



Message from the President . . .

Happy June!

How quickly the calendar changes to June. The spring went by so fast for me...did a little traveling, attended grandkid's baseball games, opened the cottage, and the highlight was my son's fabulous wedding. Getting back to reality, there is a whole calendar full of fun events with family and friends both on and off the Island (mostly on!).

We are so very excited about the Tashmoo Murder Mystery event! The committee has spent a great deal of time planning this event. The story of the Tashmoo murder is being developed by the committee and it is turning out great, the script and character development continues to evolve and gets better every time the committee meets. I am very thankful for the talented people who are willing to share their time and creativity with us. Special thanks to Stacy Williams and Chris Knight who have spent many hours outside of the committee meetings writing the event. The event sold out quickly, so those of you with tickets and characters, be ready for some fun!

The museum had a great Memorial Day weekend opening and welcomed many visitors. As always, the museum continues to look for volunteers to host, so we can keep the museum open Saturdays and Sundays through the summer. If you can spare a couple hours, please let one of our Board members know and we will be happy to get you on the schedule. It's easy and fun

As always, thank you for your support!

Joyce

Joyce Hassen, President

**TAKE THE BIG Str. TASHMOO
TO DETROIT,
TASHMOO,
ST. CLAIR FLATS**

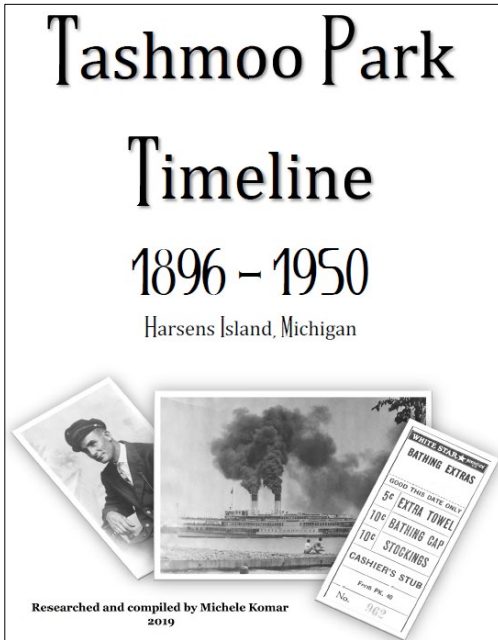


The beautiful Steamer Tashmoo leaves Port Huron daily at 3:10 p.m.; arrives Algonac 4:47 p.m. and Detroit 8:00 p.m. stopping at all points on St. Clair flats en route.

Fares:—Detroit one way, \$1.10; R. T. \$2.00; Algonac, one way, 45c; unlimited return 75c. Finzel's music for dancing in beautiful new dancing arbor on B deck; first class dining and lunch service, private parlors.

Passengers taking steamer Tashmoo any day (except Sunday) may go as far as Algonac and return on Steamer Wauketa arriving back 8:15 p.m. R. T. 60c, children half fare.

WHITE STAR NAV. CO.—Foot of Grand River Avenue



Tashmoo Park Timeline

The Tashmoo Park Timeline by Michele Komar 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 would take 2 ½ years from start to finish.

Last but not least, the Tashmoo Park Merry-Go-Round. Here is the story about the famous carousel.

Oct 19, 1990 – *The Times Herald (Port Huron)*

Harsens horses are sold

Tashmoo Park carousel ponies bring big bucks

By SEVIL OMER and MARGARET WHITMER

A graceful bit of Americana that is believed to have graced Harsens Island until 44 years ago reappeared Thursday in Manhattan, commanding astronomical prices on the auction block.

The "Magnificent Menagerie Carousel," which is believed to have delighted visitors to Tashmoo Park amusement park from 1915 to 1946, was broken into pieces and sold to the highest bidders at Christie's Auction House in New York City.

The carousel's 47 intricate hand-carved animals were sold separately for prices ranging from \$15,000 to \$26,000. The total was \$268,565, Christie's said.

Collectors are willing to pay big money for pieces of the wooden carousels that were so much a part of amusement parks earlier in the century, said spokeswoman Beth Goldberg.

The history of the carousel is somewhat muddled. A story in Long Island's Newsday newspaper said it was at "Algononac Island" park until it was taken to a Long Island site.

Recollections of area residents and Times Herald files don't include that park. Instead, they include a strikingly similar carousel at Tashmoo Park.

