

The SOCIETY

PAGES

HARSENS ISLAND / ST. CLAIR FLATS HISTORICAL SOCIETY



H-m-m-m Pie!

Homemade Pie Sale Oct. 5

Sat., Oct. 5
10:00am until 4:00pm

We will have a homemade pie
sale at the museum.

Please come to purchase your
pie!

If you could bake a pie,
please call
Nancy Boulton at 748-3802

From the President

There are multiple things to report this month.

Congratulations and a warm welcome to our newly elected board members, incumbent Bob Williams and Larry Zelensky (or 'Z' as he likes to be called.) 'Z' will continue to be an asset to The Society. Newer members may not be aware that Larry has been involved since 2010 and has contributed his talent to the logo, branding, and marketing of The Society and its many events and activities, including the great posters produced for the Lecture Series. 'Z' has contributed much to our success. New board members will start their terms on January 1, 2014.

The September 14 lecture with world renowned Artist, Author and Historian Jim Clary presenting: **The Great Storm of 1913**, was great! The lecture was appreciated by approximately 90 attendees. (See page 3).

We are sorry to report that the **Annual Square Dance and Fried Chicken Dinner** will need to be rescheduled for a future date due to multiple conflicts and the lack of a volunteer to manage the event. We will let you know when we are able to reschedule.

We have a new Chairperson for the Annual Turkey Shoot Parade. **Colleen Bugg** will assume this responsibility. She is extremely excited about participating and taking charge of the parade. The Society has acquired a donation of a replica of a Steamer/Paddle Boat that will be refurbished by Colleen and those who wish to assist her.

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The Society Pages

Volume 4 / Number 10 / October 2013

a publication of the Harsens Island/
St. Clair Flats Historical Society

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Join us on Facebook!

From the President *continued*

Mark your calendar and **SAVE THE DATE** for Tuesday, November 19. While not yet 'cast-in-concrete', our Lecture Series Chairman, Denne Osgood, is working on an event to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Gettysburg Address with Thomas Gordon. Thomas will bring his collection of Civil War original-music documents, tell stories of the Civil War and play recordings of these original music scores. Thomas will also present a recorded recitation of the Gettysburg Address with the Battle Hymn of the Republic being played by the Dodworth Saxhorn Band on original brass instruments from the Civil War.

November 19, 2013 will be: **Four Score and Ten Years....!**

The tentative plan is to have multiple one hour sessions throughout the day. The early sessions for school field trips and the later/evening session to be available to those who work and cannot attend during the day. Look for details in the November issue of *The Society Pages*.

IN OTHER NEWS:

Your President was interviewed by PBS for a program to air in January 2014. (See article below).

As we move into the last quarter of 2013, I would like to ask each of our members to offer new ideas for making your Historical Society more successful in 2014. What would you like to see happen? Please send your thoughts to me via e-mail at: licata@comcast.net.

Thank you,
bernard

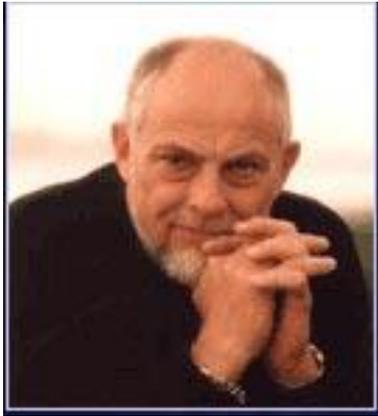


UNDER THE RADAR

By Nancy Licata

On Tuesday, September 17, your Historical Society President, Bernard Licata, was interviewed by Tom Daldin of PBS, who produces the Emmy Award Winning Program: "Under the Radar" with Tom Daldin which airs regularly on Saturday mornings on Detroit Public Television and other venues.

Tom is planning to include your Historical Society in his segment devoted to Harsens Island. Artie Bryson, Clay Township Supervisor, brought Tom and his crew to the Island to highlight the beauty and attractions of Harsens Island and the Flats. The program is tentatively scheduled to air in mid to late January 2014. Look for details in an upcoming issue of *The Society Pages*.



