



volume 15 / number 9

November / December 2024

Message from the President . . .

Happy Holidays!

The holiday season is now in full swing, with any Thanksgiving leftovers at their end. Harsens Island, as well as every other city and retail outlet looks so festive . . . can't wait to see the final product with Sans Souci's tree all lit up . . . all the lights are my favorite. With Thanksgiving being late this year, my holiday decorating isn't quite done, but my goal is the end of the week . . . we'll see!

As always, December reminds me of how quickly the year passed. The Historical Society once again accomplished so much during the year. All our annual events were once again very successful and well attended. The rejuvenated speaker series brought in many, with the most popular speaker our own Bob Williams. His presentation on the history of Harsens Island was standing room only and required an encore presentation!

We also replaced the roof, which was a necessary expenditure due to several major leaks needing immediate attention. Although that expenditure reduced our savings account, we are still in a strong financial position and are working hard to replenish the account. Due to a very generous anonymous donation, we were able to replace the sound system in the museum, which dramatically improved the sound quality and ability to hear and see the speakers and events, due to monitors and speakers throughout the museum.

And just like that, we quickly look forward to 2025. The Board's annual budget/planning meeting in November, resulted in excellent conversation and ideas, and planning will soon begin for events, speakers, and improvements.

I know I've said this before, but I can't say it enough – I'm truly grateful for all our volunteers who work tirelessly every year, to those who work to maintain the museum throughout the entire year (including the winter), the Board who support me, the host volunteers that keep the museum open, and of course our members and donors who keep us financially stable . . . thank you, thank you, thank you!!

Cheers to a happy and healthy holiday season and new year!

Joyce

Joyce Hassen, President



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We encourage, and would like to assist, islanders in getting their old photos, slides, negatives, and historical documents into digital format to preserve and/or display them.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

Edmund Fitzgerald Remembrance Event – November 10

On Sunday, November 10th, we had an event at the museum to remember those who lost their lives during the sinking of the Great Lakes freighter, the Edmund Fitzgerald. Gerhard and Jill (*On the Border*) led the ceremony with a presentation about the timeline and what most likely contributed to the sinking of the Fitzgerald. Special guest was John O'Gara, a Celtic Troubadour and Sailor.

Following the presentation, *On the Border* performed the Gordon Lightfoot song, *The Sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald* and then read the list of names of those who lost their lives on November 10, 1975. Food and refreshments were provided after the ceremony. A huge shout out to our cooks (Ellen and Corinne) who made chili. There were about 100 people in attendance to enjoy the presentation and sip some mulled wine.

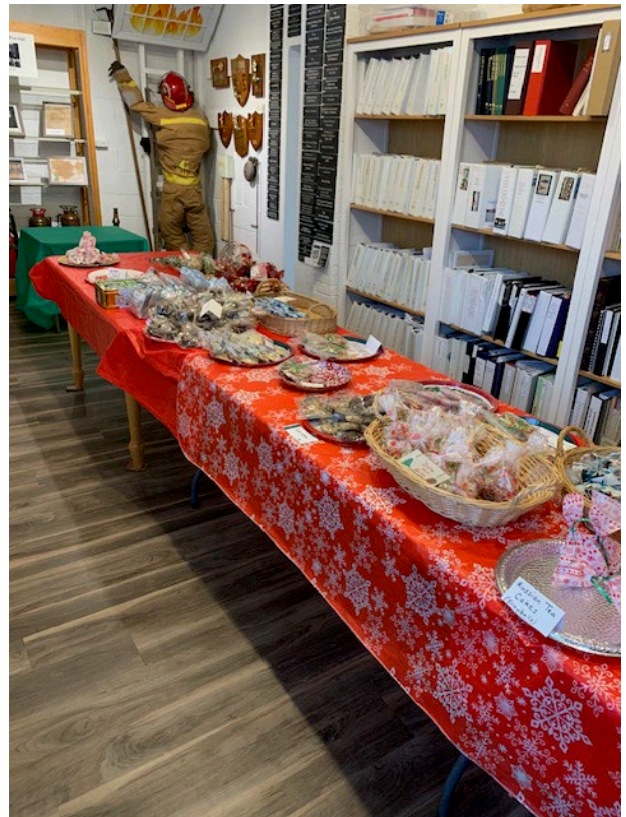


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Annual Pie Sale – October 5



Cookie Walk – December 7



The Harsens Island Historical Society held their two annual fall fund raising events, the Pie Sale in October and the Cookie Walk in December. Both events were very successful. Donations from Island bakers were plentiful and looked amazing. The Historical Society is grateful for the donations and all the supporters who bought treats. For the pie sale, there were buyers leaving with 2-3 pies this year.

