



volume 15 / number 1

January / February 2024

Message from the President . . .

Happy Winter!

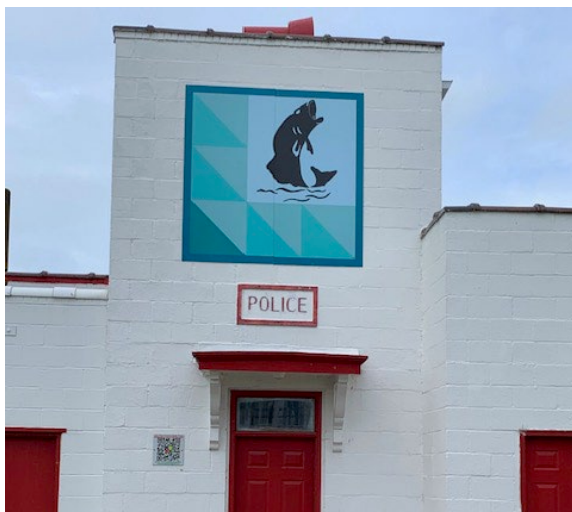
I hope your winter is going well, whether you're in warmer climates or here in Michigan. The milder winter has given me a false sense that spring is right around the corner, but I keep reminding myself we still have a lot of winter left before spring. That hasn't stopped me from starting to prepare for opening the cottage. This is the time of year when I start purchasing and storing the staple items that needed replenishing in fall when we closed; like spices, paper towel, aluminum foil, etc. etc. etc., the 'pantry' will be ready when I can turn the water back on and begin spring cleaning!

Late last year, we applied for a 2024 grant through the Michigan History Alliance Grant Program. This grant program is designed to make it easier for smaller historical societies like ours the opportunity to obtain funds for specific needs, by simplifying the application process and providing multiple smaller grants to different organizations. Our application requested funds so we could replace the outdoor shed behind the museum. I am happy to announce that we were successful in obtaining that grant, and we will be moving forward with replacing our very old and difficult to use outside shed!! We also wish to thank the Michigan Historical Alliance and are grateful to them for awarding us the grant. Stay tuned for updates as we begin that project.

As always, thank you for your support!

Joyce

Joyce Hassen, President



The Historical Society of Michigan published their Winter Issue of the Chronicle. The new Harsens Island Historical Society Quilt Block was mentioned in the magazine.

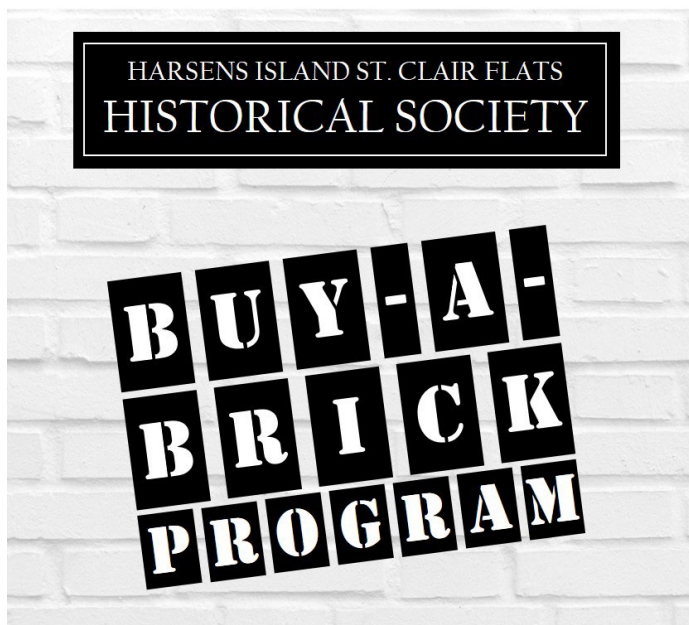
<https://sccqt.org/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ibzhPyeBXY>

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 at the end of this newsletter.

Memories



The young girl in the middle of the boat is Bob Cameron's mother, she was 14 years old. Photo was taken at the dock that was at the end of Mackinac Street. Tashmoo used to use this dock when repairs were being made at the dock at Tashmoo Park. There was no seawall yet, just a beach.

Harsen's Island Crowd Stranded

Article from Detroit Times 1959

Algonac, April 5 – Several hundred persons were marooned on Harsens Island tonight when floating ice made the St. Clair River impassable to auto ferries. Meanwhile, a spectacular marsh fire raged on the southern end of the island. Volunteer firemen had been fighting the blaze since early today. The floating ice chocked the channel at midafternoon after the ferries had brought approximately 400 persons to the island.

Many were cottagers who had shelter for the night. Many others, however, were sightseers and fisherman who had planned only a few hours outing on the resort island. The stranded visitors jammed grocery stores and restaurants. Stores reported a run-on food supplies and fuel oil by cottagers who had not planned to stay overnight.

