



### Museum closed until further notice

In the best interest of our visitors and volunteers at the museum, we will not be reopening on Memorial Day weekend as usual. We are postponing all Historical Society events and visitation to the museum until the Covid-19 virus pandemic is well under control and no longer a threat to our community.

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

Hi All,

#### *Our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*

April 20th was an historic day for our organization. Ten years ago, that day, we received approval from the State of Michigan of our Incorporation papers. We have come a long way in this first ten years. We began as a small group of islanders meeting to discuss our island history. After about a year we rented the old fire hall and opened the museum. A few years later the rental agreement was renegotiated into a land contract purchase agreement and in our sixth year we paid off the contract, and the building was all ours. Two years ago, we completed the small addition to house the Steam Whistle from the J.B. Ford and last year we broke ground on our new exhibit space and storage room addition. We still have a way to go to complete the addition, but we should all be very proud of what we have accomplished in our first ten years.

*continued on page 2 . . .*

#### *What Was It Like Back Then?*

This year our newsletters are going to feature a new section called "What Was It Like Back Then?". Each month this section will highlight how people lived in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In the last two issue, the Prohibition was featured in two articles. One article mentioned that people brewed their own beer for their blind pigs. I thought this would be a good topic for this issue's "What Was It like Back Then?"

#### *Beer*

From 1835 *Frugal Housewife* . . .

"Beer is a good family drink. A handful of hops, to a pail full of water, and a half-pint of molasses, makes good hop beer. Spruce mixed with hops is pleasanter than hops alone. Boxberry, fever-bush, sweet fern, and horseradish make a good and healthy diet-drink. The winter evergreen, or rheumatism weed, thrown in, is very beneficial to humors. Be careful and not mistake kill-lamb for winter-evergreen ; they resemble each other. Malt mixed with a few hops makes a weak kind of beer ; but it is cool and pleasant ; it needs less molasses than hops alone. The rule is about the same for all beer. Boil the ingredients two or three hours, pour in a half-pint of

*continued on page 2 . . .*

*President's Letter . . . continued from page 1 . . .*

We had planned an anniversary event for the Memorial Day weekend, but we will have to hold that off until later when we know it is safe to gather and celebrate.

The Board of Directors sends it's thanks to all of our members for their continued support during our first ten years and hope to be able to see many of you at the museum later in the year.

Stay safe,

Bob Williams, President (xharpspah@aol.com)

## Museum Exhibit Improvement Project

By Chris Knight

The museum building expansion may be on hold from a structural perspective, but we are working on a side project related to the expansion. A group of board members and supportive islanders formed a team called the Museum Exhibit Improvement Project Team, EXPO Team for short. The team's goal is to ensure that the museum's exhibits, displays, and labeling are designed to entertain, enrich, and educate visitors.

What does mean? Well, a number of things. With the expansion there will be more space which is an opportunity to improve the overall layout of the exhibits. Besides the layout, the team is exploring improvements to display methods, labeling, organizing the library collection, and new ways of teaching our youngest visitors about the island. Our first step is to catalog all of the current exhibits and artifacts to make sure all items are listed in the museum's Donation Inventory Database. Long term the Donation Inventory will be a searchable database with artifacts, a library document list and photos. Next, we will be prototyping new labels with a focus on visual appeal and education. The timing of the execution of the new layout, labels, displays will be determined later this year once the expansion is complete.

We have had to slow the effort a bit due to the coronavirus. However, if anybody who is Excel and Word savvy would like to help, there is plenty of work. Reach out to Chris Knight ([chris.knight@comcast.net](mailto:chris.knight@comcast.net)) if you would like to help.

EXPO Team: Corinne Trexler, Marie Eidt, John Eidt, Ellen Probst, Chuck Miller and Chris Knight.

*What Was It Like Back Then? . . . continued from page 1 . . .*

molasses to a pail full, while the beer is scalding hot. Strain the beer, and when about lukewarm, put a pint lively yeast to a barrel. Leave the bung loose till the beer is done working; you can ascertain this by observing when the froth subsides. If your family be large, and the beer will be drank rapidly, it may as well remain in the barrel; but if your family be small, fill what bottles you have with it; it keeps better bottled. A raw potato or two, cut up and thrown in, while the ingredients are boiling, is said to make beer spirited."

Home brewing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century included spruce and molasses, along with hops and malt. Beer is usually based on a grain, most often barley, which is malted and then brewed with hops, before being fermented. Although barley was more readily available to many early brewers than sugar, the malting could be a tricky undertaking. There were attempts to substitute Indian corn for barley as a grain, but these experiments were largely unsuccessful.