Continued from page 2 . . . Edmund Fitzgerald Remembrance Event



With the museum's new video and audio system, the guests were able to enjoy the presentation in all three rooms.

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.

There are countless articles from the Detroit Free Press and The Times Herald in this compilation. I found an article from June 25, 1905, from the Detroit Free Press worth sharing.

June 25, 1905 – *Detroit Free Press*

TRIPS BY BOAT

Delightful Journeys that End in Pleasant Places on Lake or River.

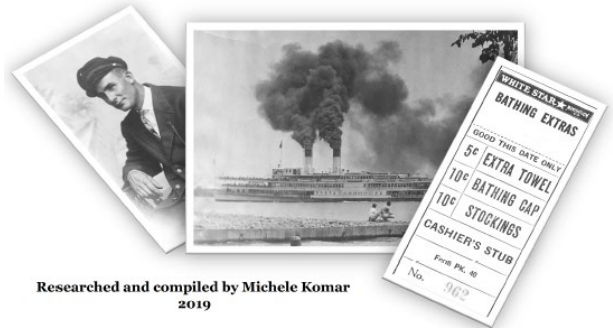
STRETCHED all along the shores of lake and river for a distance of 125 miles, and reaching from Detroit to Port Huron is a succession of attractive summer homes. The line begins at the eastern portion of Detroit, close to the river front, and runs almost unbroken as far as Port Huron. Thousands of people have made their homes for the summer on the western shore of the Detroit River, Lake St. Clair and the St. Clair River, where they get the cool breezes from the finest body of fresh water on earth, and where the men of the family may spend the weekend, sure of easy and certain communication with their offices on Monday morning. The prettiest spots are reached either by the boats of the White Star line or the fast cars of the Rapid Railway, and some are fortunate enough to be accessible by both means of transportation. Owing to the excellent facilities of travel, this district is known all over the country, and every year crowds go to the "Flats" from towns in Ohio, Illinois and the south. Many people start from as far south as Texas and as far west as Utah, for the fame of Detroit and the resorts near her borders has spread everywhere.

There are hundreds of cottages along the line, built by Detroiters and even by residents of states other than

Tashmoo Park Timeline

1896 – 1950

Harsens Island, Michigan



Researched and compiled by Michele Komar
2019

Michigan: some of the handsomest clubhouses on fresh water are built on the "Flats"; and for the public in general there are dozens of resorts, differing in price and attractions, but each possessed of the peculiar charm that characterizes the whole region. There is historic and romantic interest in every foot of land and water all the way, and one of the results of this has been the exploitation of the district. The present condition of modern hotels and parks is of comparatively recent growth. The early visitors to the "Flats" were content with anything that would offer them shelter and coolness in summer, for the fishing season, and shelter and warmth in the colder days of the shooting time. Their successors demand more, and to meet their wishes modern buildings, with all the conveniences of a hotel in the city have been erected.

A Charming Trip.

The trip north on the White Star line, is one of the

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most charming of any on fresh water. The boats leave the dock at the foot of Griswold Street at 8:30, reaching Port Huron at 2. A stop of an hour and three-quarters is made at Port Huron, plenty of time to allow the visitor to look about the old town, see many of its points of interest and rest a little from travel. The Harrington, a new and excellent hotel, offers entertainment to those who wish to make a stay of any length in Port Huron, and the city has a just reputation for its deep spring mineral baths.

A little below Port Huron is a popular summer resort, Stag Island. This is perhaps as typical a place of its kind as there is on the list. There are two hotels and twenty-three cottages for the accommodation of guests here; the cottages have from six to eight rooms and are furnished for light housekeeping. There is a private system of electric lighting, modern plumbing and water supply and all the modern conveniences and luxuries. Amusements of all kinds are provided for; dancing, bowling, tennis and other games are popular on land, while the water offers the attractions of boating, fishing and bathing. The White Star line boats stop at Stag Island, and a ferry makes connections with the cars of the Rapid Railway.

