



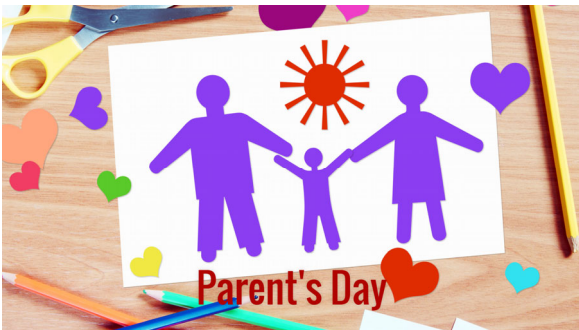
Fourth of July

Independence Day is celebrated annually on July 4 and is often known as “the Fourth of July”. It is the anniversary of the publication of the declaration of independence from Great Britain in 1776. Patriotic displays and family events are organized throughout the United States.



Parent’s Day – July 28

Parental figures in the United States receive the recognition for the role they play in their children’s lives on Parent’s Day. The day aims to promote responsible parenting and to recognize positive parental role models. It celebrates the special bonds of love between parental figures and their children.



Source: <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/us>

Message from the President . . .

Hi All,

Steam Whistle Project

On June 29, 2019 we held the Steam Whistle Dedication ceremony at the museum. All went well with John Cameron, Jr., the donor of the whistle, and his brother Kenny gave us the first blast on our wonderful whistle.

The whistle is from the freighter, the J.B. Ford, and was donated to our historical society by John and his wife Ann almost two years ago. John works for Inland Lakes Management, successor to the Huron Cement Company, that owned and operated the J.B. Ford (see December 2017 Newsletter for information on J.B. Ford) on the Great Lakes until 1985. Inland gave John the whistle as a gift when the ship was decommissioned. He installed it at his home in western Michigan and enjoyed it there for many years; when he moved from that home, he called the Society and asked if we would like it for the museum. He offered it with the compressor which he used to operate it at his home.

About two years ago Chuck Miller and Bobby Bryson made the trip to Grand Rapids to uninstall the whistle and compressor for its move to the museum. It then took us about a year to plan the installation at the museum and to build the equipment room. It was then about another year to get the equipment installed, hooked up, and operating. This involved finding and renovating an additional air storage tank so that we would have enough air to blow the whistle more than just once an hour.

Our compressor room was constructed under a contract with Dan Persyn; the electrical hook up was donated by member Amy Strutz of AJ Leo Electric and Solar. The moving of equipment, finding the added tank, fabricating piping and controls, painting, and hook up

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

was done by a crew of Society members consisting of John Eidt, Bobby Bryson, Tom Hellstrom, and Chuck Miller.

Funding for the construction of the compressor room and additional equipment was provided by the general membership and friends of the Society with a matching grant from Drew and Karen Pesler. Thank you, everyone, for your support of, and dedication to this project. The whistle is a highlight of our collection and will be enjoyed by members, islanders, and passing ships for many years to come.

Building Addition Status

At the end of May we held the groundbreaking for the addition to our museum building. Since that time, we have prepared the old wood portion off the back of the building for demolition, cleared items from the site, and moved the existing air conditioning condenser out of the area of the proposed addition. Record high ground water levels have prevented the contractor from digging foundations as of yet, but we hope to be able to work on those in July, when things begin to dry out a bit.

Bob Williams, President (xharpspah@aol.com)

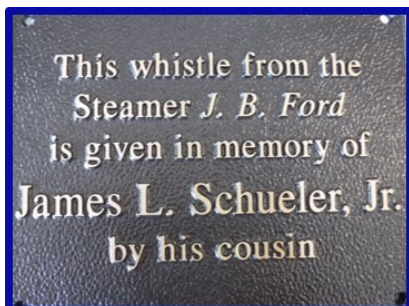
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Bob William going over the history of the Steam Whistle Project



John Cameron Jr. talking about the whistle and dedicating it to his cousin.