Tashmoo Park was once a playground for thousands of area residents and Detroiters until its demise in the 1940s.

"It's where childhood dreams came true," recalled Nellie David, 86, of Algonac. "We used to call it a merry-go-round back in those days. It was such a beautiful carousel."

Tashmoo's ornate carousel was especially valued because it was so unusual, said Anita Pilotte, a member of Friends for Long Island Heritage, the preservation society that has owned the carousel since 1972.

It was one of the few large park carousels created by Herschell-Spillman Co. of North Tonawanda, N.Y., she said.

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Preserving Your History

We encourage, and would like to assist, islanders in getting their old photos, slides, negatives, and historical documents into digital format to preserve and/or display them. In addition, the Harsens Island Historical Society would like to collect digital copies of historical photos and documents of the island for the museum's collection.

You can bring photos, slides, negatives, or historical documents to the Museum to have them scanned and the digital copy put on a USB flash drive to take home along with the documents you brought for scanning. Some photos or documents may be of historic interest, and with the owner's permission, a digital copy would be retained by the Harsens Island Historical Society for the museum's collection.

The Harsens Island History Society is also looking for 8 mm or super 8 mm home movies taken on the island prior to 1960 for segments to be digitized and place in the archives. There would be **no fee for members**, but non-members would be asked to make a small donation.

You can make an appointment for scanning with Bob Williams at 248-388-0465 or email him at xharpspah@aol.com.



Harsens Island Fire Hall Dedication in 1938

Its figures included not only the traditional horse, but wild animals such as a stork and a frog.

They were carved in four common styles known to carousel buffs: elegant, classic Philadelphia, heavily jeweled Coney Island and country fair.

"The variety of animals are all very different from one another," Pilotte said. It was last operated by Owasco Lake Park in Auburn, N.Y.

The Friends for Long Island Heritage bought and dismantled it in 1972. The pieces sat in the attic of an old mansion that belonged to the group until it went on sale Thursday.

The society decided to sell the animals to raise money for a \$1 million building restoration planed on Long Island.

Pilotte said the society regretted the move— only about 140 large park carousels were ever made and very few still are operating.

Most have gone the way of Harsens Island's masterpiece: They have been broken up and sold to avid collectors eager to make a profit, she said.

Antique carousel animals in poor condition can be bought for as much as \$25,000, refurbished and resold for at least twice that, she said.

Other collectors just like to keep the hand-carved animals as decorator pieces, she said.

"It's sad to see these things go," Pilotte said. "The saving grace is that the people who buy them do care for them and take care of them. The sad part is that the public can't enjoy them any more."

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March 1948 – *The Life and Times of Minnie Harm*

Mr. Fleming has sold the merry-go-round, and it is being carted away to some lake park near Syracuse, NY. He is also selling other equipment piecemeal. He plans on subdividing the park.

Aug, 2010 – *The Harsens Island-St. Clair Flats Historical Society Newsletter - Vol. 1, No. 1 - by Michele Komar*

Tashmoo Park Carousel

According to a 1970 newspaper article, the “Magnificent Menagerie Carousel” was installed at Tashmoo Park in 1915. It was built by the Herschell-Spillman Company of North Tonawanda, New York, one of the leading manufacturers of carousels in America at the time. Allan Herschell and James Armitage operated from about 1892 through 1902, carving a great number of portable carousels of a fairly simple style. The financial problems of the Armitage Herschell Company caused Herschell to leave and form a new company in 1900 with his Spillman in-laws called Herschell Spillman. This factory started by carving and creating carousels in the old style and also created some large park machines, generally elaborate menagerie carousels.

The Herschell Spillman factory created 18 separate menagerie animals, most of which were on each of the larger carousels. Herschell Spillman menageries can be found all across the country, including Greenfield Village in Dearborn.



Photo from ebay

In a July 11, 1993 interview with Bill Harm, here is what he had to say about the merry-go-round.

“The merry-go-round is the one which I operated. It originally sat up by the dance hall but was moved to the back of the park. My dad was park superintendent. We had about 30-40 employees that worked in various places around the park. We used to board the crew right there.

We gave them all a room and their laundry was provided by the park and of course three meals a day. Most of the fellas that worked there were mostly college students and folks from the island. A lot of the fellas were yard men and would clean up after the boat left and make the place tidy again. We had a fella who was a Teamster and would meet the boat with a wagon and a team of horses. He would pick up the supplies and take it back to the commissary.

