



# The SOCIETY PAGES

HARSENS ISLAND / ST. CLAIR FLATS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Riverside Grocery Follow-up

Last month we published an article by Paul Wargo from our **Pictures From the Attic Series** about **Riverside Grocery**, formerly known as Upmal's and prior to that the original Stokay's Grocery. There were a few corrections that were brought to our attention.

The article stated that **John Lynn** was the caretaker for the Mumfords at the Old Club. The name should be **Mulford**, not Mumford.

Also, we heard from **Michael Badalamente**, the current owner of Riverside Grocery. He states, "First we were never warned by the health department of any septic problems, in fact we had a perfect record with them. Second the Tyverts were well aware and the information was disclosed to them regarding the septic because WE brought it to the attention of the health department two years prior to the sale that in wet conditions we had septic issues. It was never a trial basis - the Tyvert's bought it and defaulted on a contract."

**The Society apologizes** for any distress this article may have caused.

## From the President

March is upon us and if you listen closely spring is just around the corner. We're starting to hear the first hints from our feathered friends...they are coming back! It has been a great winter from the perspective of not having to deal with ice on the river and ferry closings but **Mother Nature** has a way of **evening things out**.

Spring is also a time for renewal when the crocuses pop their heads; the trees bud and flower and other greenery starts pushing its way up. And, it's time to start thinking about renewing your membership in the Historical Society. Last year more than 99% of you sent in your renewal forms, dues and donations. The Society thanks you for that and hopes that we can be as successful again this year.

This year's renewal at the Historical Society will bring our members and friends new educational and cultural events as well as a repeat of some fun social events for 2012. The Lecture / Speaker Series have a full docket this year starting in April with a commemoration of the War of 1812 by marine artist, **Peter Rindlisbacher**, who primarily portrays the War of 1812. Peter has an excellent resume that you can read in the upcoming April Society Pages. He will present, **Warships on the St. Clair River; the 1812 War and its Aftermath**. Peter will visit us from Harrow, Ontario, Canada. Please call Nancy at: 810-748-1825 to purchase your tickets for this first of four interesting speakers the Society has lined up for you this year.

Your board of directors has been working hard to organize events for you. In addition to the Lecture / Speaker Series, the **Rum Runners Party** this summer and the **Square Dance** in September will return by popular demand. A **First Anniversary Party** celebrating the Museum Opening will be held Memorial Day Weekend (bring the youngsters for this fun event). This year we have added a **First Nations Day / Pow-Wow** to share and highlight the culture of the people who lived here before us. This should be a great event for youngsters and adults alike.

Your board is always looking for new ideas that will highlight the history and culture of the Island and the Flats. Please let us know your thoughts on how to improve. Phone or e-mail me any time.

We are currently 200 members strong. Help us retain that strength by renewing this month and helping to find one new member for 2012.

**bernard**

## The Society Pages

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## Museum Happenings

by Nancy Boulton

I do not know if everyone knows we had a huge tornado that struck the island in 1983. The museum has many pictures of the devastation. Luckily no one was hurt but many homes were destroyed. The total destruction totaled 3.7 million dollars. The pictures also show a visit by **Governor Blanchard**.

How many remember **Haschker's Bakery** in downtown Sans Souci? The bakery started on the island in 1948. Before that they were established in Highland Park. Mr. Haschker learned his trade in his native Germany and his recipes were a closely guarded secret as are those of all master craftsmen in the business. People would line up for the delicious bread, cakes, pies and cookies. The bakery closed its doors during the 60's.

We also have an old money drawer used at **Upmal Marine**. The alarm drawer know as the **Tucker Alarm Till** by the Tucker & Dorsey Mfg Co., trademark Indianapolis USA. The cast iron mechanism is marked Tucker No 1. It is two pieces; the top piece was attached to the underside of a cabinet or table and the drawer slides into the first section. There are finger controls on the underside of the drawer that will allow the operator to open the drawer with a certain combination. The finger mechanisms are the release which would ring a bell if the incorrect combination was used. The bell and gong are cast iron. This alarm drawer is over a hundred years old.

