

*Our
future logo
will go here!*

HARSENS ISLAND – ST CLAIR FLATS HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 1 No. 2

September 2010

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

HISCFHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Chuck Miller - 810-748-7209
Michele Komar - 734-620-3769

UPCOMING EVENTS

LABOR DAY WEEKEND

SEPT 4, 5, 6

Turkey Shoot

Lions Club Field

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

Mike Barry – 748-3504

SEPT 25

Annual Meeting & Dinner

Schoolhouse Grille @ 6pm

RSVP by Sept. 20

Reservations must be prepaid

Call Chris Wludyka for

reservations at 810-748-8815

See page 6 for more details!

from the president

August has come and gone and it sure was a busy month for your Society. On August 7th we set up our booth at the Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Association Field Day. Preparations for our first big fund raiser began with 1st Vice President Nancy Boulton and her 2011 Calendar Committee gathering twelve photographs representing the stops of the Steamer Tashmoo from the Old Club (stop one) to the Grande Pointe Hotel (stop 12). If you have not purchased one please do so soon as this collector calendar will make a wonderful Christmas gift. Also for sale was our Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Historical Society Hat. Your whole Board got involved in this but special thanks to Secretary Nancy Licata who said this is the hat, red is the color and this is the design we are using. We purchased 100 hats and they are going fast. Be sure to buy yours while they last! Other items in our booth were the "Jolly Trip on the Steamer Tashmoo" DVD and several shadow boxes holding Tashmoo Park Merry-Go-Round and Baggage tickets, which were donated by Board Member Michele Komar.

On August 15th your Society had a booth at the Roots Music Festival held at the Schoolhouse Grille. Thanks to all the members who spent a long day from setup at 8:30 a.m. to break down at 7:00 p.m. All the above mentioned items were sold as well as a Tashmoo paper weight. To date we have sold 110 of the 350 calendars purchased, we are at a break even on cost, selling the last 240 will put \$2,400 in our bank account. SELL, SELL, SELL the Calendar is a dated item.

Our Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Historical Society is ending the ninth month of our first year and we have accomplished more than anyone thought possible. Our membership has reached, at this writing, 63 paid memberships of which 34 are Charter Memberships. For those of you who receive this newsletter and have not yet become a member, you have until September 10th to become a Charter Member. Charter Membership is a onetime *cont. pg 2*

school daze

As September is back-to-school month, it seemed appropriate to write this month's article about school days on the island over the years. My mom, Dolly Harm Komar, attended the island school from K-8 in the mid-1930s until 1942. While she is no longer with us, there were a few bits of memorabilia left among her things.

From the *Harsens Island School News*, Vol. 3, Nov. 1939:

Editor Jack Baker

Managing Editor Marilyn Cundiff

News Reporters Doreen Dandron, James Cundiff, Dorothy Sampier, John
Bryan Wycoff

Sports Writers..... Harry Yax, George Johns, Roy Lauritsen

Layout Design Jane Woods, Kenneth Diem, Gilbertia Yax, Mary Persyn

Sports

- Two new Ping Pong tables have been placed in the basement recreation room. A tournament will get underway soon as the players become a little more familiar with the game.

- Volley Ball Captains Baker, Johns, Cundiff and Yax have been chosen to lead four teams in the Volley Ball Tournament which will begin the second week of November.

- Traded – Jimmy Yax has been traded to an opposing volley ball squad for two players and an undisclosed sum of \$\$\$\$.

cont. page 3

from the president *cont. from page 1*

opportunity. Charter Members will receive a special award at our September 25th General Meeting to be held at the Schoolhouse Grille. Your Board has planned a sit-down dinner; reservations will be by RSVP with meal selection and pre-payment. At the last two General Meetings I asked for members or friends to volunteer to help at the Kids games at the Harsens Island Lions Turkey Shoot. If we are to keep our use of the Lions Hall free we need to help them with this event. Normal use of the hall requires a fee of \$50.00 for Lion Members or \$300.00 if it is a fund raising event. Our August meeting was the last of our free uses of the Hall. The Lions have offered us continued free usage as we are running the Kids games for them. Lion Mike Barry is in charge of the games and we are working for him. So far we have six members have signed up, we need at least eleven. The games will be run on Saturday and Sunday only this year, please sign up by calling me at 810-748-3320. A few hours of your time will keep our hall use free.