Chuck Miller talks about the J.B Ford



*John Cameron Jr. and Kenny Cameron
blow the steam whistle*



*Board Member, Corinne Trexler serves
refreshments*



*Historical Society members and guests watch the Steam Whistle
Dedication*

Duck Almost Delays Steam Whistle Dedication

Here's a little side story about the Steam Whistle Dedication which not many people know about. **The dedication was almost postponed by a duck.** Just after the Memorial Day weekend testing of the steam whistle we noticed that a duck had taken up residence behind one of the shrubs in front of the compressor room, within two feet of where we stand to pull the pole to blast the whistle. We found out soon after that she was sitting on some eggs.

Any time that we checked on her, there she was, sitting on her eggs. We did not want to call attention to her and therefore did not put up any markers to keep people away and week after week people would come and go on the sidewalk just feet from her and sometimes stand nearby without even noticing her. She blended in well with the color of the mulch.

As the dedication approached some of us were concerned that the crowd or the sound of the steam whistle at the dedication could scare her away and that she might not come back to finish incubating her eggs. In the end, just a few days before the dedication, she hatched about 6 or 7 ducklings and they all went on their merry way. The next time you are at the museum you can look behind the shrubs in front of the compressor room and see the egg shells. All's well that ends well.



Wait for me . . . people are too loud!

Algonac Middle School Visits the Museum

Our Historical Museum had some special young visitors in June. Four classes of 2nd graders from Algonquin Elementary School in Algonac came to Harsens Island to learn more about their community. Their visit to the island included a stop at the museum. The students were very interested in the display of crafts made by the Indians of Walpole Island that were sold at Tashmoo Park. They enjoyed looking at our model of the Tashmoo Steamer and comparing it to the Titanic! They also had fun completing our Scavenger Hunt activity. Thank you to Ellen Probst and Louann Schachermeyer for volunteering to help us welcome the students to the museum.



One of four groups of kids from Algonac Middle School



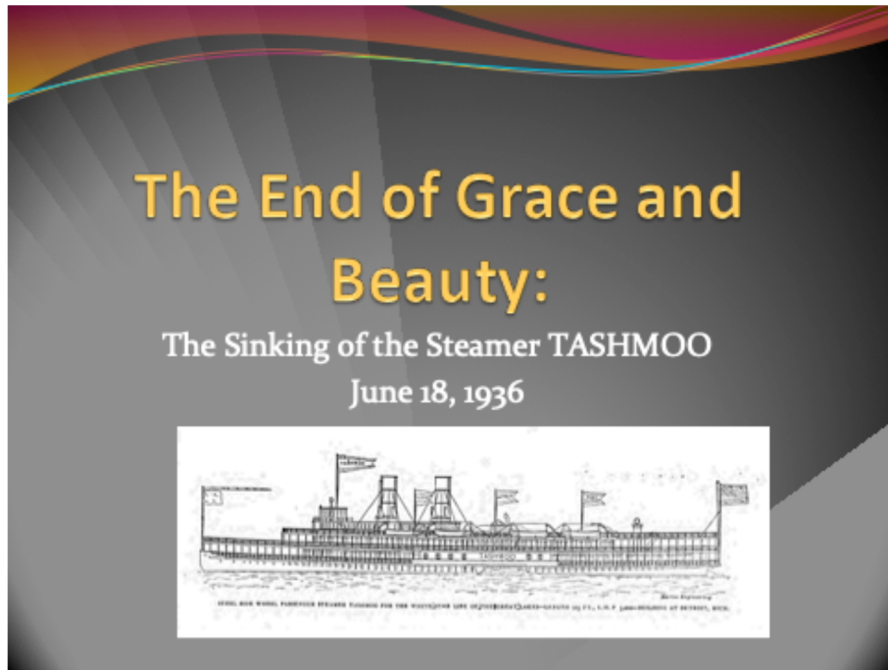
Museum's version of Ms. Frizzle



Kids on a scavenger hunt

The End of Grace and Beauty: The Sinking of the Steamer TASHMOO

By Chuck Miller



On the night of June 18-19, 1936, 1,400 passengers, mostly members of the Polish American Legal Society (PALS, which still exists today), were returning from a Moonlight Cruise to Sugar Island in the lower Detroit River. The Tashmoo was running through the Sugar Island Channel opposite Amherstberg, Ontario when she struck hard rock on the bottom near the keel. She immediately began to take on water and Captain Donald McAlpine immediately began heading for the Brunner Monn Coal Dock on the Amherstberg shore 2 miles away. With passengers and crew safely ashore, they watched the Tashmoo sink to the bottom in 18 feet of water. No injuries were reported.