I couldn’t run the merry-go-round until after 12:00 when the boat docked. I had other duties in the morning. I had to keep the merry-go-round clean. If there weren’t enough people to ride the merry-go-round, then I would get the job of cutting grass along with some of the other fellas.

In the event of rain, the merry-go-round building was quite large and could hold a lot of people. The old merry-go-round sat on the corner of the park. After the merry-go-round was gone, they kept the building as a shelter. It was a big round building, oh, about 70-75 feet across. In the wintertime we would use it for storage for the tables and benches. There were shutters that had to be put up on the outside in the winter. It was a job I hated. They were very heavy, and it took two men to put them up.

The powerhouse was a corrugated metal building, and we had a boiler in there that provided steam for the park. In those days the water was pumped from the river to the boiler. There was also one of Edison’s first dynamos in there. I understand that it is now down at Greenfield Village. The main power for the merry-go-round was steam and was run by what we called double action engine. There was the main engine that would drive the merry-go-round and a smaller one that would drive the

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organ. You almost had to be a steam engineer to run them. They were also dirty as they need to be oiled a lot and oil would get all over everything. I spent a lot of time keeping everything clean!

The merry-go-round at Greenfield Village is pretty close to the one we had. It was a three abreast with various types of hand carved animals. The two inner rows were on a crank and would up and down and the group of animals on the outside were stationary. Of course, they all had a brass pole in the center.

They had horses, a giraffe, frogs, lions, tigers and a dragon. When I was a little kid, that dragon sure used to scare me! Also, a pig, deer, ostrich and a zebra. Then we had a tub. You get in the tub, and you could make it spin around. We eventually took the bearings out of the tub to stop the tub from going around. With people moving in two directions, they were getting sick. We didn't like cleaning up behind them all the time. We had what you call a rocker and that would hold 4-6 people with seats on both ends. You could make it rock as you were going around in a circle. There was a chariot that would seat about 4 people with a seat at both ends but it didn't move. The organ would play music as it went around. I liked to run the ride about 5 minutes from the time they got on and we stopped it. Too many kids were getting sick if the ride was longer. That prevented a lot of mop jobs!

It was a beautiful ride. It had a lot of mirrors, and a lot of the animals had jewels and there were pictures painted around the crown. The crown was the center part of the merry-go-round that turned with it. On the end of the sweeps (spokes) were painted carvings. It was quite beautiful.

The original animals we had were all hand carved wood. The horses were quite detailed and even had the veins in the face carved in. One of the horses we had was for a knight and was decked out in armor with a lot of jewels and a headdress.

They had dismantled the merry-go-round but left the building. I don't know what happened to it. I understand it ended up in some park on the east coast. At one time I

could have bought the lot it sat on, the merry-go-round and the building for \$700. But that would have been like \$3 million today. I just didn't have it."

According to the same newspaper article that opens this article, in 1970, the carousel was broken into pieces and sold separately for prices ranging from \$15,000 to \$26,000 at New York auction house, Christie's. Collectors paid \$268,565 total for 47 hand-carved animals.

Here is where there is a conflict of dates. The article states that the merry-go-round was at Tashmoo Park from 1915-1946. Yet the photo of the lady in front of the merry-go-round says 1914. Minnie Harm's diary mentions that in August 1944, Bill (her husband) tore down the old merry-go-round building. I have to think that this was the one at the front of the park and not the one in the back where the merry-go-round was moved to. According to *The Billboard*, October 12, 1946, "Spot had only one ride this year, a Merry-Go- Round, but more may be added next season."

Then it was reported in the May 30, 1947 issue of *The Billboard*, "Project to move the Merry-Go- Round, a 64-passenger unit to Belle Isle Park, operated by the City, has been presented to the city council by the park owners, and is now pending official action." However, by August, that plan was dropped and the ride was retained as one of Tashmoo Park's major attractions. In January of 1948, an ad appeared in *Billboard Magazine* to sell the entire operation—20 acres, all the buildings, caretaker's home, contents, 1 excursion steamer and the Merry-Go-Round for a cool \$125,000. Minnie Harm's diary mentions in March that "Mr. Fleming has sold the merry-go- round and it is being carted away to some lake park by Syracuse, NY."

I have been unable to trace the park it may have gone to. One thing for sure is that the merry-go- round does not exist anymore except as cherished menagerie animals most likely in private collections. If you ever make it to Greenfield Village and ride the carousel, try to imagine what it was like almost 100 years ago on an island in the St. Clair River.

