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

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www.HarsensIslandHistory.org

Notes from the Curator

Chuck Miller

Our special exhibit this year focuses on the history and heritage of Harsens Island. One of the fun parts of the exhibit involves the huge 56' long 'tapestry' of the Jacob Harsen Family Tree hanging from the ceiling. If you think you may be a distant relative, here's your chance to confirm it. If you locate your relatives, we hope you can give us a picture of them to place on the Tree.

We also have trees from a number of the old-line families. Cathy Yax in particular did a splendid job chasing down the Yax (Yacques) Family back to the 1700's. We're connecting pictures of the relatives to their tree location with twine on all the tree layouts. Come check it out and help us "connect the dots". Bring your old family heirloom pictures for our Heritage Wall. See page two for a message about these photos from our president, Bob Williams. Just received a call from Lisa Miller in Lauderdale by the Sea, FL inquiring about her family summer home on the Island back in the 1920's and 1930's. Family name was Sloman, and their house was known as "Villa Eden". Using our archives of maps, we were able to confirm the location of Sloman property and incorporate photos into our archives.

Sue Wrobel's June presentation on the Walpole Island First Nations Reserve was a wonderful complement to our Heritage exhibit and provided an introduction to our July program that welcomes the French-Canadian Voyageur Re-enactors from the Saginaw Valley Historical Society to the Museum July 23-25th. Their camp at the Museum, along with their 30' canoe, will demonstrate what life was like during the late 1700's and early 1800's, when the fur trade was the dominant driver for commerce and settlement in our area. It was the fur trade that brought Jacob Harsen to the Island.

Also in July Daniel Harrison from Henry Ford Dearborn Community College will speak about his ongoing research into the location and identification of the shipwrecks around the St. Clair Flats. Titled "If These Waters Could Talk", he will present on July 14th at 3 PM at the Schoolhouse Grille. Reservations with Chuck Miller are requested. Email: cmiller5179@gmail.com OR call him at (810) 643-1150

**Our 2018 Special Exhibit is about the people of Harsens Island.
That means YOU!**



One portion of our Special Exhibit 2018 about the people of Harsens Island is our photo board. One part is for photos of Islanders from the 1800's and 1900's and the other for photos of Islanders since 2000. We encourage people to bring copies of their family photos and post them on these boards. As you can see, we need many more. You can bring them anytime this summer; mail them to P.O. Box 44, Harsens Island, MI 48028; or drop them through the letter slot under the window in the front of the museum. If they are digital photos you can just email them to xharpspah@aol.com.

Please, only bring photos that will not need to be returned. On the back of each photo please write the approximate date of the photo and the names of the people in the photo. We will gather them all at the end of the season and package them up for our museum archives. You and your family will then be part of Harsens Island history!

Thank you.
Bob Williams, President

**Social Hour Success
By John Chamberlain**

Our Social Hour season got off to a fine start on June 8 with over a dozen people who fully enjoyed their Museum's new display for 2018. It centers on the genealogy of the Jacob Harsen family and several other Island families. Come and see it whether or not you are related to any of them. The display is too wonderful for words. The Museum is always open during Social Hour, so bring something to drink and an appetizer to share, or just show up. Many folks have wonderful stories of their lives and events on Harsens Island and St. Clair Flats. Others just enjoy hearing the old stories. (Some may be embellished just a tad.) There is also a great deal of updating of what's going on around the Island. There were so much information and stories the Social Hour ran over until 8:30 PM. Feel free to stop by and visit for whatever time you have. The Historical Island St. Clair Flats Historical Society promises you a great time.

P.S. Photos to share are always welcome – and encouraged!



Our next Social Hour is Friday July 13 (you read that right) 6-8 PM. Come join us!



You Want to be Here in July!

On Saturday June 16 Sue Wrobel gave a wonderful presentation on the Walpole Island First Nations Reserve. With over 30 people in attendance, Sue stayed and answered many questions. This was the first program in our 2018 Speaker Series, all of which will be about the people of Harsens Island. If you missed Sue's talk, no worries. There's another fabulous presentation coming in July!



14th – Saturday – 3:00 PM – Daniel Harrison will present *If These Waters Could Talk*, a program about the shipwrecks around Harsens Island and The St. Clair Flats at the Schoolhouse Grille.

SAGINAW VOYAGEURS

Presented by the Castle Museum of Saginaw County History



The Saginaw Voyageurs are a history reenactment group of the Castle Museum of Saginaw County History. The members travel the original routes of the French fur traders on the Great Lakes and inland waterways in a fiberglass replica of the birch bark canoe. They dress, eat, and sleep as the original voyageurs did in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The public are always welcome to join the Saginaw Voyageurs at their campsites to learn about the fur trading era and the part it played in Michigan history. The voyageurs will present a brief program to their guests and answer any questions.

All programs begin at 7:30 p.m. each night provided Mother Nature cooperates and allows the Voyageurs to paddle at a normal pace and arrive at camp on time.





