



### **April Fool's Day**

April Fool's Day has been celebrated for centuries and in several cultures. Some historians believe that April Fool's Day originated back in 1582 when France switched from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar. People who were slow to recognize the start of the new year became the butt of jokes and pranks.

What were some of history's biggest pranks?

**Spaghetti Trees** - In 1957 BBC news announced that the dreaded spaghetti weevil has been eradicated leading to a tremendous crop of spaghetti. Many fooled viewers wanted to know how they could grow their own spaghetti tree.

**Eruption of Mount Edgumbe** - Residents of Stika, Alaska saw smoke rising from the dormant volcano, Mt. Edgumbe. The coast guard sent a helicopter over the mountain to investigate. The pilot ended people's concerns when the words "April Fool" were seen on the rim of the volcano in 50-foot letters. A local resident planned the prank for years, setting a large pile of tires on fire.



Source: <https://bigthink.com/scotty-hendricks/april-fools-day-the-seven-most-hysterical-pranks-through-history>

### ***Message from the President . . .***

Hi All,

#### ***Proposed Museum Addition and Steam Whistle Project***

Over the last couple of months, we have been busy collecting bids from local contractors for the new addition, and our existing storage shed has been moved to make room for the addition. Thank you, John Eidt and Bobby Bryson for that move as well as your continued work on the Whistle Project.

On Memorial Day weekend we are planning a celebration of the completion of our Steam Whistle project. We still need to finish some of the piping for it and actual mounting of the whistle on the roof of the compressor room addition which was completed last summer.

The Memorial Day celebration hopefully will include a groundbreaking for our new exhibit room addition. We will also be kicking off a fundraiser to help finance some items needed in addition to the basic building shell which is being funded by a generous contribution from the estate of Clayton Evans.

#### ***Membership Renewal***

The membership renewals are coming in fast and furious. Thank you to so many of you for returning them promptly. If you have not returned your renewal yet, please try to do it in the next couple of weeks; it will save Terry Wiggins, our membership director, from having to send out a reminder. Also, if you have a life membership, you do not need to return anything unless your contact information has changed. If you did not return your renewal and are not sure where you put it, feel free to send in your payment with the form found on the last page in this newsletter.

*continued on page 2 . . .*

*Message from the President . . . continued from page 1 . . .*

### ***Museum Closed for the Winter***

Though the museum is still closed for the season, if you have a group who would like to visit we can make special arrangements to have it opened; please call Chuck Miller at 810-643-1150. This is a reminder that while the museum is closed, the Society will be publishing the newsletter less frequently. Your next newsletter will arrive at the beginning of May.

Bob Williams, President  
(xharpspah@aol.com)

### **The Memoirs of Aura P. Stewart**

Reminiscences of the early 1800's in St. Clair County including Harsens Island and Clay Township. These memoirs include stories of early pioneers of St. Clair County and some of their adventures during the war of 1812.

Written in 1876

Published in the

Marine City Gazette, The Pioneer Society Minutes and the  
History of St. Clair County by A.T. Andreas & Co. 1883

In recent issues we printed a portion of Aura Stewart's memoirs as originally published in "*The History of St. Clair County* by A.T. Andreas & Co. 1883." Below are more of his reminiscences from the early 1800's.

"I will state a circumstance that happened in the year 1812 or 1813, as related by my step-mother. At the breaking-out of the war, the British Government secured the services (with but few exceptions) of all the Indians residing at Mackinac, Sault Ste. Marie and the shores of Lake Huron; a large number of them went in with the British troops to the assault on Fort Sandusky, commanded by Capt. Croghan. The repulse given by the Americans was so spirited and so destructive, that the British made a hasty retreat back to Malden, which caused a panic among their Indian allies, many of them refusing to remain. Two large birch canoes, filled with returning Indians were passing up the River St. Clair in the night, and when near my step-mother's residence on Harsen's Island, a thunder-storm burst upon them and upset one of their canoes, throwing about sixteen Indian warriors into the river to struggle for their lives.

The night was perfect darkness and it was a long while before they could reach the shore. Those that reached the shore shouted to those struggling in the water, through the lightning's flash and peals of thunder. The shouts of Indians continued until all not drowned reached the shore. To my step-mother the scene was so frightful that she seized her brother's infant, threw a blanket around it and was about rushing into the wood nearby, fearing that the Indians would massacre them, when she was prevented from doing so by her brother, and they both waited for the morning to reveal the mystery of the Indian shouts and yells of the night. At the dawn of day the next morning, two birch canoes filled with Indians were seen to leave the opposite side of the river and approach the island, and twenty great strapping Indians came ashore, their faces all blackened with charcoal --the Indian manner of mourning for departed friends. They looked very solemn, and stated that they were induced to go to war by the British, and were told by them that the Kit-che-moco-mans (Long-knives) were great cowards, and easily whipped, but they had found the statement not true; that the Americans had killed a great many British at Lower Sandusky; and that they had to retreat to save their lives, and were returning home when the storm struck them last night; one of their canoes was upset; that they were a long time in reaching the shore; that two of their number were drowned. The Indian speaker ended his statements by advising Mr. Graveraet to leave immediately, as the Long-knives were coming and would kill them."