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The End of Grace and Beauty . . . continued from page 6 . . .

The incident did provide a few stories; it seems that four young girls from Cooley High School accidentally boarded the Tashmoo instead of their assigned steamer. They were discovered by a lady crewmember who happened to be a relative of one of the girls. Since the Tashmoo was already under way, she took pity on them and hid them in a room and locked the door . . . promising to return to release them upon docking. Fortunately, they were released with quite a story to tell. Also, in an eerie parallel to the Titanic, while the Tashmoo raced to the shore before sinking, the band "played on" and the passengers continued their revelry right to the end. In fact, reports indicate that once ashore, many of them wanted to return to the ship to continue their gaiety!

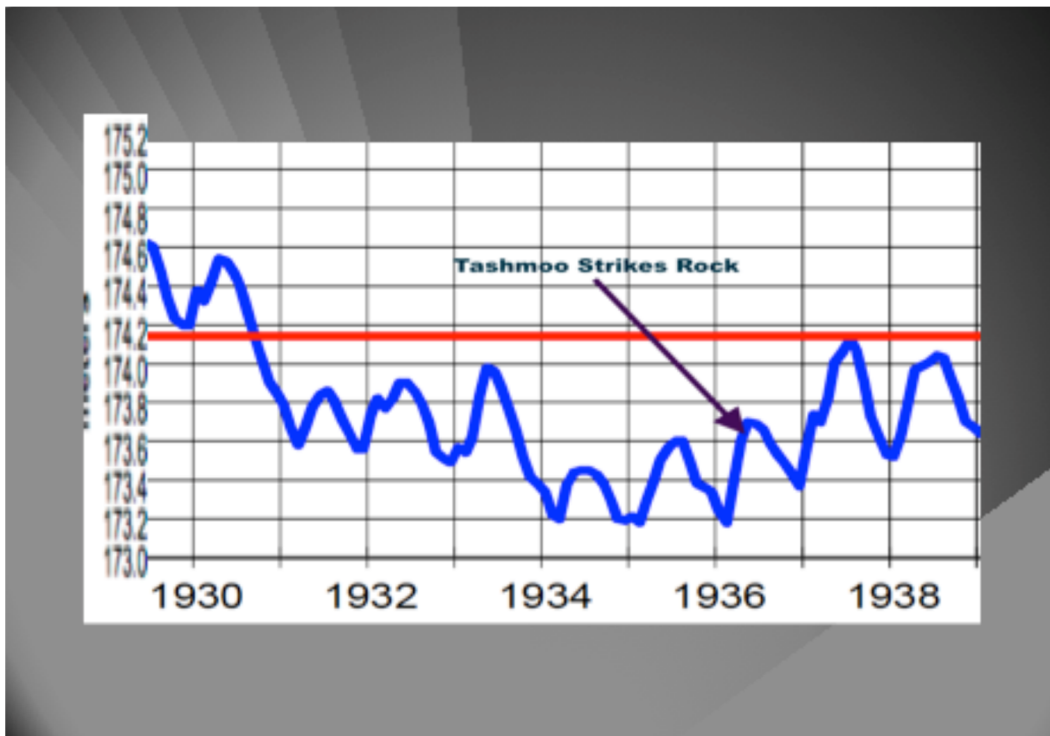
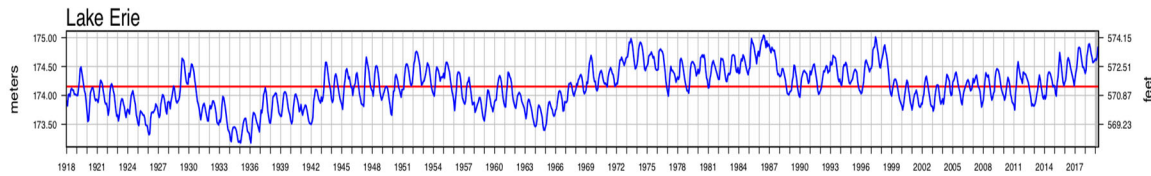