A Pleasant Place.

Just above St. Clair is the Somerville hotel, a famous old place. Many years ago, the building was put up for a young ladies' seminary and has been adapted to its present purpose within quite recent times. Everything is on a large, old-fashioned scale; the main rooms are enormous, with high ceilings and quaint old pictures on the walls. A big veranda along the front of the hotel gives a view of the river and the passing boats, and the whole place is cool and airy. In many respects the hotel is like an old southern residence, and possibly for this reason it is very popular with people from the south. Although it is an old house, it is fitted with modern improvements, and is a pleasant, restful place in which to spend the summer.

The Oakland.

Below St. Clair, and reached by suburban and steamer lines, is the Hotel Oakland. It stands in an ideal location, fronting the waterway along which the big boats of the lake traffic pass in ceaseless procession. The guests have every means of enjoyment at their disposal. A new golf course of nine holes has been laid out by "Joe" Schlottman, running well down the river through beautiful country, a new and handsome buffet bar has been established this year, and with the other numerous improvements, the management of the Oakland look forward to the most successful season in the house's twenty years of existence. Besides the hotel, which accommodates 550 guests, there is room for 150 more in the cottages, club house and Oakland is the home of "Salutaris" water, famous all over the country. There are 400 acres of ground at the resort, which is under the management of J. A. Fitzgerald. The formal opening came on June 22 and was a brilliant affair.

At Port Lampton, on the Canadian side, is the Grand Central hotel, owned by William Drew. The town is a delightfully quiet spot for a summer's rest, with all the attractions of the surrounding charming country and the river. The hotel is an excellent stopping place, where all the comforts are to be had amid the rest and quiet of the country.

Quiet, Restful Algonac.

Algonac is a quiet old place, but in summer it wakes up to entertain its guests, who come in search of rest and coolness. There are two hotels in Algonac that cater to summer guests. One is the Kimball house, fronting Lake St. Clair. It is owned by A. P. Harsen, a descendant of the original purchaser of Harsen's island, and the third of the name to be born on the old place. The Kimball puts on no airs, but it is comfortable and hospitable; it is easily reached by boat or by trolley and is within three hours of Detroit. People from Ohio and

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Continued from page 5 – Trips by Boat

Tennessee have been coming to it for years, so well satisfied are they with what the place offers. The other hotel at Algonac is the Riverview, run by James Johnson. The house is forty years old, and Mr. Johnson has been in charge for the last seventeen years. There are twenty rooms in the house, which is fitted with modern conveniences, and Mr. Johnson is a hospitable host. His idea is to make people at home without putting on extra frills, and his methods appear to satisfy his guests, many of whom have been coming to him ever since he took charge of the house.

Grande Pointe.

From Algonac it is easy to get to Grande Pointe by launch, or this charming spot is readily reached by the White Star boats. The hotel at Grande Pointe, in many ways one of the most attractive of hostelrys at the "Flats," was opened June 17 with a small informal party. The formal opening took place yesterday and a big crowd turned out to make things lively. Grand Pointe is only thirty-five miles from Detroit by boat and its location, in addition to its many attractions, makes it extremely popular with Detroiters. G. B. Davidson is general manager of the hotel, which is run in a thoroughly modern way. The chef is a cordon bleu, and the hotel has its own farm, from which summery things are summoned to delight the guests. The island location of the hotel ensures fresh breezes from every side, and the rooms are delightfully cool and airy. The hotel is three stories in height and takes care of 300 guests without any trouble.

In addition to housing its guests delightfully and feeding them off the fat of the land, the hotel management looks after their amusement. Several miles of good roads provide driving, riding and automobiling; the attractions of the water are many, and material for taking advantage of them are equally numerous. Fishing is good, and sailboats and launches provide for easy and rapid transportation on the waters about the hotel. Yachts from up and down the river make their headquarters at Grande Pointe for days at a time, and there is always something going forward to interest the summer idler.

Favorite Stopping Places.

