

*Our
future logo
will go here!*

HARSENS ISLAND – ST CLAIR FLATS HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 1 No. 1

August 2010

PO Box 44
Harsens Island MI 48028
www.HISCFHS.org
Email@hiscfhs.org
Editor: Michele Komar

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UPCOMING EVENTS

AUG 7

HISCFH Field Day
Browne Field

Visit us at our booth!

AUG 15

Bluegrass Festival
Schoolhouse Grille

Visit us at our booth!

AUG 28

Membership Meeting

Guest Speaker: Bob Coulter

Author of *A Kid From The Flats*

Lions Club Hall

9:30 am

Coffee & Refreshments

Non-Members are Welcome!

LABOR DAY WEEKEND

SEPT 4, 5, 6

Turkey Shoot

Lions Club Field

**We need volunteers to work
the kid games!**

from the president

Where has the summer gone? When your Board Member, Michele Komar, asked if she could produce a newsletter for our Society, her request got a resounding GO FOR IT. I didn't know that her next request was that I write a monthly article, of course I said yes, so here we go.

It seems like yesterday that Nancy Boulton spoke to me about attending a meeting at the Reader's Cove. She told me of an idea that she and a few others had of forming a Harsens Island Historical Society. I was one of over twenty people who packed the Cove on Saturday, December 5, 2009. In attendance that day were members of the Algonac Clay Township Historical Society. They explained the beginnings of their Society and offered help in establishing our own Historical Society. From that group, eight people had expressed a desire to become Board Members. Our first Board Meeting was held at Chris Wludyka's home on January 16, 2010. Of the seven persons attending, I was the last to arrive, so you guess who they had elected president!

We have come a long way from that first meeting in December of 2009. On Saturday, July 24 our new society held its sixth general membership meeting, with nearly thirty members or guests in attendance. My thanks to all the members in attendance, who gave your Board a vote of approval to continue with the search to find a HOME for your Society.

When a new HOME is found, we will be able to display the historical items that have been donated to date. The first was a school desk donated by Milton Osgood. This is currently in my pole barn where it is safe from the elements. The next items were several maps of Harsens Island (to be matted and framed) and a model of the steamer Tashmoo. These items were donated by member, Paul Wargo. They are from the collection of Keith Steffke who resides in Wyandotte. Paul is currently keeping the Tashmoo model but will display it at our booth at the Blue Grass Festival.

Building Committee Chairperson and Board Member Bernard Licata and his committee are currently hard at work to find our new HOME so donated artifacts from Harsens Island and the St. Clair Flats will have a special place where future generations of Islanders will be able to trace the history of this unique Island we call home.

cont. pg 2



from the editor

Unlike Gary's article, this will not be a regular feature of the newsletter! However, as this is our first edition, I thought I would share a few things with you.

Initially, this newsletter will be emailed to all members and other folks that have an interest in the HISCFHS. Members that do not have email will get a copy in the mail. If you know of anyone that you think would be interested in receiving the newsletter, please send along their email. Perhaps down the road we can take on advertisers or have other means to bear the cost of mailing out more copies.

cont. pg 2

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.

cont. pg 3

from the president *cont. from page 1*

Get ready for a busy August and September! August 7 is the HISCFA Field Day; we will have a booth and offer our 2011 Calendar for a mere \$10 donation. Also available for a small donation will be *A Jolly Trip on the Steamer Tashmoo* DVD, our new HISCFS ballcap, a reproduction of a 1914 steamer Tashmoo menu, and authentic Tashmoo Park baggage tags and Merry-Go-Round tickets.

On August 15, look for our booth at the Bluegrass Festival at The Island Grill. We will be in the parade for the first time at the Annual Turkey Shoot at the Lions Club, Labor Day weekend (September 4, 5 and 6). Come and march with us and help carry our banner!

We need volunteers for all these events, please sign up by calling me at 810-748-3320. Remember to promote your Society by asking your friends and neighbors to join. Charter memberships are available until September 10, 2010 and a very special General Membership Meeting is being planned for September 25, 2010. Please join us!