[https://blogs.loc.gov/inside\\_adams/2014/09/early-american-beer/](https://blogs.loc.gov/inside_adams/2014/09/early-american-beer/) Early American Beer, September 29, 2014 by Jennifer

Harbster

## Help Us Record This Historic Time

By Bob Williams

This is truly an historic time in the world and right here on the island. The island, as you know, is also dealing with the high-water crisis and the ferry dock problem, which led to a lack of being able to bring sand to the island to aid in shoreline protection.

I have a favor to ask.

Decades from now people visiting our museum will be asking what was happening on the island during the pandemic and how did it affect the islanders. I believe that, as a Society, we need to not only make available the history we know of but also to record history as it happens.

Recently I received an email from the Historical Society of Michigan (HSM) describing a project they have undertaken for the Library of Michigan, to record stories of this time in Michigan's history. Some of the text from that email is copied for you at the bottom of this message. HSM is asking Michiganders to write their story of their experiences during this historic time.

Being quite involved in family tree research, I have many times wondered what my ancestors were doing and thinking during events such as the Great Depression, the world wars, or the pandemic of 1918. As a result, I began a diary about eight weeks ago, for the purpose of leaving a record for my descendants. I also plan to leave a copy of that diary in the files of our museum. I would like to encourage you to add to that file by writing a bit about your experiences during this time in your life on the island. It is our intent to collect all of the articles received and compile them into one document that will not only be on file at the museum but will also be submitted to the Library of Michigan to become a part of their project.

If you are interested in being a part of this project, please send your writings to me at [xharpspah@aol.com](mailto:xharpspah@aol.com) . If you would like a few ideas to get started, you can see the HSM webpage about their project at: <https://bit.ly/2ynT8rj>

Thank you and stay safe.

Robert Williams

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### BELOW IS PART OF THE EMAIL I RECEIVED FROM HSM ABOUT THEIR PROJECT

The Historical Society of Michigan is sponsoring an effort of the Library of Michigan to collect your stories of life during the coronavirus pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all of us in many different ways, and we are all eyewitnesses to the events that have been unfolding in the last few weeks. This is a time for us to record our daily experiences, thoughts, and feelings in diary form, either in writing or video.

The Library of Michigan and the Historical Society of Michigan envision collecting and preserving these stories of our daily lives during the crisis to provide future historians, researchers, and students with information and data on life in Michigan communities during the pandemic.

Please take the time each day to record your activities, thoughts, and/or feelings in diary form. The entries can be handwritten, typed, or in video format, and they can be as long or short as you want. Don't worry about handwriting, spelling, or punctuation. The goal is to capture your personal experiences.

Please consider saving and sharing your story of life during this pandemic for the Library of Michigan.

### Brief History of Piers Lighthouse

By Chris Knight / Chuck Miller

Helen Yacques, "an old timer" submitted the following information on the Piers.

"I spent six rather exciting weeks back in 1922 at the lighthouse that stood on the piers. Mr. Tom Lapin was the keeper for the light, which was lit at sundown, and put out each morning. It was a guiding light for freighters which came up from the lake on one side and down on the other. Mr. Lapin's wife was dying in Detroit, so my husband was asked to take over for a while. To light the lamp, you ascended a circular iron stairway and it didn't pay to look down. The first day we were there a cruiser caught fire and two people drowned. A passing freighter told us to rescue the men. It was next to impossible to launch our small boat as the waves were so high – but we did it. The second day we were there, a small government boat stopped by on a routine checkup and I learned that baby clothes (we had our first child along) were not to be seen and things must shape up – or ship out. You learn faster in your 20's.

I've written to the Corps of Engineers for information on the piers as most people don't remember about them. Gull Island is all that remains."

Respectfully submitted: Helen Yacques "an old timer"



## Summer Days on the Route of Star-cole, Red and White Star Lines' Steamers

By Chris Knight

Carol Hogg let me borrow a photocopy of a book she had called Summer Days on the Detroit and St. Clair River (not sure about the title since the photocopy is hard to read). It looks like it was written in 1894. I found and bought a reproduction of Summer Days on the Route of Star-cole, Red and White Star Lines' Steamers, originally published in 1897, which has almost identical content as Carol's copy. The book is tour of sites along the Detroit River and St. Clair River. Many known and long forgotten attractions on Harsens Island are mentioned, from, Star Island, to Marshland Club, to Tashmoo Park and many more.

I thought you would enjoy an excerpt from the book . . .

### Maple Leaf

Dame Nature, when showering her prodigal favors in the beautiful region 'round the Flats, remember with bountiful hand this exquisitely lovely spot. Maple Leaf is indeed appropriately named, for the entire river front is adorned with those majestic trees, they present a magnificent site. Here, under the leafy branches of the lordly maples, one becomes enthusiastic and is thrilled with the panorama of splendor that greets the vision. Sweeping back from the river front, where the maples stand like watchful sentinels guarding this earthly paradise, the entranced beholder observes ornamental flower beds of surpassing beauty and unique design. Delightful driveways thread the grove, and artistically arranged walks proclaim the grandeur of Maple Leaf to be the ideal spot for a summer home. Everywhere the eye is greeted with charming cottages of picturesque architecture that add wonderfully to the beauty of the landscape and, as one detects a feeling of fascination stealing over him, he rapturously exclaims:

The cottage homes of Maple Leaf,  
How beautiful they stand  
Amid the stately forest trees,  
The fairest in the land.