Your Society will take part in the Turkey Shoot Parade for the first time. Nancy Bolton has obtained the use of a vintage auto to lead our group. Guys, wear your straw hat and overalls; ladies, your bonnet and period dress if available. Gather at St. Marks Church and march with us to the Lions field. Help us carry our banner and pass out candy for the children and adults along the parade route. Being a part of this Historical Society is more fun than anyone has a right to expect!

- Gary Grout



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



Tashmo on St Clair River – a Pesha postcard. Recently sold for \$36.07 on Aug. 12, 2010



Spoon with Steamer Tashmo. "Jane" is engraved on the handle. Sold for \$52.77 on Aug. 19, 2010



Pesha Photo – "My Catch on River St Clair" listed in an ebay store for \$29.99.

school daze cont. from page 1

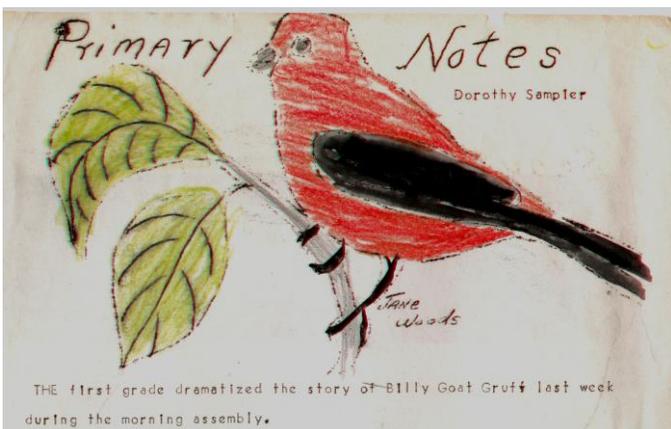
Halloween Party – The Halloween Party sponsored by the PTA and held at the Community Hall was a huge success. Nearly every family on the island was represented by one of its members. The Junior Spelling Bee was won by Howard Ellison of Detroit with Virginia Ferguson as runner-up. The Adult Class ended in a tie with Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Champion sharing honors.

Honor Students of the month of October are:

Grade 5.....Dorothy Sampier
Grade 4.....Jack Stout
Grade 3.....Betty Sampier
Grade 2.....John Yax
Grade 1.....Joel Krause

High Point Students for the current month are:

Grade 10.....Marilyn Cundiff
Grade 9.....Doreen Dandron
Grade 8.....Kenneth Diem
Grade 7.....Leona Persyn
Grade 6.....Dolores Harm



In 2003, *The Delta News* took a look back at history on the island. Jon McLane, Dan Persyn, Tom and Carol Hogg and Larry Havens were interviewed. Dan remembers that parents in those days never disagreed with the teachers. The teachers were always right; the kid who got in trouble at school also got in trouble at home. Students got the first day of trapping season off school, if they had a note from their parents. Carol was one of these and ran her own trap line catching mostly rabbit and muskrat.

One member of the school system remembered fondly by all was Bill Harm. Bill was the janitor and school bus driver for a time. Carol mentioned how Uncle Willie, as he was known, had a small vegetable farm on the Island. Bill treasured his garden and carefully doled out his spoils, giving especially generously to the poorer families. One day he offered some cucumbers to friends and was told that they did not need any as they just purchased a nice supply from the poor children with the nice fresh vegetable stand down the road. From Bill they learned kindness.