Harsens Island Historical Society Calendar 2025

Date	Day	Time	Event
June 21	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
June 21	Saturday	5:00 PM	“Murder on the <i>Tashmoo</i> ” Interactive Mystery Event (Doors open at 4:30 PM – Tickets sold in advance)
July 19	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
July 19	Saturday	11:00 AM	Special Event – Voices from the Flats, presented by Daniel Harrison (author of “Michigan’s Venice”)
August 9	Saturday	11:00 AM	Special Event – History of Three Fires presented by Sue Wrobel
August 16	Saturday	10:00 AM	Annual Membership Meeting at the Museum
August 16	Saturday	10:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
August 30	Saturday	11:00 AM	Labor Day Parade
September 20	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
October 4	Saturday	10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Annual Pie Sale
October 18	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
November 9	Sunday	3:00 PM	Remembrance Edmund Fitzgerald
November 15	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Planning Meeting via Zoom
December 6	Saturday	10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Cookie Walk
December 20	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

Museum will be closed June 21 for a private event



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

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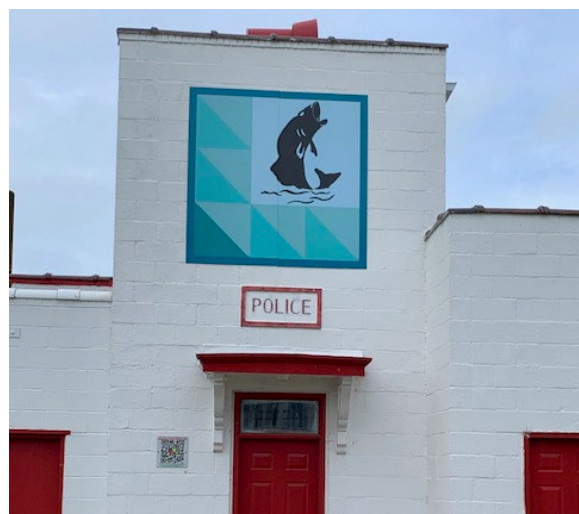
The historical society is looking to add to its collection. We accept donations of artifacts, photos, documents, and stories related to the Island and surrounding area. If you would like to add your family history to the museum archives, we can help you capture your memories for future generations.

Please contact our curator; Chris Knight at chris.knight@comcast.net

Harsens Island Historical Society

The Harsens Island St. Clair Flats History Society has a quilt block on the building and a QR code is mounted next to the side door. Using the camera app on your phone, scan the code and it will show the link to the Historical Museum page in the [Quilt Trail](#) site.

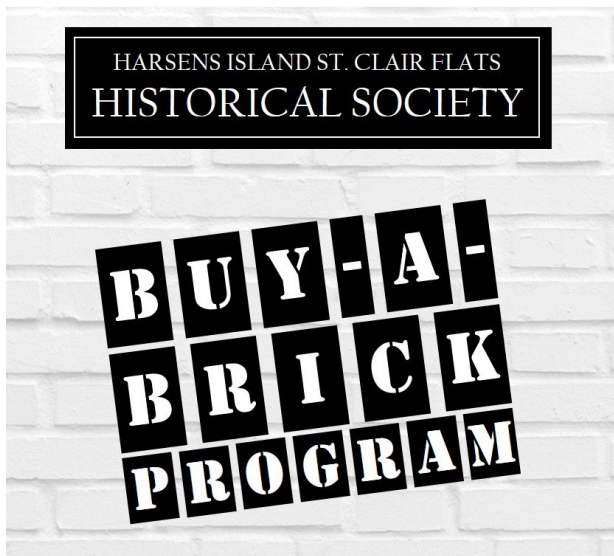
The [Historical Society of Michigan](#) published their 2024 Winter Issue of the Chronicle. The new Harsens Island Historical Society Quilt Block was mentioned in the magazine.



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 below.



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

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2025

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:

- Individual (1 Member Only) \$20.00
- Family (1-2 Adults + Children < 18) \$30.00
- Business \$50.00

Lifetime Dues:

- Lifetime Individual \$300.00
- Lifetime Family \$500.00

Building Donation / Roof: \$ _____ Other Donation: \$ _____

(* The necessary roof replacement in 2024 has left reserve funds low)

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 \$ _____

I would be interested in volunteering as a museum host this summer (greeting visitors, answer questions, if possible, & record museum shop sales).