The condition of the Tashmoo was in grave doubt, and repeated efforts by hard-hat divers to locate the gash in the hull were unsuccessful. Due to damage to her keel, it was decided that the steamer was a total loss. Most of the furnishings and dishware were moved to storage, first in Amherstburg, then in Detroit. A Federal Investigation was convened immediately, and numerous crew and passengers were called to testify before a Board of Inquiry. Captain McAlpine claimed that an errant boulder from a nearby dredging operation had somehow slid down into the side of the channel, and he was unfortunate enough to strike it. Since, at that time, the Livingston Channel construction was underway, and nearby blasting, dredging and spoil dumping, it was a plausible explanation. However, repeated attempts were made to locate the 'boulder' with no success. The mishap went basically unsolved, and the crew was cited for their dedication to duty and their bravery. No one was injured, so the event passed into history. Captain McAlpine came away a hero.

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But the story takes an interesting turn. Recently, while researching historic water levels in our area, this author stumbled on a bit of minutia that could conceivably shed more light on the accident that night in 1936. This data suggests a new hypothesis should be brought to light that the Tashmoo didn't strike an errant boulder at all; it may have simply glanced off the rock bottom of the Sugar Island Channel and ripped the hull. Captain McAlpine may have been a victim of a natural process, one that is affecting us today on the opposite end of the scale. This chart shows the water level for the lower Detroit River from 1916-2019. The arrow below the chart points to the time of the Tashmoo accident. The red line represents the all-time average. Note that the incident coincides closely with the *all-time low water* recorded in the last 100 years or so! Could it be that low water had a role in the Tashmoo sinking?



At the time of the sinking, the water level in the Sugar Island Channel was a mere six inches above the all-time record low! The Tashmoo was transiting the Sugar Island Channel, a narrow cut just below Grosse Isle at night. The channel was not maintained by any public authority; it was owned and operated exclusively by the White Star Line and Tashmoo was its sole user! Available charts from the period show the very few buoys or markers then maintained by the Army Corps. of Engineers in the established navigation lanes - none in the Sugar Island Cut. Captain McAlpine's margin for error had

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The End of Grace and Beauty . . . continued from page 8 . . .

shrunk considerably and he had to rely on his experience and dead reckoning in making this passage ... especially at night. Not an easy task with a channel merely 300 feet wide, and the water level so low. Still reeling from the economic effects of the 1929 crash, and the specter of new alternative transportation options (rail and automobile), The Glory Days of the passenger steamers were rapidly fading. By 1941, two of the remaining grand passenger steamers were under the torch; being reconstructed as aircraft carriers for training naval aviators on Lake Michigan.

Post Script

At this writing, we stand at an all-time high-water level for the Great Lakes. Very close to eclipsing the 1985-86 levels, and still rising. The temporal effect of these changes over a relatively short span of time can be dramatic.