- Gary Grout

Thanks To . . .

- Nancy Boulton and her group for producing the 2011 Historical Calendar featuring the stops of Steamer Tashmoo from the Old Club to Grande Pointe Hotel.
- Jeannie Rhodes for her design work on the calendar.
- Michele Komar for the donation of the baggage tags and tickets.
- Ruth Roth for loaning us her original 1914 steamer Tashmoo menu for reproduction.
- Bernard Licata for all his hard work on the Building Committee and with obtaining our soon-to-be Non-Profit 501(c)(3) status.
- Kate Hart and her crew for organizing the Roots Music Festival



Calling All Aspiring Storytellers

Do you have a family story to tell?
Any skeletons to rattle? Do you have a passion for the Island you want to share?
Maybe some old time photos?
Email us at Email@hiscfhs.org

ebay® Watch



Recently sold for \$104.49 on 7/29/10. An antique sauceboat from the Great Lakes steamship operations of the White Star Line. This piece measures 6-1/8" handle to spout and stands 3-1/4". The width is 1-3/4". No maker mark. There is a fine hairline on the back near where the handle top joins the boat; it is visible inside and out but faint.

from the editor *cont. from page 1*

This will be a monthly newsletter appearing in your Inbox around the 1st of every month. If you would like to see or submit anything, please do so by the 15th of every month. If I receive it after that, I'll try to fit it in if space allows.

I would like to encourage stories and photo submissions by our readers on a variety of topics. If you have some older photos that are BDC (before digital camera) I have a scanner and would happy to scan and return them.

The history of the Island is as varied as there are fish in the river. Historically, we are best known for Tashmoo Park and the many hotels that once graced our shores. But the Island is much more than that. We have a rich hunting and fishing history with the natural abundance of marsh and river wildlife.

Freighters, ferries, yachts, the Coast Guard and lighthouses have a long history, too. And don't forget the people! Some of our families can trace their roots back to Jacob Harsen and the original settlers, the Native Americans. My own family has been on the island for 96 years and I know that their contributions to island life was and continues to be - important.

History is also what is happening now because as soon as it happens, it becomes part of history. I would encourage everyone with kids and grandkids to get them interested at an earlier age than most of us did in preserving your own family history.

Before I run on too much, I think it is time now to step down from the soap box. Let me know what you think!

- Michele Komar



Tashmoo Park Carousel *cont. from page 1*

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.

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 superintendant. 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 winter time 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 a double action engine. There was the main engine that would drive the merry-go-round and a smaller one that would drive the organ.

Eventually, they were replaced by electric motors and steam went out. That was better because steam is hard to run. 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!



photo by Gary Nance www.nca-usa.org

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!



photo by Gary Nance www.nca-usa.org

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

cont. on page 4

ROOTS MUSIC FESTIVAL

Bluegrass on Harsens Island

SUNDAY AUG 15, 2010 Noon-9pm

At Harsen's Island Schoolhouse Grille

2669 Columbine Road, Harsen's Island, MI 48028 (810) 748-9551

Featuring **5** Bluegrass Bands
from Michigan & Ohio

Local Vendors, BBQ, Campfire,
Beer Tent, Wine Bar & Horseshoes
Celebrate back-to-basics lifestyle

Admission \$20

Kids 12 and under are free!

Portion of proceeds to Harsens Island Lions Club

Lonesome County
Skin & Bones
Company of Strangers
Deep Water Blue Grass
Catfish Mafia

Featured
Bands



<http://harsensislandbluegrassfestival.eventbrite.com/>

Don't be left out! Buy your tickets now!

Roots Music Updates

There is NO-CHARGE for people to VISIT and SHOP at the VENDOR BOOTHS. All Booths are set up in front of the admission gate.

ADMISSION to the Roots Music Festival is \$20 per ticket...children under 12 FREE.