Bill Harm's son also named Bill remembered when he and his brother Harold had to cross the river to Algonac in the 1920s to go to school. They had a rowboat stashed around Grand Pointe Cut. Early morning around dawn, they would drive an old Model T from Tashmoo Park where they lived out to Grand Pointe and then row the boat across the North Channel to Algonac, walk a mile or more to school, then repeat the process on the way home. In the winter when the ice would freeze over, they could drive across the river.



photo courtesy of *The Delta News*, 1957

Bill "Uncle Willie" Harm and school teacher, Harold Bidigare.

Not to be left out are some school memories from Clayton Evans. He is in his 90s now and living out in Washington state.

"It was during that summer that my parents obtained the teaching position at the island school (Little Rd.). Mother taught the Kindergarten through the Fourth grade and Dad taught Fifth through Eighth grade. The grades Nine through Twelve went across the river to Algonac. Now the school house was a two room building, painted white with cement steps which lead directly to the front door. The desks were fastened to the floor and each one had an inkwell in the upper right hand corner of the top. The lid opened up so the students could put their books inside and the seats folded down when one wanted to sit down. There was a pantry way above the water jug and held each individual glass for each student had to furnish their own glass. Each glass had their own name on it which was printed on adhesive tape. There were two outside toilets. The older boys (Clayton mentioned that Bill Harm Jr. was the instigator) attached to the toilets long rubber bands made from an inner tube. They carved arrows from shingles and shot the arrows into the woods to see how far they would travel. But they soon ran out of shingles. The lower classroom had a low table where Mother held reading classes and where she spread out our lunch at noon time. Classes were held from nine in the morning to noon, with one hour for lunch and then school again from one to four in the afternoon. Recess was at 10:00 am and 2:30 pm. Some classes were let out early and the students were supposed to walk straight home. One afternoon two or

(next page)

three of us got to playing in the dump which was along the side of the road to the bridge over the canal. We were seen by someone and reported to the teacher who sent two students after us and we were ordered to return to school. After that we no longer got to go home early. The folks moved to Detroit when I was ten." ❁

What's Your Story?

This column shares readers' thoughts and opinions on a range of Harsens Island-related topics. To join the discussion – either as a participant or to suggest a question – send an email message to Email@hiscfhs.org or write to HISCFHS, PO Box 44, Harsens Island MI 48028. We would love to hear from you! See below for the October Query.

In keeping with our September School Daze theme for this newsletter, we asked our readers to relate their island school memories with us.

One Sunday morning early in the school year I was approached after church and asked if I was available to substitute at the Island School for the next several months. Miss. Kennedy would be out for some time recovering from upcoming surgery. So on Monday morning I called the school district and eagerly agreed to come. That turned out to be wonderful experience.

Miss. Kennedy had charge of the lower primary grades classroom - Kindergarten to Third Grade. The Kindergarten came only in the afternoon and at that time the Third Graders went across the hall to join the Upper School. Miss. Kennedy, knowing she would be out for some time, had extensively prepared the way for my stepping into her shoes. The students were fantastic young people! There was such a sense of camaraderie in the classrooms. The day was organized so that each small group of students got my undivided attention and instruction tailored to their specific needs. Just an ideal classroom situation!

Those children became dear to my heart. For many years I delighted in seeing them at my door on Halloween evening. As time has gone by I follow their progress in the *Delta News*. Graduations, marriages, career paths and deaths have been noted. Even the youngest now have families of their own. If I go over to the Schoolhouse Grill and close my eyes it seems like just yesterday.

- Marie Eidt

No school bus at that time!!!! My parents drove me to school----Mrs Evans was my favorite teacher during those early years--I brought my own lunch with a thermos. The swings were my favorite----also the slide. We also played baseball....At the end of the year, we played ball against Pte. Tremble and Starville

- Joyce Bryson

There once was a young lady we (Bob Coulter and Alphie Dandron) went to school with who was a bit of a scaredy cat. At recess one day we found a dead sparrow. Having nothing better to do with it we wrapped it in a paper towel and hid it in her desk and waited eagerly for her to scream. We were not disappointed. Mr. Sims, a teacher who was 8 ½ feet tall with hands like tennis racquets easily figured out that we were involved. The next day, we hid an empty paper towel in her desk and again she screamed. Both of us got 15 lashes but what a joke it was!