Down below Grande Pointe are Sans Souci and Maple Leaf, both occupied by cottagers who find their summer life full of delight, and between them lies Tashmoo Park, the property of the White Star line. This park is the public playground at the "Flats" and the people flock to it every hot day in summer. The property has an area of sixty acres, and the company has expended thousands upon its beautification; a grove and a dancing pavilion, where an orchestra plays for excursion parties. The pavilion is covered and will shelter 2,000 people in case of rain, while the covered dock takes care of many more. New attractions have been added this year, and so popular is the place that it entertained 5,000 pleasure-seekers on Decoration Day this year.

Right below Tashmoo Park is Muir's Landing. This is one of the oldest places at the "Flats" and has been popular for years. Miss Collins has assumed the management this year and she has prepared rooms for fifty guests. There are eight or ten cottages on the reservation which are rented to summer residents from Michigan and Ohio. The opening day at Muir's was last Thursday, when the season got an excellent start.

Gust. Trautz has a summer resort below Muir's and here "us Germans" gather in numbers every summer. There are all the usual attractions of summer resorts, and the place has held the affections of its patrons for the last nine years, since it was opened. An annex that will hold fifty people is nearing completion for this year. Riverside, where James B. Clay is putting in his second year as manager, is below Trautz's and takes care of about 300 guests. There are about ten acres at the resort and several private cottages are built here. The season opened formally last Thursday, but before that old patrons of the house had been on hand to enjoy the cool breeze that blows along the "Flats."

Ed. E. Henn has a popular resort he calls "Marshland." The place was formerly a private club,

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Continued from page 6 – Trips by Boat

but has been run as a hotel for the last three years. F. P. Bodde is manager, and the opening will take place July 2, when a hop will be given. As a matter of fact, the resort is open from the first boat in the spring to the last boat in the fall, and the capacity of the house, 123 guests, is not infrequently taxed.

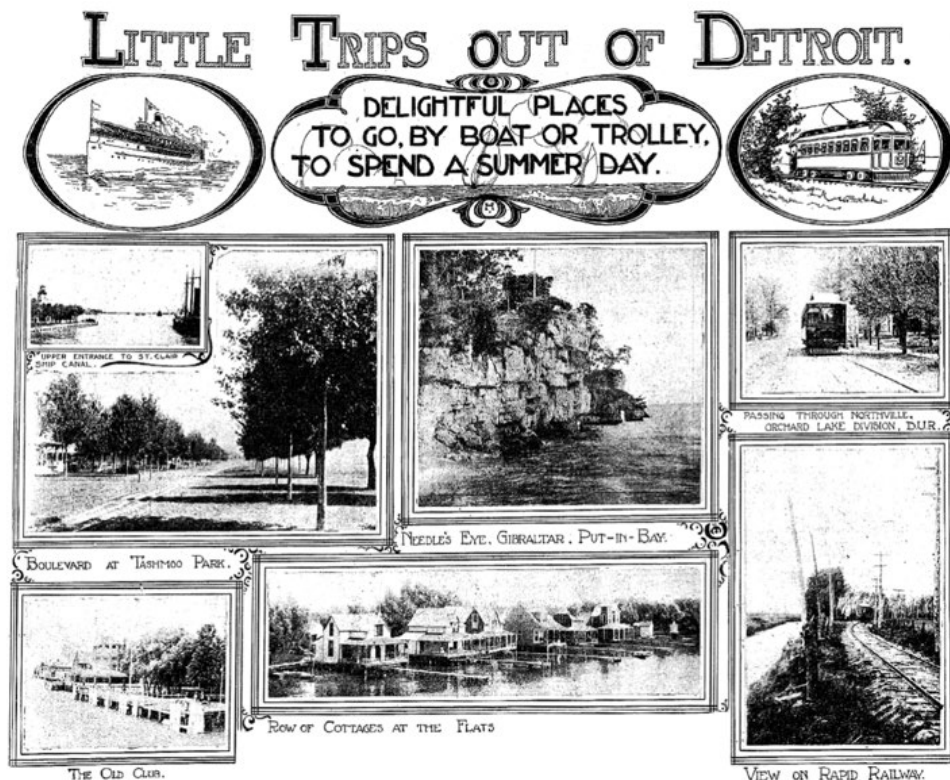
Star Island.

