



volume 15 / number 4

June 2024

*Message from the President . . .*

Happy June!

Now that the Memorial Day holiday weekend is behind us, summer events are in full swing, and calendars are filling up fast with family events, concerts, festivals, and much more!

Save room on those busy calendars for our upcoming speakers. June 8th we kick off the 2024 speaker series with Joel Stone and his presentation *Watercolors: Artists View the Detroit River*. Joel is curator emeritus with the Detroit Historical Society and will tell the story of the Detroit River through the people who preserved it for us with paint, brush, and pencil. I saw him do this presentation last year and it was excellent, I'm so glad we can host Joel on June 8th at the museum.

Then coming July 20th is our own Bob Williams to present *Harsens Island History*. I've seen Bob's presentation too, and he also does an excellent job!

A great starting line-up . . . don't miss our 2024 speakers.

The museum continues to look for volunteers to host, so we can keep the museum open Saturdays and Sundays through the summer. If you can spare a couple hours, please let one of our Board members know and we will be happy to get you on the schedule. It's easy and fun.

As always, thank you for your support!

*Joyce*

*Joyce Hassen, President*

**HISTORICAL MUSEUM HOST VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

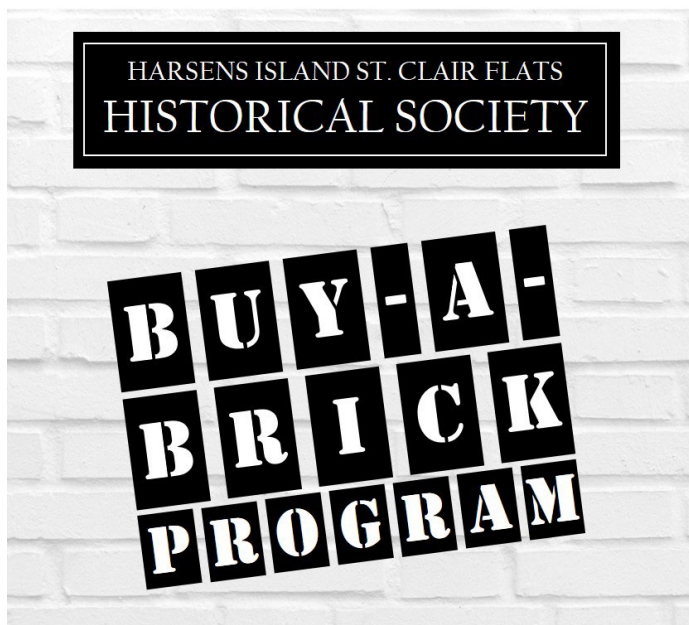
The Harsens Island Historical Museum will reopen Memorial Day weekend. We are open every weekend throughout the summer, Saturdays from 10-3, and Sundays from Noon – 4pm. We are in need of volunteers to work as hosts this summer to maintain these hours. If you would like to volunteer for two or three hours on any Saturday or Sunday this summer, please contact us. Hosting simply means being there to greet visitors, answer questions if you can, and record sales in our Museum Shop. Many volunteers have found that it is also an opportunity to spend a little time learning more about our interesting Island history!

If you are interested in volunteering, or would like more information, please contact Corinne Trexler at 313-530-9173, or Ellen Probst at 772-766-2912.

## *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](mailto:xharpspah@aol.com).

**BUY-A-BRICK Order Form is included at the end of this newsletter.**

Join us on

**June 8 at 11:00 AM at the Harsens Island Historical Museum**

We kick off our 2024 Speaker Series with Joel Stone, curator emeritus with the Detroit Historical Society. He will share the story of the Detroit River through the people who preserved it for us with paint, brush, and pencil. Prior to the advent of photography, painters and illustrators captured the sailors, vessels and waterfronts of Detroit and Windsor. Not only did each artist create a historic record representing their era's aesthetic, but each artist represents an individual life and career that reflect the town they lived in.