Painters and Supplies Needed for the Steam Whistle Project

As you have probably noticed if you have been to Sans Souci in the past week or so, the walls of the Steam Whistle Project compressor room are now in place. It's time for us to start thinking about getting a couple coats of paint on them. Painting will be done in July. To help us complete this part of the project we are looking for any or all of the following:

1. A small group of volunteers.
2. A professional painter to direct the work.
3. Supplies including paint brushes, paint rollers, extension handles, drop clothes, block filler, and paint.
4. Good weather.

If you can help with any of these, please contact me at 248-388-0465 or xharpspah@aol.com.
Bob Williams, President

Tashmoo Timeline Project Update

The Tashmoo Timeline project, headed by Michele Komar, is an ongoing newspaper research project that encompasses the almost daily events at Tashmoo Park and other White Star Line venues, ships and people from 1896 (when the park property was purchased) to 1951 when the park was closed for good. Over 600 pages of transcriptions have been completed for the years 1896-1907. Many of the articles are only available in a poorly scanned format and every effort is being made to transcribe them into easily readable text. Right now, we have four members tirelessly tapping the keys to make this happen and we cannot thank them enough for their ongoing efforts. Below are some comments from our transcribers on their experience:

Steve Nichol – “It’s been interesting to learn more about the Flats and Russell Island history, I started going there 45 years ago and never heard how it started as a resort area.”

Diane Innis – “I can tell you that I have learned a lot of history from retyping the articles. Very interesting!”

Dianne Owen – “I have learned much about the history of the steamers and resorts of this area while typing the articles. It’s fun to imagine the way of life during the turn of the 19th to 20th centuries. Because I am a stickler about spelling, punctuation, and grammar, some of the old printing does make me a little “batty,” but, I enjoy the task and look forward to the complete publication.”

Pam Wilson – “It's been very interesting to transcribe the various newspaper articles about the steamers coming and going up and down river to take happy customers to resorts and outings at Tashmoo Park and other venues. The reporters have been very enthusiastic in reporting the happenings at the outings which were very well organized. The newspapers of that time were the only way the people could find out date, time, place, group holding an outing as well as the steamers’ schedules.”

More transcribers are needed as work will continue throughout 2018. If you are interested in transcribing, please contact Michele Komar at michelekomar@gmail.com for further information.

The Memoirs of Aura P. Stewart

In recent issues 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.

"The first boat built in our county was owned and commanded by Samuel Ward, called the St. Clair, which was built in the year 1820, for lake navigation. After the Erie Canal was opened, Capt. Ward freighted his boat at Detroit for New York City, and took on board two horses to tow her through the canal. On arriving at Erie he took down his masts, stowed them snugly on deck, entered and towed safely through the canal; arrived at the Hudson he shipped the mast, bent the sails, and soon came to anchorage at the Metropolis. Procuring a full freight back, he returned, but was somewhat disappointed upon being required to pay toll. Capt. Ward not only calculated on getting through the canal free of toll but expected to receive a premium, as his was the first boat from the lakes. The St. Clair was the first boat built at Marine City, which is to-day the most extensive ship-building town in the State except Detroit.

*The first vessel built at the town of St. Clair was the Grand Turk, owned by the father of Capt. Alex St. Barnard; she was about forty tons burden, Barber, the master-builder, was a very ordinary workman, and the vessel, when completed, was a rough-looking concern, and, perhaps, "Grand Turk" was the most appropriate name for her. To look at her -- "She seemed to dare the elements to strife!" but under a press of sail, did not -- "*walk the waters like a thing of life!" However, in her day, she carried many a load of lumber and shingles to Detroit.*

The first vessel Clay produced was built by Capt. Amos Henkly and R. Newhall, about the year 1824; she was about fifty tons burden and was called the Savage, of Detroit. She was used as a trader, and ran to Mackinac and Green Bay. She was the first vessel that entered and wintered in St. Joseph River. Henkly, on his return to Detroit, represented it as a fit place to build a flourishing town, and, when the site was secured, he claimed an interest in the lands as his possessory right, he having built the first house on the premises. In 1834 he died on his boat and was buried in the sand on the Canada shore. The following winter, Mr. William Brown had the body raised and properly interred on the American side of the river. Mr. Brown had a perfect likeness of Capt. Henkly which he carefully preserved, and it is now in the possession of some of his family.

Within the past two decades, a multitude of boats and vessels have been built at Marine City, but the first vessel built on Bell River was the Pilot, and was owned by Capt. Andrew Wesbrook and Capt. A. B. Henkly. The owners disagreed about the management of the vessel, and to settle the difficulty the boat was sold to Mr. Newberry, of Detroit. A full history of the ship-building of St. Clair River, together with a sketch of the lives of the different commanders, would make a large and interesting book."

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 July with your Historical Society:
And IT'S ALL FREE!

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

13th – Friday – Social hour – 6 to 8 PM at the Museum. See page 2.

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. See page 3.

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. See page 3.



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

Summer Schedule
Thursday 12:00 – 4:00 PM
Friday 12:00 – 4:00 PM and 6:00 – 8:00 PM
Saturday 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Sunday 12:00 – 4:00 PM

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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president@hiscfhs.org

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Susan Wrobel 810-748-3601

2nd Vice President

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Mary Woodford 810-748-3571

Museum Curator

Chuck Miller 810-748-7209

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