Please remember: All Ticket Proceeds from this event go to the LIONS Emergency Fund and the Historical Society.

Tickets are available at: Sans Souci Bar, Delta Hardware, Cricket Garden, Schoolhouse Grilleor at: <http://harsensislandbluegrassfestival.eventbrite.com/>
Buy your tickets now...!

FYI: 57 of the 60 vendor booths have been sold. Artists; Paintings - Oil & Watercolors, Photography, Pottery, Crafts, Face-Painting, Massage, Hand Made items from Stuffed Animals to Handbags and Totes, as well as Jewelry and many other items.....including: Lioness Beets, Fresh Lemonade, KettleCorn, Popcorn, Chocolate Covered Popcorn, Festival T-Shirts, 'Limited Edition Festival Posters for the Historical Society', Hand Dipped Ice Cream, Magic Nuts...et-all.

There will be TROLLY / SHUTTLE SERVICE at the following stops starting at 11:00 AM:
SUNSET MARINA

AT THE FERRY - STOP WILL BE IN THE HORSESHOE AT THE SIGN

BROWN FIELD - PARKING - STOP WILL BE AT THE DRIVEWAY ON M-154

SCHOOHOUSE - FESTIVAL - STOP WILL BE AT THE CIRCULAR DRIVE

LIONS HALL - PARKING - STOP WILL BE AT DRIVEWAY ON LACROIX

SANS SOUCI - STOP WILL BE AT THE MEMORIAL PARK

SPECIAL PICK-UPS WILL BE MADE TO:

for pick-up at: SCYC, IDLE HOUR or the OLD CLUB...phone: 810-982-7433

12:00 – 1:00 Company of Strangers

1:30 – 2:30 Skin and Bones

3:00 – 4:00 Balduck Mountain Ramblers

4:30 – 5:30 Lonesome County

6:00 – 7:00 Catfish Mafia

Deepwater Bluegrass Jam starts at 7:15 in Beer Tent or Patio

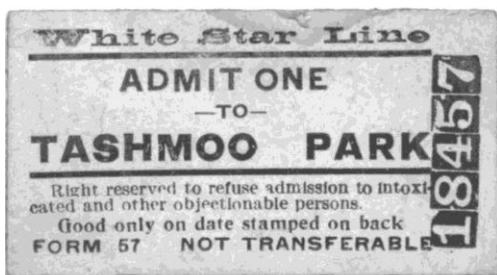
Tashmoo Park Carousel *cont. from page 3*

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 *The Billboard* 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.



HISCFHS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME: _____

SUMMER ADDRESS: _____

CITY: Harsens Island STATE: MI ZIP: 48028

HOME PHONE: _____

CELL: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

WINTER ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____

STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

WINTER PHONE: _____

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND SEND WITH CHECK MADE PAYABLE TO:
 HISCFHS
 P.O. BOX 44
 HARSENS ISLAND, MI 48028

A drop box is available at Reader's Cove Library

General Membership Dues:

- ___ Individual: \$15.00
- ___ Life Individual: \$150.00
- ___ Family: \$20.00
- ___ Life Family: \$200.00
- ___ Business: \$25.00
- ___ Patron: \$25.00

Special Charter Membership until Sept. 10, 2010

- ___ Bronze Charter Member: \$100.00
- ___ Silver Charter Member: \$250.00
- ___ Gold Charter Member: \$500.00
- ___ Platinum Charter Member: \$1,000.00 plus