HARSENS ISLAND / ST. CLAIR FLATS - **Historical Society**

**2024 SPEAKER SERIES**

JOEL STONE  
*presents*

**“Water Colors  
Artists View the  
Detroit River”**



*Join us*

**SATURDAY, JUNE 8**  
**11:00 AM**

*At the Harsens Island Museum*  
*Free Refreshments*

Joel tells the story of how painters and illustrators captured the sailors, vessels and waterfronts of the Detroit and Windsor.

*Suggested donation: **Ten Dollars***

Joel Stone is a native Detroiter, a life-long sailor, and former senior curator at the Detroit Historical Society and the Dossin Great Lakes Museum.

Joel is the immediate past president of the Association for Great Lakes Maritime History, and a current board member of the Great Lakes Maritime Institute. In 2023, he was honored as “Great Lakes Maritime Historian of the Year” by the Marine Historical Society of Detroit, a group founded in 1944.

His writing focuses on North American frontier and transportation cultures and includes “Floating Palaces of the Great Lakes” (University of Michigan Press, 2015) and “Interpreting Maritime History at Museums and Historic Sites” (Rowman



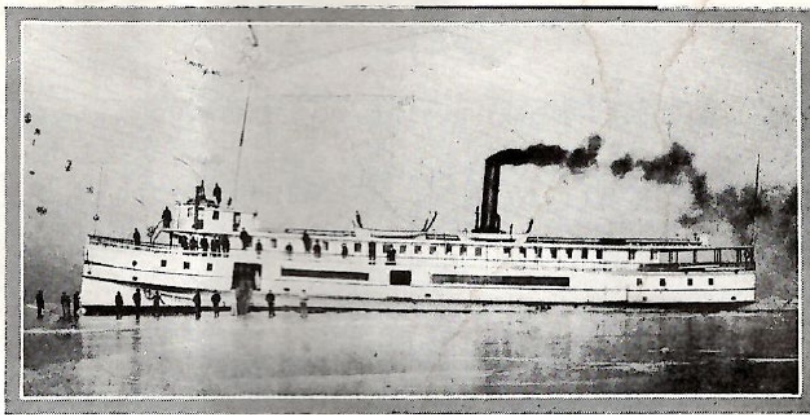
## A REMINISCING FLATTER

Article from *The Delta News*, April 2, 1951

Before the St. Clair Flats was accessible by automobile in 1924, the only means of reaching this beautiful summer resort was by steamboats owned by the Red Star Line and the White Star lines of Detroit.

As spring approached and we saw the snow disappearing, the ice melting and the rivers and lakes again open to navigation, the thought came to many of us to visit our cottage on the first steamer and see what the ravages of winter had done during the long winter season. To those of the older generation, many remember how that terrific urge and thrill came to make that first trip. We often had some exciting experiences as the good ship made its way through solid ice in places and then slush ice or open water all the way through the river and Lake St. Clair.

### WALKING ON ICE ON LAKE ST. CLAIR



ARUNDELL—(Courtesy Rev. F. C. St. Clair)—Built at Buffalo, N. Y., 1778. Length—166 feet, width—26 feet, draft—10 feet, seven inches. Ran from Detroit to St. Clair River, points until 1901, when she was replaced by the TASHMOO, then went to Oswego, N. Y. Burned at Manistee in 1917 or 1918.

To many people who read this article, it may not seem interesting, however, there are many oldsters who would like to make such a trip now, too bad there are no boats making the daily trip to St. Clair Flats and Port Huron anymore. This initial trip of the season generally made on a Sunday. This was the opening of the regular season which meant that after this day you could go any time and stay a few days to prepare your cottage for a happy season. The season ran until November around Thanksgiving.

In the 1880's, passenger boat service began to what was considered a primitive and undeveloped marsh territory. There were no hotel facilities excepting a few small

hunting clubs, the largest being The Old Club. On the Canadian side opposite its present site was the famous hostelry of Joe Bedore. In the later years, development was very rapid because of its fine fishing and hunting areas. Many popular hotels came into national prominence, namely, the Old Club, Arthur House, New Club, Merve Club, Rushmere Club, Star Island Hotel, Marshland Club, Damen Hotel, Riverside or Idle Hour, Angler's Club, Gus Trautz later Forster's Hotel, Joe Bedore's Hotel, the Muir House and Lempke Hotel, Grand Pointe Hotel and Maple Leaf of Harsen's Island. Most of these burned down or were moved.