If you are interested to help in the museum we would love to have you. I believe you would love working with us. Please call Nancy at 748-3802.

## Community Foundation Grant

from the *Times Herald*, Feb. 14, 2012

The votes have been tallied and winners have been chosen in the Share the Love grant contest. The **Community Foundation of St. Clair County** will be awarding \$1,500 grants to Special Dreams Farm and the Algonac Food Pantry at Trinity United Methodist. The nonprofit is a working farm for developmentally disabled adults. The Algonac Food Pantry received the second highest number of votes, with 514.

The Community Foundation teamed up with the Times Herald for the contest. Nominations were accepted and the foundation narrowed the list to 10. Here are the full results:

747 votes: Special Dreams Farm

514 votes: Algonac Food Pantry at Trinity United Methodist

**511 votes: Harsens Island-St. Clair Flats Historical Society**

333 votes: St. Clair County Council on Aging

322 votes: SOS Marysville Food Pantry

295 votes: We Heart This City

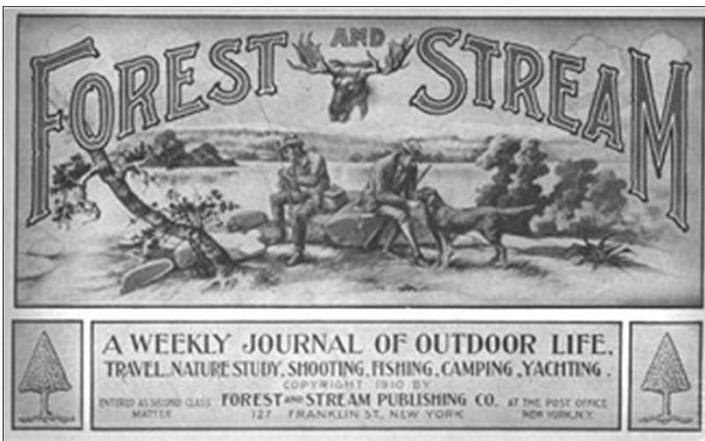
240 votes: Betty Kearns Little Black Dress breast cancer services

209 votes: Blue Water Habitat for Humanity

182 votes: Blue Water Film Festival

75 votes: Marine City Old News Boys

**Our Thanks to all that voted for us!**



## The Clubs of the St. Clair Flats

by E. Hough

*Editor's Note: This is Part 3 of a multi-part series originally published in Forest and Stream in August and September, 1890.*

### THE MERVUE CLUB

The made land which follows on up the river from the St. Clair Club is often protected against the water by piling and planking. All along, following the great curve of the river, there is a nearly continuous string of cottages, cabins and summer ranches as they are locally called. First above the property of the St. Clair Club is the tasty private cottage of the Messrs. Ed. and F. W. Joys, of Detroit. Then there is a sort of combination cottage belonging to a Mr. Smith, from over Baltimore Bay way, and after that a vacant cottage of little consequence, and then the modest abode of Mr. Jas. H. Harsen, of Algonac. Beyond this are what is called the La Croix ranch and cabin with a sail-covered porch, and then one comes to one of those deep and narrow waterways made by the dredgers, running clear through the strip of made land from front to back and known as a cut-off.

Over the cut-off is the long dock of the two-story frame hotel known as the **Arthur House**. This is run by Arthur Humphreys, perhaps as good and well-known a pusher as any on the Flats. Here we found abundant evidence of practical sportsmanship. Mr. Humphreys took us up into the loft and showed us a magnificent fleet of decoys which he and his brother were just painting. All these decoys were made with flat bottoms. A round-bottom decoy is not liked on

the Flats, and is not suitable for the shooting practiced there. Much of this is open water shooting, in more or less of a swell, and the old shooters say that a flat bottom decoy sits much more steadily than a rounded one. The latter wobbles in the chop, and does not look natural. Here we saw also what was a new idea to me, in the shape of a number of tremendous mallard decoys, as large as geese, and painted jet black all over. These, so our host informed us, were for use in the night or late dusk. I think most sportsmen will have little use for such decoys, for night shooting, or shooting on the marsh after sundown, is recognized as being without the legitimate limits of club practices, and in many States is against the law. The game ought to have some chance, and the night is all too short a time for that.