Jim Clary The Great Lakes Storm of 1913

PRESENTED ON SEPT. 14, 2013

by Denne Osgood

Historically referred to as the "Big Blow", the "Freshwater Fury", or the "White Hurricane", was the blizzard with hurricane-force winds that devastated the Great Lakes Basin in the Midwestern United States and the Canadian province of Ontario from November 7 through November 10, 1913.

The storm was most powerful on November 9, battering and overturning ships on four of the five Great Lakes, particularly Lake Huron. Deceptive lulls in the storm and the slow pace of weather reports contributed to the storm's destructiveness.

Jim Clary described in detail the convergence of two storms and low pressure areas that converged on the Great Lakes devoting his attention to Lake Huron. His paintings depicted each of the ships that were battered and lost in the storm.

In the audience that day was Petipen Smith whose father, and Bill Smith, whose grandfather was Captain Smith. Captain Smith was the Master of the freighter *Harvester*, which weathered the fury of the 1913 storm and survived.

Jim conducted a book signing after the lecture.



A good turnout welcomes our guest speaker.



Jim Clary stirs the crowd with his compelling story.

A History of St. Mark From a Mission to a Parish

Compiled by Elizabeth A. Morris and Mary Agnes Simons

In 1800, the Harsen family attempted to bring a religious atmosphere to their island home. A missionary, on his way to Mackinac Island, floating through Lake St. Clair, drew their attention. They rowed out to meet him and tried to convince him to stay on the island, but he was determined to keep going.

During the Civil War and the years of rebuilding that followed, Father Aloysius Lambert regularly visited the French, in and around what is now Algonac. By 1888, there were 29 missions registered in the Catholic Directory. On the St. Clair River there were two missions; St. Catherine in Algonac and a mission of the Holy Cross in Marine City.

It was in 1869 that Fr. Lambert built a church on St. Clair Boulevard in Algonac and named it St. Catherine. He continued to visit Algonac regularly, but no resident pastor was appointed. In 1894, Fr. Francis Kemper was appointed there. On November 3, 1895, the church on St. Clair Boulevard burned to the ground. Fr. Benoit Gery, (*pronounced Ben-wah Jerry*) a French born priest who succeeded Fr. Kemper, started construction of a new church on the corner of Fruit Street and St. Clair Boulevard.



On June 1, 1887 land on the South Channel of the St. Clair River was purchased from Patricia and William Bennett by Peter Dederich, A.T. Fisher and Ferdinand Huhn as a site for a church. Permission was granted by Bishop John B. Foley to erect the church; he determined that it would be a mission to St. Catherine Church in Algonac. This church would be named St. Mark after the man known to be the christened godson of St. Peter the Apostle, who subsequently became Mark the Evangelist. The first service held was in July 1897, some ten years after the land purchase. Fr. Gery took on the additional duties of both churches and continued until Easter of 1924. Fr. Gery would meet a White Star Line boat each Sunday in Algonac and would sail to San Souci on Harsens Island. There he would be met with horse and buggy and taken to the church to say Mass. Fr. Gery was Pastor for the next twenty seven years.

In the early days, due to the unique land features of this area, one of the early obstacles the church had to face was making it possible for the members to attend Mass. In the past, members of the Church came to Mass by horse and buggy or by walking along the river and then crossing a walking bridge to church. People who lived on the south end lived on small islands and had only canals or the river for their transportation. Roads were not built until the late 1930's. In order to get to church they would use their own boats or go by tug which sailed up the river and picked up passengers. They would then transfer to a scow which would be maneuvered by hand to the shore at *Sf. Mark on the Sea*, as it was affectionately known.

In 1926 a new boat dock was built in front of the present church. When the island road became a reality, coming in a boat became obsolete and the dock was abandoned.

