

N E W S L E T T E R



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A Publication of the Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Historical Society

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www.HarsensIslandHistory.org

President's Message

Hi All,

Major Donation Received

In the previous newsletter I mentioned that we lost three very supportive members. One was Clayton Evans of Washington State. In March I received a phone call from his attorney informing me that Clayton bequeathed funds to the Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Historical Society, earmarked for our building fund. We have been struggling with the lack of space for storage, exhibits, research, and meetings. Many items are stored at Board member's homes; we do not have a dedicated space where our volunteers or visitors can spread out materials for research; and exhibit items must be moved when we have a Board or Membership meeting to make room for folding chairs. In light of these issues and the fact that we have received this generous gift from Mr. Evans the Board has formed a "Building Addition Committee" which will study the prospects and impact of adding an addition to the museum. I will be reporting more on this in future newsletters as the committee proceeds.

Steam Whistle Project Update

Last fall Dan Persyn, our builder for the Steam Whistle Project compressor building addition, cleared the site and installed the foundations. Now he is back, building the block walls. Amy Strutz of A.J. Leo Electrical Contractors installed everything electrical needed for the compressor that powers the whistle. Thank you both for keeping the project moving forward. I am pleased to announce that Chuck Miller and I attended the Algonac Clay Community Foundation annual fundraising meeting to receive a \$425 grant to help complete this project. A special thanks to the Algonac Clay Community Foundation for your support of this project which we believe will bring regional attention to our Museum and Harsens Island.

Please Welcome our New Newsletter Editor

Chuck Miller, our Curator and newsletter editor for the past year, asked to step down in order to concentrate his energy on our collection. One of our new Board members, Mary Woodford, stepped up to take over as Editor. This issue is Mary's first. Thank you, Mary.

Our New Website

Our Webmaster, Chris Knight, worked on customizing and updating our website. Her work complete, please check it out at www.HarsensIslandHistory.org. It looks great and has many new features.

Museum Heritage Project Bares Early Fruit

Chuck Miller, Museum Curator



In mid-April I received a call from Tim Ouimet, a resident of Panama City, Fla. Tim and his wife had never been to the Island and were taking a quick vacation here in search of his distant family connections. Tim knew he was related to Jacob Harsen but had no idea just where he fit on the family tree so he called for help. We set up a meeting at the Museum for the next day.

As a part of our special Island Heritage Program, which will be featured this year, Bob Williams generated a “Family Tree” for the Harsen Family using Ancestry.com. The result is a chart that covers four generations. The readable exhibit-size product ended up being a scroll 18” high and 56 feet long!

When Tim and his wife arrived, I explained our project and then began to unroll the scroll along the floor of the museum. After about 30 feet, Tim let out a whoop. There was the Ouimet family clearly displayed in its position on the chart:

“Timothy Mark Ouimet, Grandson of Maxium and Floyd (Harsen) Z. Ouimet, Son of Edgar Harsen Ouimet”

The trip was a success for Tim and his family. He told us his relatives are excited that the museum was able to help him with his efforts. He has already begun to send us photos and articles from his family’s heirloom collection, and he plans on visiting us again this summer.

For those of us at the Museum, this short (albeit exciting) event reinforces our objective of “Building for the Future, Preserving Our Past”.

Isn’t it nice when a plan comes together?



18” high and 56 feet long!

Remembering Gary Grout 1933-2017



Gary & his companion Annie



As a member of the Sons of the American Revolution

Gary Grout was a genealogist and Harsens Island Historian. Gary provided a great service to The Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Society as a founding member, Chairman of the Board, and President. His family history here was traced to the early 19th century.

Gary served in the U.S. Naval Reserve; he was a member of the Sons of the American Revolution, the General Society for the War of 1812, and the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War.

Volunteer Workgroup Weekly Meetings Have Begun

Summer is here and our dedicated volunteers are once again meeting to continue to sort through materials which have been donated for our museum library. The workgroup, headed by Nancy Boulton, will meet every Tuesday and Thursday morning from 10 am to about Noon to review, organize and catalog the new historical materials to be placed in our library for everyone to access. The volunteers have a great time visiting and sharing what they are finding in the boxes of materials donated by family members of long-time islanders. You are guaranteed a good time!