At this point the wild rice marsh back of the made ground is quite dense and wide, and runs up almost through the strip to the channel. All through the rice we could see the mudhens working, and some of these, fearless from their freedom from molestation, swam up close along where our boat lay. There was a sort of saloon connected with the hotel, and this was built on piles, the front porch being 3 or 4 feet above the water. There were rice hens swimming around under the house, and Humphreys told us that a mallard lately built her nest and hatched a brood under the house. There is, of course, more or less nesting of wildfowl all over the Flats.

There is a stretch of shallow water, in the summer time grown up with wild rice, lying between the ship channel and the shore for a distance in here. But for the made land the marsh would be continuous here. But out of the low terra firma we now saw rising the solid and comfortable structure of the Mervue.

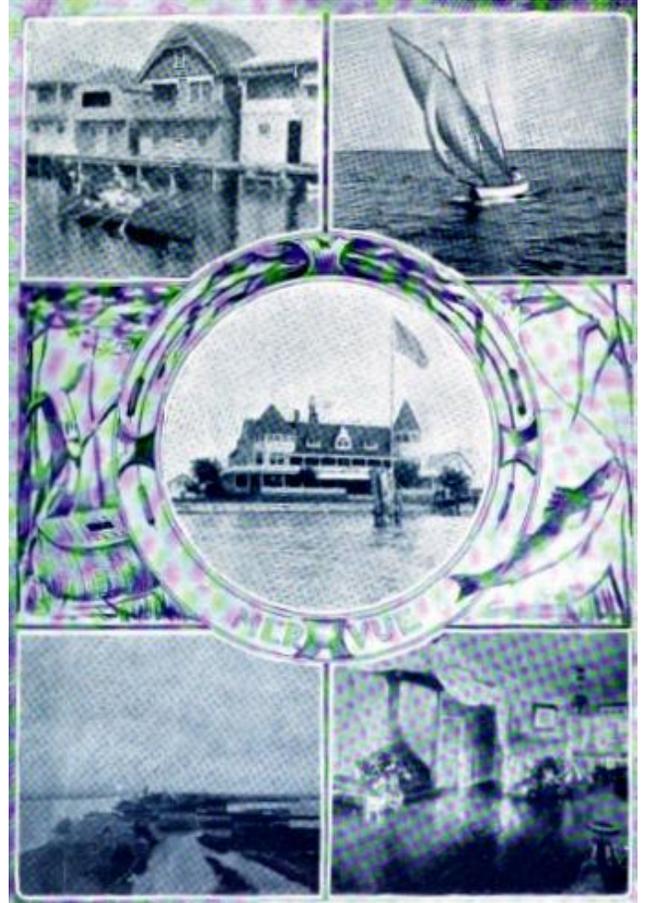
The little duck boat slipped up over the shallow beach and received a hospitable hailing here, and Mr. R. M. Northwood, the club steward, did the honors and answered the questions.

The incorporated name of what is generally known as the Mervue Club is The Michigan Fishing and Shooting Association. The idea of the club was conceived about three years ago by Mr. Chas.

## The Clubs of the St. Clair Flats *continued*

Bristol and Mr. Oscar Rasch, of Detroit, as the result of a pleasant fishing trip to the Flats. The club began with fifteen members, and \$5,000 worth of stock was subscribed the first night. Soon thereafter 642 ft. front of land was bought 850 ft. deep, and in July, 1889, the present building was erected.

Mervue is a spacious building, of a roomy and comfortable look. All is well arranged within, and provided with the usual reception room and hall, leading to the parlors, smoking room, dining room, etc. The thirty-six sleeping apartments are mostly on the second floor—a lot of them are necessary, for there have been 118 persons out at Mervue on one day, though not all remained over night. The third story, or attic, holds the servants quarters, and was designed originally to have also the billiard and smoking rooms. The building is in every way suited to its purpose, and the club, whose membership is mostly made up of young men, most of them, perhaps, single men, may be very much congratulated upon their new home now that it is finished. This is the youngest and most youthful club of the Flats. The gentlemen will have a yet more tasteful and handsome place when they have completed their plans and improvements, which will include a filling in, smoothing down and putting in grass about 100 ft. to the front at least, which will make a very nice lawn.