Members

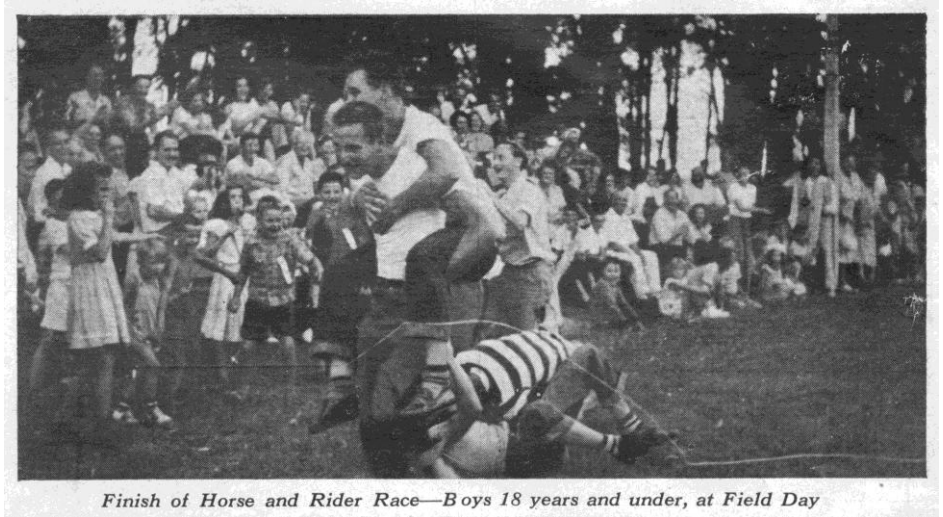
— you joined because of your passion to preserve the history of Harsens Island. Please ask your family, friends and neighbors if they would like to join as well. Charter memberships are only available until September 10, 2010.

Field Day

A long standing tradition on the island is Field Day sponsored by the Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Association. Below are excerpts from the Sept. 6, 1947 edition of the *Delta News*.

DOOR PRIZES

- Emerson portable radio..... Mr. George Helm
- General Electric blanket..... Mr. A. W. Heine
- Radiola radio..... Mr. George M. Schuler
- Set of golf irons..... E. M. Rogers
- Mixmaster..... William Van Fleet
- Home Chef electric stove..... Mrs. A. W. Heine
- Aluminum kitchenware..... Mrs. L. A. Wilcox
- Pressure cooker..... J. Cooley
- Ecko pressure cooker..... J. F. Bentoske
- Ecko pressure cooker..... Frank Lipp
- Dormet electric juicer..... Mr. Lester Mitchell
- Dormet electric juicer..... Mr. Fred Schultz
- Automatic electric iron..... Hazel Wetherbee
- Automatic electric iron..... Carl Remmert
- Steam iron..... Nich Blossom
- Portable electric heater..... Mr. Kenedif
(Walpole Island resident)
- Hot and cold chest..... H. R. Rouse
- Hot and cold chest..... Margaret Beghox
- Schick razor..... John York
- General Electric mantle clock..... Geo. M. Jaekle
- Golf bag..... Dorothy Bosch Corbett
- Coffee pecolator..... William A. Meyers
- Picnic jug..... Bill Bolton
- Boys' bicycle..... Denise Delfeir
- Girls' bicycle..... D. DeGain
- Zimmer boat and outb'd motor..... Thos. Poutter
- Liquor basket..... Harry Sigsworth
- Plymouth sedan..... Mrs. F. Hill
(Harsens Island resident)



Finish of Horse and Rider Race—Boys 18 years and under, at Field Day

Field Day was held at Tashmoo Park in 1947. Attendance was good with almost 2000 paid attendees. There were fireworks, a liquor basket raffle and games for every age. The winners of the above race were Tom Bessemer and Mickey Cromie. The games held were Boys & Girls 25-yard Dash, Boys & Girls 3-Legged Race, 50-yard Dash for Boys & Girls 14 and under, 75-yard Dash for Boys 18 and under, Women's Egg & Spoon 25-yard Race, Men's Egg Throwing Contest, Horse & Rider Race for Boys under 18, Veterans 100-yard Dash, Men & Women Cigarette & Match Race, Bubble Gum Contest under 8. Many of the games had several age classes.

HARSENS ISLAND ST. CLAIR FLATS HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PO BOX 44
HARSENS ISLAND MI 48028



An early photo of Tashmoo Park around 1905. The dock is in the background. The photo is from the Detroit Publishing Co.