**Our lecture series this year is being tailored to fit in with our
2018 Special Exhibit about the people of Harsens Island.
That means YOU!**

Hosts Needed for the 2018 Season

With the museum open every weekend and on weekdays for special visiting groups during the summer, the Society needs plenty of hosts to help out. Hosts open and/or close the museum for visitors, staying for a two to two-and-one-half hour shift. Serving as a host is a great opportunity to meet and greet visitors to the museum who include your Island neighbors as well as Island visitors. Your time at the museum can also be a chance to become more familiar with our great collection of historical items on display or to sit down and read some of the great materials in the museum library. During the half-hour orientation, prospective hosts learn the store sales, opening, and closing procedures. There is no commitment if you attend an orientation; just come and see what is involved. There is no need to pre-register so come to the Museum on Saturday, June 2nd at either 9:30 AM or 3:00 PM.

What's New

The entire museum has been updated with new labelling, lighting and backgrounds. We now have permanent exhibits relating to Tashmoo and the Island hotels. This year our Special Exhibit will focus on Island History and Heritage and seeks to link Island people and events. Special focus is given to the First Nations and their presence on our Island and the Flats. The "Island Under Three Flags" highlights the multinational heritage of our border region and examines the environmental and habitation of our early 1700-1800 history including some key developments and the Islanders involved that brought us where we are today.

Thanks to Kathy O'Connor, the museum now has a model of the *Tashmoo Steamer* and it's a beauty.

Along with a generous donation from a Harsens Island family, we also have many additions to our Tashmoo display.

Come and see our new "Tashmoo Room" and all its treasures!

The Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Historical Society announces its 2018 Raffle!



1st prize: "Lightship Huron" print by Jim Clary

2nd Prize: One 2-night stay at Harsens Island Bed & Breakfast

3rd Prize: One book of ferry tickets

Tickets for the Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Historical Society 2018 Raffle are only

\$1 each (6 for \$5!)

and are available for purchase at the museum and other locations around the Island.

Drawing will be held September 1, 2018 at 2:00 at the Museum.

Winner need not be present to win.

You don't want to miss this!

What's happening in June with your Historical Society:

Saturday June 2 – 10:30 AM – We are having our monthly Board/Membership Meeting at the Museum, so come on by, share your ideas and hear some of ours.

Want to be a Showoff?

Come see us on Saturday June 2! You will learn how to be a Museum Host, presenting our treasures and sharing our stories. No registration is needed. Just come on down to the Museum and see what it's all about at either **9:30 AM or 3:00 PM**.



Friday, June 8 – 6:00 – 8:00 PM – **Our Social Hour is to die for, Darling!** Bring an appetizer to share and your favorite cocktail to the Museum. You simply **MUST** attend, My Dear! How **EVER** will we have fun without you?

Saturday June 16 – Three locations for three events!

11:00 AM – NEW! Delta News Collectors will meet to swap copies of the Island's annual publication, now in its 71st year, and share stories of the past. Come on down to the Museum!

NOON – A special memorial for one of our HISCFS founders Gary Grout at the Lion's Hall.

3:00 PM – The first speaker in our 2018 Lecture Series will be Sue Wrobel, telling us about the history of the Walpole First Nations and their presence on Harsens Island at the Schoolhouse Grille.

Museum Hours June 1st through September 2nd

Thursday 12 Noon – 4:00 PM

Friday 12 Noon – 4:00 PM

Saturday 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Sunday 12 Noon – 4:00 PM

[Historical Society upcoming events](#) See our website at HarsensIslandHistory.org for updates.

July - 9th - Saturday – 10:30 AM – Board/Membership meeting at the Museum

13th – Friday – Social hour – 6 to 8 PM at the Museum

14th – Saturday – 3:00 PM – Daniel Harrison will present “If These Waters Could Talk”, a program about the shipwrecks around Harsens Island and The Flats.

23rd – Friday – Voyagers arrive via canoe at museum for three-night encampment on the Museum grounds. They will be in costume and have a 30' canoe typical of the Fur Traders. Weather permitting, evening fireside talks will be presented.

August- 4th - Saturday – 10:30 AM – Board/Membership meeting at the Museum

10th - Friday – Social hour – 6 to 8 PM at the Museum

11th – Saturday – 3:00 PM - Lecture series – tentative date

18th – Saturday – 4:30 PM Wine and Appetizers at the museum.

5 to 6 PM Annual Membership meeting at the museum.

Sept. - 14th – Friday – Social hour – 6 to 8 PM at the Museum

The Memoirs of Aura P. Stewart

Last month we printed a portion of Aura Stewart's memoirs as originally published in "*The History of St. Clair County* by A.T. Andreas & Co. 1883." Below are more of his reminiscences from the early 1800's.