There are now in all over one hundred members of the Mervue Club, and its affairs may now be said to be in good, sound, flourishing condition financially, which may largely be attributed to the judicious taking into the club of some old business heads familiar with the planning and conduct of large enterprises. The annual dues are \$12. The steward is paid a salary, providing his own material and charging a specific amount per diem. Mr. Northwood, who succeeds Mr. Mackintosh in this office, is of experience in Canada hotels, and will doubtless make a success of the practical administration of the club.

Good boat houses were going up, and about two dozen boats were already owned by club members. There will be one yacht at least, that owned by Mr. Bowling.

I regret to say that the articles of incorporation of this club lay special emphasis upon the fact that its purposes are "for social intercourse," but there are two clauses in the bylaws which many and many a club might do well to copy and follow:

*Article VI—Games.—* Sec. 1. No games shall be played at the club house on Sunday, and no person shall bet on any game, or play for any stake upon the association's property at any time, under the penalty of expulsion of any member and the exclusion of any guest.

*Article VII—Wines and Liquors.—* Sec. 1. There shall be no malt or spirituous liquors sold upon the premises.

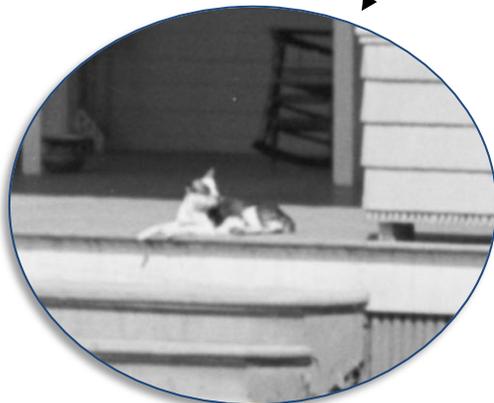
The officers of the Mervue Club are: F. P. Williams, President; W. J. Stapleton, Vice-President; J. W. Weisman, Secretary; S. J. Bowling, Treasurer. ■

**Look for Part 4 in the next issue!**

# Hotel Mervue



Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Detroit Publishing Company Collection.



Meow!



Two Girls on the Porch.

## Pictures From The Attic

by Joyce Hassen

### Venice Canal

Harsens Island has been a welcome summertime destination for generations, but getting here can be an adventure. Sometimes I struggle with being the week-end warrior - packing the food, clothes, clean laundry, dogs, and whatever else is needed for a couple of days on the Island. Go back 100 years... my great-grandfather was making similar preparations and also had to make a trip to get where he could relax by the water. However, he travelled by car to a dock in Detroit, and boarded the steamer to **Fosters Landing**, where his boat, the *Bess C*, was waiting to get him to his house on the Venice Canal. A far cry from the door to door drive we make in an air conditioned car!

**George Burgett Sr.**, my great-grandfather, was Chief Mechanic for the Dodge brothers. He came to Harsens Island to maintain the engines of the fishing boats for the members of the **Nereus Club** on Venice Canal in the St. Clair Flats.

He soon wanted his own place to enjoy the sportsmanship and the fishing. He purchased property across the canal from the club at 7473 Venice.

George built the house around 1913 (our best estimate). He began bringing his family up for the summers. Picture 1 was taken around 1918. My grandfather, **George Burgett Jr.** is peeking over the boat in the corner of the house and looks to be around 6 or 7. The boat, the *Bess C*, was purchased used from the New York Harbor and was shipped by truck from New York to Detroit. She was a 26 foot double-end launch with a 1-cylinder Kermath motor, reportedly started by spinning the flywheel by hand, without even a pull rope. At one cylinder, it must have been quite the speedster! The boat was purchased around 1900, well before the house was built.