Adorned by Nature's lavish gifts  
And those that men devise,  
Its splendor stands without a peer –  
An earthly paradise.

The waters here abound with fish in great variety, and catches are frequently made of from fifty to one hundred pounds in a single day's sport. Bathing can be enjoyed with perfect safety, as the water at the shore is but eight inches deep and gradually extends to a depth of three feet at a distance of two hundred feet from the shore.

The river bottom is of sand, and being kept in perfect order, makes bathing all the more enjoyable. It is an ideal spot for fishing and boating or other aquatic amusements and should your ideas of pleasure run in the direction of other outdoor sports, the grounds will be found splendidly adapted for those enjoyments. There is no place along the river that possesses so many advantages for private residences, and the beautiful place has been subdivided into lots are the most desirable and attractive, and none will be sold for any other purpose. This restriction assures the permanent high character of the property to every purchaser of a lot at Maple Leaf. The proprietors have expended enormous sums of money in assisting Nature to beautify and make this the prettiest

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*Summer Days . . . continued from page 5 . . .*

and most ideal summer resort along the river. There are some desirable lots that front on the stately St. Clair River, and other face the magnificent avenues that grandly sweep over the expansive grounds.

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Contributed by Bob Williams

**God Willin' and the Creek Don't Rise**

I hope you all are doing your best to stay safe during these hard times. I know your lives have been turned upside down by this Covid-19 pandemic coming on top of the record high water levels.

The other day I thought of the old phrase "God Willin' and the creek don't rise" and I thought, that's what many of us are thinking right now. I remembered that there was a song by that name, so I looked it up.

Since March 11<sup>th</sup> I have been isolated at my home in Berkley and I find the last stanza of the song particularly fitting when thinking about Harsens Island.

God Willin' & the Creek Don't Rise by Ray LaMontagne

In the mountains the sun sets up in ribbons so high  
 It's like I don't never wanna get old, don't never wanna die  
 We seein' steady rain, 'bout to drive us all insane  
 Nearly lost a few head up in the pines

At night, some of the boys get to talking up their girls back home  
 I tell 'em there ain't none's as fine as mine  
 I can hear old Chapman sayin', come morning we'll break the range  
 Be pushin' hard now for the plains

I close my eyes, I can see you  
 I close my eyes, I can feel you here  
 God willin' and the creek don't rise  
 I'll be home again before this time next year  
 Though I fear this fever won't break

All my love

# Harsens Island Historical Society Calendar 2020

Date	Day	Time	Event
<b>POSTPONED</b>			Board / Membership Meeting at the Museum
			Historical Society 10th Anniversary Celebration
			Memorial Weekend Museum Open House
			Museum Host Orientation at the Museum
<b>June 6</b>	Saturday	10:30 AM	Board / Membership Meeting at the Museum
<b>June 12</b>	Friday	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Social Hour at the Museum
<b>July 3</b>	Friday	8:00 PM	Board / Membership Meeting at the Museum
<b>July 10</b>	Friday	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Social Hour at the Museum
<b>August 14</b>	Friday	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Social Hour at the Museum
<b>August 15</b>	Saturday	4:30 PM – 5:00 PM 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM	Wine and Appetizers at the Museum Annual Membership Meeting (Election results)
<b>September 13</b>	Friday	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Social Hour at the Museum
<b>October 3</b>	Saturday	10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Pie Sale at the Museum
<b>October 10</b>	Saturday	10:30 AM	Board / Membership Meeting at Museum
<b>December 5</b>	Saturday	10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Cookie Walk at the Museum



## Museum Hours

(May change due to Covid-19)

<b>Summer Schedule (June, July, August, September)</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**

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**Terry Wiggins**  
**Donna Krispin**  
**Christine Knight**



The historical society is still collecting photos and stories about the high water of 2019. Please contact our curator, Chuck Miller (cmiller5179@gmail.com).

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**Volunteer to be a Host at the Museum this Summer**

**Volunteer for 3 (2 hour) shifts and get a Free T-Shirt from the Museum Gift Shop**

**Orientation – To Be Announced**

**Contact Corinne Trexler for additional information 313-530-9173**



## Membership Application 2020

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: \_\_\_\_\_ Current Membership Type \_\_\_\_\_

<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		

<b>BUILDING ADDITION DONATION: \$</b> _____	<b>OTHER DONATION: \$</b> _____
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

<b>OFFICE USE ONLY:</b>	
Date received:	_____
Check # _____	Amount \$ _____