"At the death of Mr. Harsen (the first), the old homestead on the Island fell to his son Francis, who, during the war of 1812, and for many years thereafter, held an appointment in the Indian Department at Detroit. At the close of the war, in 1815, he leased his farm to one Robert Little, a Canadian, and a most lawful British subject. By the lease, Harsen was to receive rent from the products of the farm, a part of which would be apples and cider. In the succeeding fall, Harsen came up and collected rent without difficulty; but in the fall of 1816 Little refused to pay rent to Harsen, who was astonished at such refusal and wished to know the reason. Little stated to Harsen that the Island was in his Britannic Majesty's dominion, and that no American citizen could, under present laws, hold lands under the British Government; that he had rendered important services to his government and was entitled to lands; that he was now in possession of the farm and should claim and hold it under British laws; he then drove Harsen from the premises. Harsen returned to Detroit and engaged a lawyer by the name of Whitney, and in the year 1817 commenced suit in the County Court of Macomb County, then embracing all that portion of the territory lying north and east of the present boundary of that county. Judge Clemens was the first Judge, and Robert Fulton, the first purchaser of the land upon which St. Clair City now stands, was Sheriff. There was some delay in the prosecution of this suit, it seems, for it was late in the fall of 1817 before the writ of ejectment was placed in the hands of Sheriff Fulton. On its receipt this officer proceeded to execute it; he called on Little and demanded the surrender of the premises. On this Little forcibly put the officer out of doors and told him that he should procure arms and shoot any person attempting to oust him; he claimed that he was a subject of Great Britain and under the protection of that power; that no American court could interfere with or molest him. Fulton told the usurper that he would execute the writ if it took all the militia in the Territory. Accordingly, he called on Lieut. William Brown for assistance; Brown made a selection of six men, two of whom had been discharged from our army, and the next day crossed over to the island, landing at my father's residence; after procuring a small jug of whisky for his men, the party proceeded up to Harsen's farm, the owner joining them on the way. It appears that Little was on the lookout, and informed of the Sheriff's coming, and had prepared for the fight. He loaded the four guns in his house with coarse shot and had a large five pail kettle over the fire filled with boiling water, and thus prepared he waited the assault. The assaulting party, on their arrival, took possession of an outhouse, where they agreed upon a plan of attack, and fortified their courage by several nips from the contents of the little jug. It was agreed in council that Sheriff Fulton should first go to the outer door and in the name of the sovereign people of the United States demand a surrender of the premises, and, if refused, signal Lieut. Brown, who was to take the place by storm. Accordingly, Sheriff Fulton proceeded to make the formal demand, followed, at a short distance, by Mr. Harsen, when Little fired on Harsen from a window, wounding him in the fleshy part of the leg. At the report of Little's gun, Brown ordered his men to surround the house and return the fire, which was done; the first shots shattered the door behind which Little stood, one bullet going past him and entering the bed on which his daughter was sitting. Little did not wait for another volley, but cried for quarter, and surrendered himself into the hands of the Yankees he so much hated."

If you aren't currently a member, please consider joining the Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Historical Society
Membership Application 2018

Last Name: _____ **First Name (1):** _____ **Spouse (2):** _____
Only required for family Membership

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Primary Phone: _____ **Cell (1):** _____ **Spouses Cell (2):** _____

E-Mail: _____ **Spouse E-Mail:** _____
Please write e-mail address clearly.

Additional Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Additional Phone: _____

| <u>Annual Dues:</u> | | <u>Life-time Dues</u> | |
|---|---------|-----------------------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual (1 Member Only) | \$20.00 | _____ Life Individual | \$300.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family (1-2 Adults plus children under 18 years) | \$30.00 | _____ Life Family | \$500.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business | \$50.00 | Business Name: _____ | |

BUILDING FUND DONATION: \$ _____ **OTHER DONATION:** \$ _____
STEAM WHISTLE PROJECT DONATION: \$ _____ If desired, please specify use:

Please complete this form and send with a check made payable to: "The Society" to P.O. Box 44, Harsens Island, MI 48028, or deposit in the letter slot at the museum at 3058 South Channel Drive, Harsens Island, MI 48028

New Member
 Renewal

OFFICE USE ONLY:
Date received: _____ Check # _____ Amount \$ _____

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Chuck Miller 810-748-7209

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