsen Family

Once the war ended with the Treaty of Gott, the question of what country truly owned the island was again brought to everyone's attention. It was previously determined the British Empire would remain in control, but after the area was surveyed in 1819, the final boundary line was set in 1822; Harsens Island was now the property of the United States. Prior to this decision, Francis Harsen, Jacob Harsen's son, had his ownership challenged by a renter of his farm. Robert Little rented the property beginning in 1815, but by the fall of 1816, Little was withholding payment because he was a loyal British subject and claimed Francis had no rights over land owned by the British Government. After Little refused to leave the property, a few men from the area, along with Lieutenant William Brown, gathered to reclaim the farm. After a back and forth exchange of bullets, Little eventually surrendered, but not before Francis was struck in the leg by a bullet.

Today the island, which is often referred to as the "Venice of America", remains an escape from daily life for all who visit. Much of the island is dotted with beautiful vacation homes, although some residents remain on the island year round. It is interesting to note that just as Jacob Harsens' first deal with the Indians began as a lease, the same remained true for later inhabitants. Prior to the organization of the St. Clair Improvement Association, no resident owned the property their home resided on, but instead held a 99-year lease on the land.



Harsens Island Hotel, Sans Souci, 1943, compliments of Theodore J. Neuner

To learn more about Jacob Harsen and his family stop by the Harsens Island Museum to see the vast collection of documents and gravestone of Jacob Harsen II.

Jacob Harsen II
 Jacob Harsen II was one of five sons of Jacob and Alistair Harsen who settled on Harsens Island in the late 1700's. He was a farmer and a carpenter. He also worked as a fur trader for the American Fur Company from 1823-1854, with business that he maintained a close relationship with the local native community and traded goods with the Indians on Walpole Island and surrounding areas. Jacob was married to an Indian princess, Francis (Frances), also known as Aunty. Although they had no children of their own, they adopted and raised Jacob P. Harsen, their nephew, whose mother died during childbirth. Following Jacob's death on Halloween in 1843, Jacob's estate was passed on to Jacob P. Harsen.

Harsen Headstone
 This headstone was found on the property originally belonging to Francis Harsen, Jacob II's brother. The property is shown Lot 2 on the South Channel. After boundary lines between the United States and Canada were established in 1822, the Harsen farm was divided into five lots.
 - Lot 1 - sold to Francis Harsen
 - Lot 2 - William Harsen
 - Lot 3 - transferred to granddaughter, Mary Graves
 - Lot 4 - Jacob Harsen II
 - Lot 5 - Jacob Harsen II
 It is believed that it was moved from its original location near the water's edge when...

Harsens Island Historical Society Calendar 2023

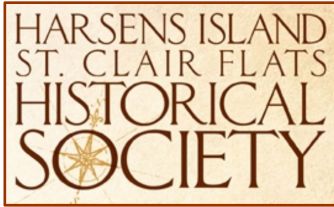
PLEASE NOTE: All events and locations in the following schedule are tentative

Date	Day	Time	Event
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	Author LeRoy A. Rubinas talks about 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 12	Sunday	3:00 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

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 44
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](https://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.



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 \$ _____