In 1935 St. Mark almost became a memory. The United States *Government* proposed to straighten out the South Channel of the St. Clair River to make it easier for the ships to navigate. This would have taken all the property that St. Mark occupied. With the prompting of A.J. Saxter from Cleveland, whom along with his mother owned a

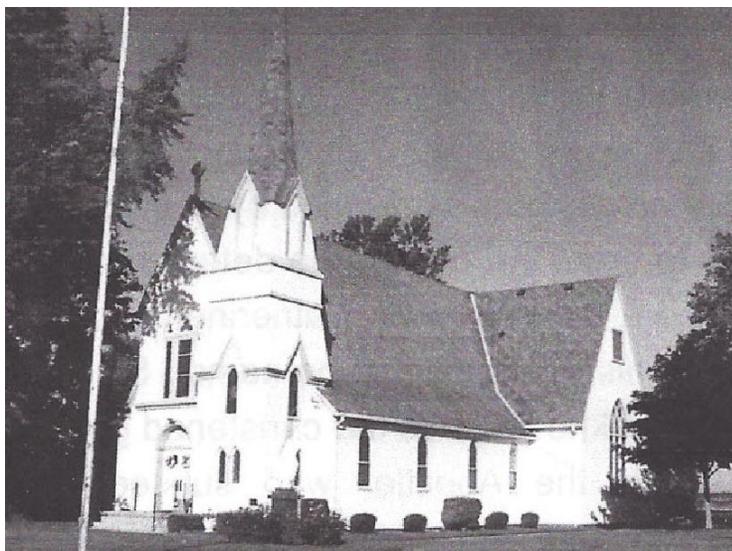
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A History of St. Mark *continued*

summer cottage on Harsens Island, a tremendous letter writing campaign ensued. The St. Clair Flats and Harsens Island Improvement Association began firing off letters and the original plan was abandoned. Instead the Channel was dredged and St. Mark was saved!

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Being a mission church, in the beginning St. Mark only held services from June through September. The original church seated 150 parishioners. It consisted of the bell tower and the part of the current church that goes up to the side additions. In 1923 the church was extended to the back of the present altar. This increased the capacity to 250 persons. In 1929 the two side wings were added which created room for 450 parishioners. In 1948 a new heating system was installed and the back behind the altar was made larger to accommodate it. New restrooms were added and the area on each side of the altar was changed to its present appearance. Much of the original woodwork remains today. The stained glass windows were added during the third renovation and were donated as memorials by members of the parish. Some of these memorials were for the members of the families that were original settlers of Harsens Island. Their descendants can still be found in the area.



In November of 1974, Fr. Paul Lederman was assigned to be the first pastor of St. Mark, now a full-fledged parish. He served part-time, being assigned to the Archdiocese to work on the tribunal three days a week.

Fr. Peter Vanderlinden was the next Pastor and under his leadership two summer missions were organized, The Old Club and Club Island. Also during his time the present rectory was built adjacent to the church. Prior to this time, the priests that helped at St. Mark, stayed in the home owned by the Parish on Donald Street.

In 1999 Fr. Sigismund Kowalczyk (Fr. Sig) retired from Immaculate Conception Parish in Anchorville. He moved onto the island and offered his services to the parishioners of St. Mark. Fr. Sig is cherished by the parishioners at St. Mark has been celebrating Masses, weddings, funerals and baptisms at St. Mark ever since.

In 2007 St. Mark Parish was merged with Holy Cross Parish and St. Catherine Parish; the three now make up the combined parish of *Our Lady on the River Parish*. Today St. Mark is known all over the world, and remains a historic landmark on the St. Clair River as the ships sail past her scenic steeple shining in the dignity and grace of a holy place on Harsens Island. ■



PO Box 44
Harsens Island MI 48028

Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Historical Society 2013 Calendar of Events

subject to change

Members are welcome to attend any Board / Membership Meeting to keep apprised of Society activities and to bring issues before the Board.

Museum Hours

Oct, Nov, Dec - closed - open by appointment and for Christmas Sale (Dec)

October

5th – Pie Sale 10 AM – 4 PM (Museum)

12th - Saturday - 11:30 AM - Board Meeting (Museum)

November

9th - Saturday - 11:30 AM - Board Meeting (Museum)

19th – Tuesday - Four Score and Ten Years presented by Thomas Gordon (Museum)

December

7th & 8th - Saturday and Sunday - 10 AM - 3 PM - Christmas Sale (Museum) Dates Tentative