Every room was sold out in the Ship and Shore, the only open hotel on the island, and the proprietor, Mrs. Irene McFarland, set up cots to transform the dining room into a dormitory. The ice came in from Lake Huron in the early afternoon. Auto ferries operated by the Champion Ferry Co. were forced to return to their docks after unsuccessful efforts at passage.

continued on page 4 . . .

continued from page 3 . . . Harsen's Island Crowd Stranded

Scores of cars had lined up at the island ferry approaches by late afternoon hoping the ice jam would break up.

The ferry company said this was the first interruption to its service in more than a year. Art Champion, president of the ferry company blamed operations of the coast guard ice breaker for the jam. He said the *Mackinac*, working at the Lake Huron mouth of the St. Clair, was dislodging huge chunks of ice. Fire Chief, Wilford Yax said that the fire would probably burn itself out without property damage, barring a sudden wind shift. Meanwhile, he was keeping it confined to the vast marsh area by setting back fires. Over 500 acres of state land have already been burned over, Yax said. Flames at times shot 40 feet into the air and were visible for miles.

Island's Life 'Untradeable'

By Hank Schaller (Algonac Bureau Chief)

Harsens Island – Back in 1778, Jacob Harsen I, fur trader and gunsmith, proved to be almost as shrewd a shopper as Peter Minuit had been when he purchased Manhattan for a pittance. Jacob Harsen, the first white man to settle on Harsens Island, obtained possession of St. Clair County's largest island from the Indians by making them a few guns. But little did Harsen realize the wilderness he purchased would become the eventual home for a thousand Clay Township residents, a number that swells to five times that amount in the summer.

Nor did Harsen know his island would become part of Michigan at all. After all, it was years after his purchase before the Canadian government granted him a deed to the island from "deep water to deep water." And it was still later that the boundary line between Canada and the United States was straightened and Harsens Island became part of Michigan.

And yet, Jon E. Manos, Clay Township supervisor and island resident himself, claims the character of the island is changing still. "More and more of the people who used to maintain only summer cottages on the island are moving here to live permanently," Manos explained. Connected to the mainland by Champion Auto Ferry, the golfers who frequent the Middle Channel Golf and Country Club are only a small segment of island visitors.

Now, literally thousands of fishermen cram the banks of the island canals. In fact, so many consider Harsens Island their favorite fishing hole, one of the problems faced by island residents is the litter left behind. Still and all, island residents are unique from most communities in that most belong to the Harsens Island St. Clair Flats Association, which tries to represent island interests.

As a matter of fact, just as one leaves the ferry, the Cecil R. Browne Recreation Area is visible on the left. Its tennis courts and baseball diamond are for use by islanders since the land itself was donated by a resident and other islanders who have financed park improvements through field days and bike-a-thons. Moreover, the organization was instrumental in its effort to keep the St. Clair Flats Coast Guard Station in operation. Of course, a great deal of Harsens Island is now under Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) control.

The DNR, as much as possible, attempts to keep the area in its natural state for waterfowl which abound within its boundaries. Only controlled hunting is allowed at certain times of the year. Many of the island old timers and even the not-so old recall having to battle nature to develop their property. Indicative of this are Jon and his father E. Z. Manos, who restored their country club from land which had reverted to a marsh. In fact, when E. Z. Manos purchased the land around 1945, little would one suspect a golf course ever existed there. But one did operate until the Depression of 1929. "Our clubhouse was darn near one because the floors were rotted through and the windows had been shot out by hunters," Jon Manos recalls. But if golf isn't a visitor's forte, the island is dotted with marinas, overnight ducking facilities and boat liveries with the boater in mind.

Harsens Island Historical Society Calendar 2024

PLEASE NOTE: All events and locations in the following schedule are **tentative**.

Date	Day	Time	Event
March 16	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting via Zoom
April 20	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting via Zoom
May 18	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
May 25	Saturday	TBD	Museum Opens
June 15	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
June 1 or 8	TBD	TBD	Special Event – Joel Stone
July 20	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
July TBD	TBD	TBD	Special Event – Speaker TBD
August 17	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
August 17	Saturday	TBD	Annual Membership Meeting
August	TBD	TBD	Special Event –Speaker TBD
August 31	Saturday	11:00 AM	Labor Day Parade
September 21	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
October 5	Saturday	10:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Annual Pie Sale
October 19	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
November 16	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Planning Meeting via Zoom
November 10	Sunday	TBD	Remembrance Edmund Fitzgerald
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

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 44
Harsens Island MI 48028

Museum Address:

3058 S. Channel Dr.

www.harsensislandhistory.org

HISCFHS Board of Directors 2024

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Joyce Hassen

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Treasurer

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Terry Wiggins

Sue Wrobel

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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 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.

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 2024

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: \$ _____

(* Original Building Roof)

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 \$ _____