- Bob Coulter

October Query

October brings thoughts of Fall and Halloween and those are the topics for the next newsletter. Please share with us! Write about anything you like. Here are some questions to jog your memory:



1. Where on the island was the best place to trick or treat? Who had the best treats? Who had the scariest house?
2. Did you pull any "tricks"?
3. If you missed being a kid on the island at Halloween, what do you do now as an adult? Any traditions? Do you decorate?
4. Any haunted places/stories on or about the island?
5. Many of you leave the island in the fall. Any amusing stories about shutting up the house? End-of-the-season parties? Fall Traditions?

Deadline for submission is Sept. 26

your board in action

new members for august 2010

Lanie Anderson*
 Art & Janie Armstrong
 Joyce Bryson
 Susan Borchert
 Doris & Lon Jackson
 Lucy & Tony Mastro
 Sandy O'Dras
 Steve Schriever*
 Karen & Bill Smith*
 Shirley Toussaint
 Del & Jim White
 Lisa White

**denotes charter member*



President Gary Grout
 models our new ball cap



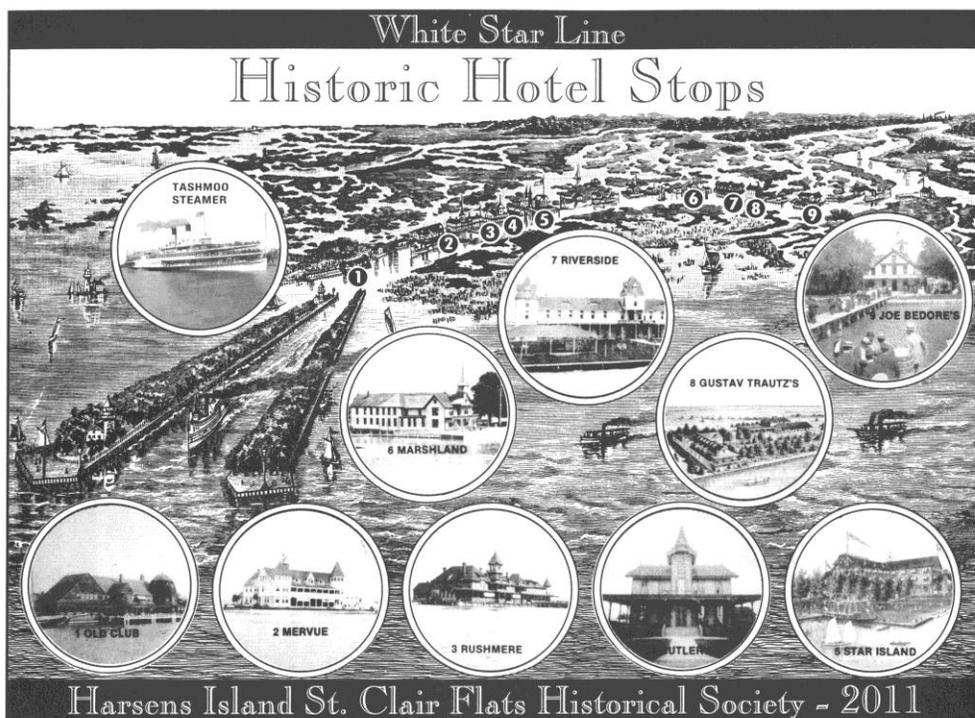
Nancy & Bernard Licata
 at the Roots Music Festival



Roots Music Festival –
 Chris Wludyka and Gary Grout



HISCFA Field Day –
 Michele Komar and Nancy Boulton



HISTORIC HARSENS ISLAND 2011 CALENDAR

ONLY \$10.00

**EACH MONTH FEATURES A
 DIFFERENT ST. CLAIR FLATS
 STOP THE STEAMER TASHMOO
 MADE ON THE RUN UP THE
 ST. CLAIR RIVER.**

**LIMITED QUANTITIES
 AVAILABLE.**

**CONTACT NANCY BOULTON
 810-748-1825**

The cover to the calendar is from the Special/Patrons edition of Mike Dixon's first book. It was a labor of love that he commissioned an artist to compile it with illustrations from his collection.