Dandron Hwy, Harsens Island 1986

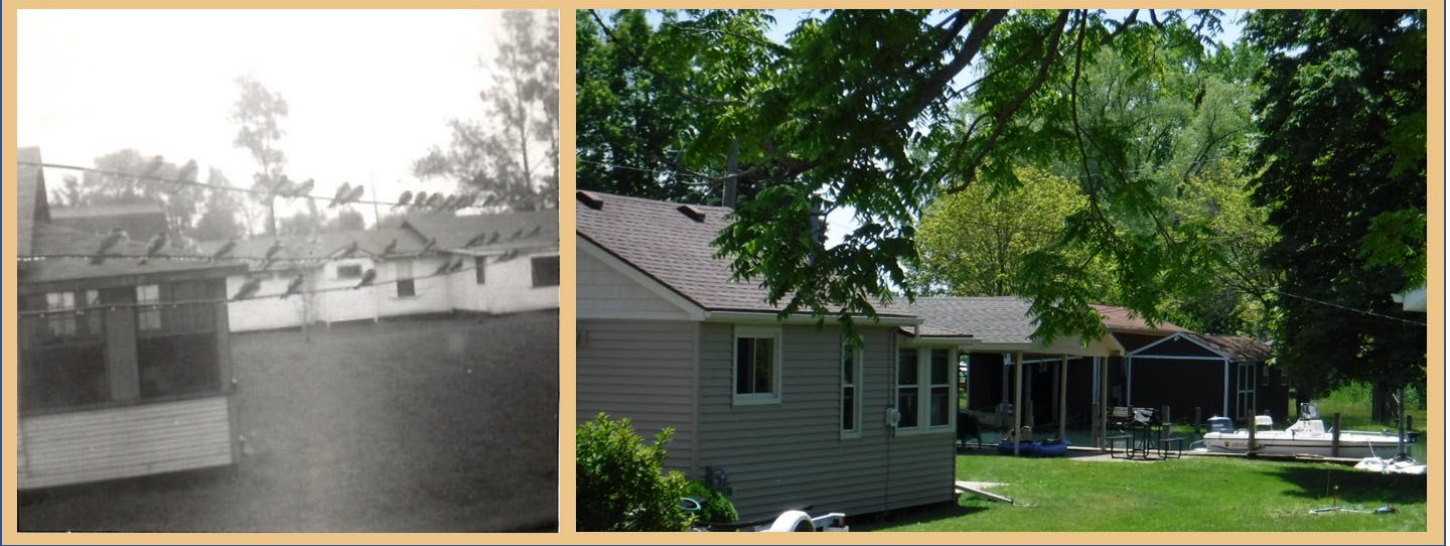


Dandron Hwy, Harsens Island 2016 (same points of view as 1986)

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Post Script . . . continued from page 9 . . .

High and low water comes in cycles . . .



Dandron Hwy, Harsens Island 1955 and 2019 (water was high in 1955-left, the same property today-right)

Just six years ago the water was very low . . .



Carol and Tom Hogg's Home in January 2013

Harsens Island Historical Society Calendar 2019

Note: The Annual Membership Meeting has been moved to August 10 (same time – 4:30 PM)

Date	Day	Time	Event
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 10	Saturday	4:30 PM 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM 6:00 PM	Wine and Appetizers at Museum Annual Membership Meeting at Museum Board Meeting to Elect 2019 Officers
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

Summer Schedule (June, July, August)
Second Fridays 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Saturdays 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Sundays 12:00 PM – 4:00 PM
Winter Schedule (October through April)
Closed but Open by appointment



The historical society is collecting photos and stories about the high water of 2019. Please contact our curator, Chuck Miller, to share your stories.

(cmiller5179@gmail.com)



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

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Harsens Island MI 48028

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3058 S. Channel Dr.

<https://harsensislandhistory.org/>

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Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Historical Society

Policy and Procedures for the Operation of Steam Whistles

This article applies to steam whistles at the Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Historical Society whether owned by, loaned to, or just visiting the Society. Such whistles, and any equipment relating to these whistles, will be installed, maintained and operated only by persons approved by the Curator. Use of the whistle operational exhibit will be restricted to persons who are specifically qualified, trained, and approved by the Curator. The whistle operational exhibit includes mounted whistles, piping, controls, and air compressor system.

Whistles will be blown at the discretion of the Curator. The blowing of the whistles will be treated as a special event rather than a routine exercise. It is advisable to sound the museum siren 30 to 60 seconds prior to activating the whistle as a notice to neighbors. Whistles will only be blown in keeping with the following guidelines of Steam Whistle Salutes.

Steam Whistle Salutes

A standard salute to a ship is to be one long blast followed by two short blasts. A short blast is a blast of approximately one second in duration. A long blast is a blast of approximately four seconds in duration. A master salute is to be used only on special occasions and might never be used at the museum. Three long blasts followed by two short blasts. All other blasts of any duration or combination should be completely avoided so as not to confuse personnel on nearby ships. Five short blasts mean "danger" and should avoided at all times.

The whistle preferably will only be used when no commercial ships are in sight or when only one commercial ship is in sight. We need to be especially careful if we use the whistle when two or more commercial ships are in sight so as not to confuse the ship navigators about where the signal is coming from or its meaning.

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 \$ _____