George's brother in law, **Bill Gagnier**, visited often for the fishing and companionship. He soon bought the property next door at 7470 and built his own place to be close to family and more importantly, to have a place to keep his boat. ►



Picture 1: Taken around 1918, the boat is the *Bess C* and the youngster to the far right is George Burgett, Jr.

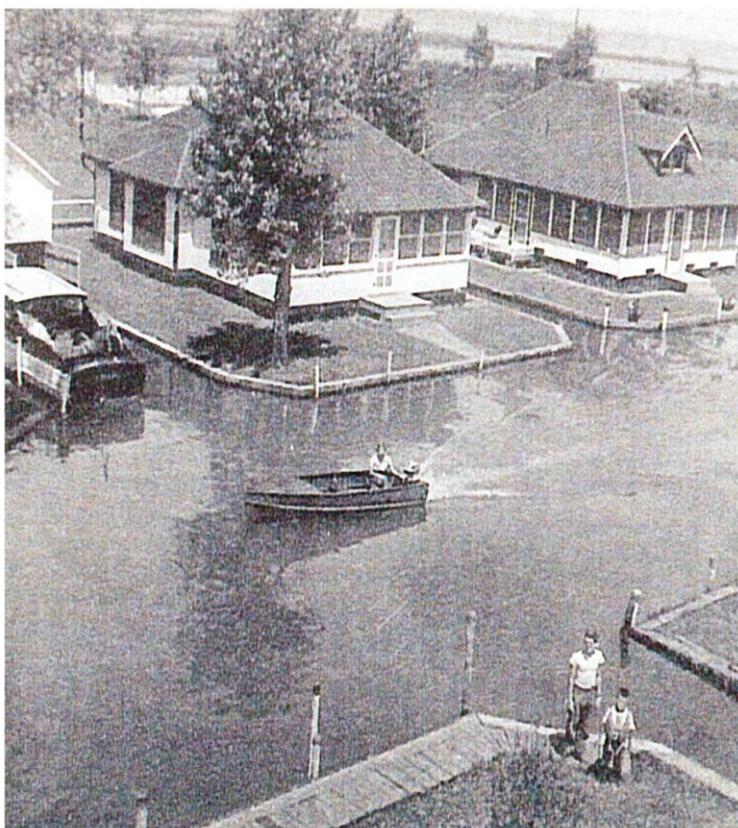
## Pictures From The Attic continued

Uncle Bill, being a staunch bachelor, welcomed his other sisters to the cottage to help with the household chores, meal preparation, and even, yes...cleaning the fish! They began to bring their families, and the two cottages were used as one extended property, with people going back and forth regularly.

Today, 5 generations later, I own the house at 7473 and my Dad, **John Chamberlain** lives next door at 7470. My family, my kids and their families and friends go back and forth between the places; using them as one...the more things change, the more they stay the same. ■



*Picture 2, above: 7473 in the early 30's with a boathouse behind it, and a walk-bridge connecting the property to 7470. Wood sheet-piling, of course.*



*Picture 3, left: Both cottages late 1950's, a summer with high water. That's my Dad in the corner sporting the white t-shirt. He grew up across the canal from where my Mom grew up, and where he lives now...which is another story!!*

## 2012 Activities & Events Calendar

*Dates and locations subject to change*

### Museum Hours

Open by appointment in March 2012

May: Saturday 10 AM – 2 PM

June, July, Aug, Sept: Saturday 10 AM – 2 PM and Sunday Noon – 4 PM

For museum information, contact Nancy Boulton at 810-748-3802

Contact us at [email@hiscfhs.org](mailto:email@hiscfhs.org)

All events and meetings held at the Old Fire Hall Museum unless noted  
3058 S. Channel in downtown Sans Souci.

Members are welcome to attend any Board meetings on the calendar to keep apprised of  
Society activities and to bring issues before the Board.

March	31	Board Meeting Saturday – 11:30 AM
April	14	General Membership Meeting and Lecture Series Saturday – 3 to 5 PM
May	12	Board Meeting Saturday – 11:30 AM
	12	General Membership Meeting and Lecture Series Saturday – 3 to 5 PM
	26 – 28	Memorial Day Open House & First Year Anniversary Saturday, Sunday & Monday