Star Island house, "Michigan's famous summer resort," opened its twenty-eighth season on Decoration Day, following its old custom. Mr. James Slocum, the original proprietor, was one of the first hotel men on the "Flats," and his widow is now managing the place. The house has 150 rooms, and these have been redecorated for this year, with the result that the old house looks like new. The kitchen is big and airy and out of it come countless things to tempt the appetite of the sojourner. Mrs. Slocum is always at the dock to meet the boats and to extend a personal welcome to her guests. The extent to which they are made to feel at home is shown by the length of time they stay. There are families who make it a point to be at Star Island on the first day it is opened for their entertainment and to stay until it closes in the late fall. In addition to the permanent guests, there is always a big crowd

of transients on every hot day, and the weekend brings a crowd on the afternoon boat. Last Saturday there were 300 at dinner, and the season appears to have made an unusually prosperous opening.

Star Island is fitted out with all sorts of entertainment on land and water. Bowling alleys in good shape are a feature, and a modern grill room, established three years ago, is being continued. This is always open, and it is a handy place to get a meal after a trip on a sailboat or a launch. Fishing grounds that really have fish in them are not too far away and the constant coming and going of people makes life at Star Island a lively thing.

Down below Star Island are the Rushmere, Mervue and "Old" clubs. The latter is the most aristocratic and exclusive on the line, and many of the most prominent families of Detroit are on its membership list. The "Old" club is the first stop north of the famous government ship canal, which is one of the many sights of the trip.



Harsens Island Historical Society Calendar 2024

Date	Day	Time	Event
December 7	Saturday	10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Cookie Walk
December 21	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



A publication of the Harsens Island St.
Clair Flats Historical Society

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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

Is your house more than 100 years old?

The Michigan Heritage Home™ program recognizes houses that were constructed at least 100 years ago and are in substantially original condition. That designation comes with a handsome cast-aluminum plaque that lets everyone know that your home has its own rich heritage and historical significance. This distinguished plaque, authorized by the Historical Society of Michigan, will remind both new and longtime community members of your home's contribution to your shared heritage.



For more information click here to go to the

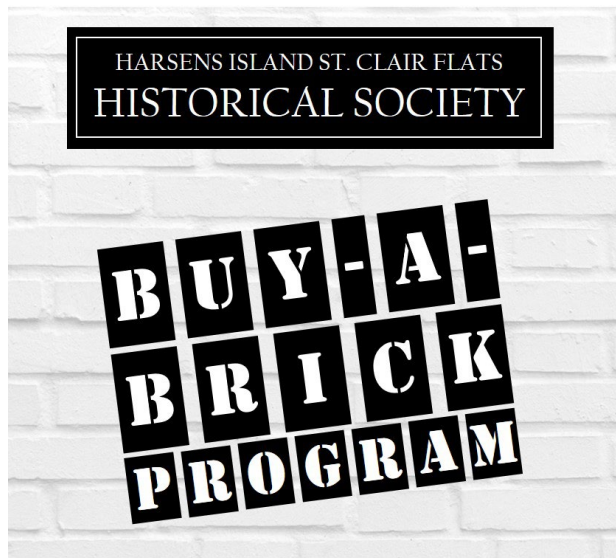
[Michigan Heritage Program](https://www.hsmichigan.org/awards/michigan-heritage-home)

<https://www.hsmichigan.org/awards/michigan-heritage-home>

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.

Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Historical Society
Building Renovation BUY-A-BRICK Order Form

I / We would like to ‘BUY-A-BRICK’ to support the Museum.

Indicate on the three lines below the inscription you would like on the brick using up to 25 letters, spaces, or special characters per line.

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Print Your Name _____

Your Phone Number _____ - _____ - _____

Your email address _____ @ _____

_____ **Enclosed is my check for \$350 made payable to HISCFHS.**

_____ **I will not be purchasing a brick at this time but have enclosed a donation for the renovation.**

Payments should be made payable to “HISCFHS” with “BRICK” on the memo line and mailed to the HISCFHS at P.O. Box 44, Harsens Island, MI 48028.



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:

- | | |
|--|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual (1 Member Only) | \$20.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family (1-2 Adults + Children < 18) | \$30.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business | \$50.00 |

Lifetime Dues:

- | | |
|--|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime Individual | \$300.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 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).