## Freighters and the Steam Whistle

By Chris Knight

The days are getting warmer and the sun is setting later and later each day. I am looking forward to sitting out on my deck and watching the beautiful St. Clair River. Each day brings a different shade of blue; from the opaque blue on a cloudy day or a bright turquoise with a cloudless sky, the river is comforting and memorizing. But, there is one more thing that always brings a smile to my face. It is the distant and familiar whistle blasts from freighters. For those lucky islanders who live on the shipping channel, I am sure you are starting to see more and more freighter traffic. What a thrill it is to watch them pass, going up and down the river with the churning of their massive engines. And even more awesome is seeing two freighters pass each other and hearing their whistle blasts to let each other know their intentions. One short blast means 'I intend to leave you on my port side' and two short blasts means 'I intend to leave you on my starboard side'.



*The ALGOSTEEL and MCKEE SONS are already traveling the Great Lakes. Donated photos from the Dolores Komar collection (1994).*

The Historical Society is bringing the marvelous sounds of the freighter whistle to Harsens Island with our very own steam whistle. Back in October 2017 we announced the start of the Steam Whistle Project. The project included building a small annex to the museum and installing a compressor, an air storage tank and the donated steam whistle from the retired Freighter J.B. Ford. As Bob Williams mentioned at the beginning of this newsletter we are close to completing the project.

To celebrate the project completion, we are planning a get-together and dedication on Saturday May 25 (save the date). The celebration will include refreshments and a raffle for a chance to blow the steam whistle. See event details on page 5.

Hope to see you there!



## Curator's Corner

By Chuck Miller

I am asking all our members to consider contributing to our newsletter by contributing a story relating to interesting island events that may have occurred in their family. Submit them in word (.doc) format or just write them down and send them to me with pictures. If you want help crafting the story, contact me and we'll work it up together.

Contact our curator, Chuck Miller, to arrange for a visit.

There are great stories out there! Help me capture them!

(cmiller5179@gmail.com)

### Harsens Island Historical Society Calendar 2019

Date	Day	Time	Event
May 4	Saturday		Board / Membership Meeting at Museum
May 25 - 27	Saturday	11:30 AM – 3:30 PM	Steam Whistle Dedication and Building Addition ground breaking ceremony
	Sunday	12:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Memorial Weekend Museum Open House
	Monday	10:00 AM – 3:00 PM	
June 1	Saturday	9:30 AM	Museum Host Orientation at Museum
June 1	Saturday	10:30 AM	Board / Membership Meeting at Museum
June 1	Saturday	3:00 PM	Museum Host Orientation at Museum
June 14	Friday	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Social Hour
July 6	Saturday	10:30 AM	Board / Membership Meeting at Museum
July 12	Friday	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Social Hour
August 3	Saturday	5:30 PM	Board Meeting/Dinner at Board member's home
August 9	Friday	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Social Hour
August 17	Saturday	4:30 PM	Wine and Appetizers at Museum
		5:00 PM – 6:00 PM	Annual Membership Meeting at Museum
		6:00 PM	Board Meeting to Elect Board Members
September 13	Friday	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Social Hour
October 5	Saturday	10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Pie Sale at Museum
October 12	Saturday	10:30 AM	Board / Membership Meeting at Museum
December 7	Saturday	10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Cookie Walk at Museum
December 14	Saturday	10:30 AM	Board Meeting at Museum



### Museum Hours

<b>Memorial Weekend May 25 – 27</b>
Saturday 11:30 AM – 3:30 PM
Sunday 12:00 PM – 4:00 PM
Monday 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM
<b>Summer Schedule (June, July, August)</b>
Second Fridays 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Saturdays 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Sundays 12:00 PM – 4:00 PM
<b>Winter Schedule (October through April)</b>
Closed but Open by appointment





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

**Mailing Address:**

PO Box 44  
Harsens Island MI 48028

**Museum Address:**

3058 S. Channel Dr.

<https://harsensislandhistory.org/>

**HISCFHS Board of Directors**

Chairman of the Board  
**Open Position**

President  
**Bob Williams**

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
**Sue Wrobel**

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
**Corinne Trexler**

Treasurer  
**Joyce Hassen**

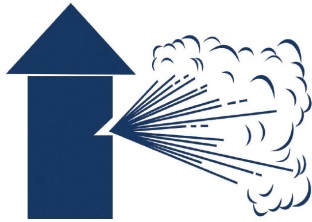
Secretary  
**Nancy Bonacquisti**

Directors  
**Terry Wiggins**  
**Mary Woodford**  
**Christine Knight**

Come and Help Us  
**Blow Off Some Steam**

**Saturday, May 25<sup>th</sup>**

**11:30 AM – 3:30 PM**



Pulled Pork Sliders  
Coleslaw  
Refreshments  
Desserts

**Raffle - \$1 per Ticket**  
Win a chance to blow the steam whistle  
4 Chances to Win – Noon, 1, 2 and 3 pm  
Historical Society Members receive 5  
Free Tickets (pick up at event)

Need to be present to win  
New tickets for each drawing

## Membership Application 2019

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

<u>Annual Dues:</u>		<u>Life-time Dues</u>	
{ } Individual (1 Member Only)	\$20.00	_____ Life Individual	\$300.00
{ } Family (1-2 Adults plus children under 18 years)	\$30.00	_____ Life Family	\$500.00
{ } Business	\$50.00		

**BUILDING ADDITION DONATION:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_ **OTHER DONATION:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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: **The Society**. Mail to: The Society, PO Box 44, Harsens Island, MI 48028

**OFFICE USE ONLY:**

Date received: \_\_\_\_\_

Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_