JOIN US
FOR A
CELEBRATION!

Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Historical Society

Inaugural Dinner Meeting

Saturday, September 25, 2010

6:00pm at the Schoolhouse Grille

includes choice of beef, fish or vegetarian dinner, hors d'oeuvres and dessert

RSVP by September 20, 2010. Call Chris Wludyka at 810-748-8815 to reserve.

Reservations must be prepaid. ▪ Limited Seating

Mail check payable to HISCFS and mail to PO Box 44, Harsens Island MI 48028

Cost: \$25 per person

Harsens Island In The News

PEDDLES MAPS TO EXPIATE CRIME

Port Huron, Nov. 21.—William Saner, who was convicted of manslaughter, having shot and killed Constable Elisha Moore of Algonac at Harsens Island, is selling maps of St. Clair Flats and declares he will turn over the proceeds to Moore's widow. Two thousand of the maps have been made by Sauer, who is a skilled draughtsman, and are being sold at \$1.50 each. Sauer hopes to be able to give Mrs. Moore \$3,000.

- Nov. 22, 1905 *The Logansport Journal*, *Logansport IN*

MICHIGAN NEWS

Mt. Clemens—The suit of the state against the Venice of America Land Co., one of the biggest fights over a land title ever waged in Michigan, will begin tomorrow in the circuit court. The suit involves the title to 3,000 acres of Harsen's Island in the St. Clair flats, the lower part of which is submerged.

- Dec. 26, 1907 *The News Palladium*, *Benton Harbor MI*

RESORT HOTEL BURNS

Detroit, Mich., June 3.—The Grande Pointe hotel on Harsens Island, in the St. Clair River, burned to the ground. The hotel was a four-story frame structure. The loss is estimated at \$60,000. Dr. J. D. Kennedy of Detroit is the owner.

- June 3, 1909, *The Van Wert Daily Bulletin*, *Van Wert OH*

NICE PLACE FOR A BLIND PIG

PORT HURON, Sept. 16 — U. P.
—Harsen's Island, an isolated spot in the St. Clair, is or was the prettiest spot for a "blind pig" in the state of Michigan. However, that did not deter federal officers who raided the island yesterday and found a real old-time bar whose mahogany shelves were decorated with whiskey, gin, wine, champagne and other brands of liquor. In addition the officers found on the island two fugitives who were wanted on smuggling.

- Sept. 16, 1927, *Marshall Evening Chronicle*, *Marshall MI*



photo courtesy of Karen Ortel

Bob Coulter with Susan Bryson modeling the monkey fur coat

Bob Coulter Speaks at August Meeting

Bob Coulter is the author of *A Kid on the Flats*, a humorous look at growing up on the island. He spoke of his beloved grandmother and she was quite a character. Being quite fashion conscious, she decided that she needed a fur coat but not just any common type of fur. She came home one day with a jet black coat with very long hair. She said it was monkey fur and being quite warm, wore it with clothing that it was never intended to be paired with. Namely her high top rubber boots with her slacks tucked in and a warm woolen babushka on her head. She was quite a sight! Thanks, Bob. We enjoyed it!

Thanks To . . .

- The volunteers at the HS booth at Field Day – Gary Grout, Nancy Boulton, Michele Komar, Chris Wludyka, John Eidt, Jean Nelson and Linda Schoonover. And thanks to Bernard Licata who sent prospective members our way!
- To the volunteers at the HS booth at the Roots Music Festival – Gary Grout, Nancy Boulton, Chris Wludyka and nameless others.

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

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

LAST CHANCE!

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.