In those days, in the late 70's and 80's the popular mode of transportation for excursions was by steamboat which steamboats were jammed with capacity load to the St. Clair Flats, Put-in-Bay, Sugar Island and other places like Toledo, Cleveland, etc. These were pleasant, cool and refreshing trips away from city life.

To refresh your memory old-timers, some of the early steamers to Port Huron were the *Ossifrage*, *Jennie Bell*, *Steinhoff*, *Arundel*, *Pilgrim*, *Puritan*, *Holland*, *Thousand Islander*, *Olcott* and *Wauketa*, and the fast steamer *Unique*. These were all screw propelled boats that could cut through ice and generally opened up navigation. Later, the larger and more spacious

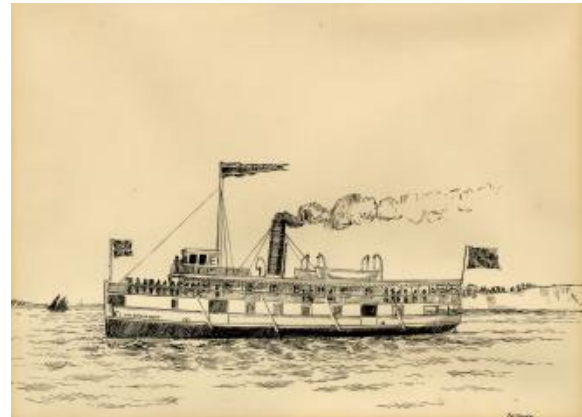
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Steamboat – Ossifrage

Source: <https://greatlakes.bgsu.edu/item/437227>



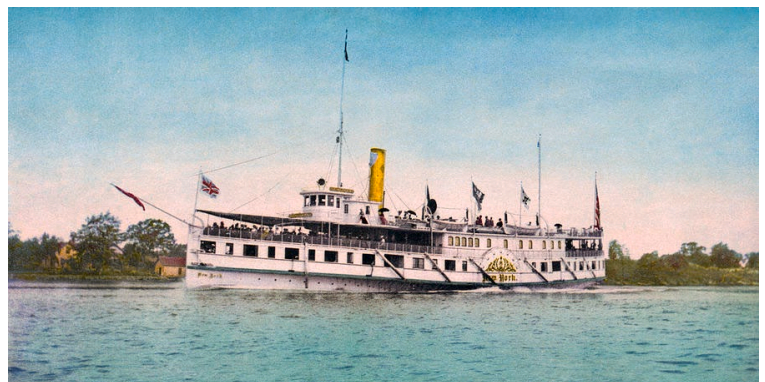
Steamboat – Steinhoff

Source : <https://digitalarchive.tpl.ca/>



Steamboat – Pilgrim

Source : <https://www.loc.gov/item/2001702124/>



Steamboat – Thousand Islander

Source : <https://fineartamerica.com>

side-wheelers like the *Huron*, *Darius Cole*, *Greyhound*, *City of Toledo*, *Idlewild*, *Flora* and the famous steamer *Tashmoo* would make the trip. With the foregoing background, here is a graphic description of a day thirty or more years ago on one of these adventurous trips.

As the steamer lay at dock at the foot of Griswold, all freshly painted and cleaned, there was a steady stream of people walking down the hill from the streetcars on Jefferson Avenue, each person loaded with baskets of lunch and other things that had to go to the cottage every year. Some even brought their dogs. Charles F. Bielman, Sr. stood on the dock directing and greeting his summer customers and after he saw everyone was aboard, including the stragglers, he would raise his arms to the captain saying, "All aboard." Then the gangplanks were pulled in and as the boat slowly pulled away from the dock everyone would wave their hands and the boat whistle would start a series of salutes answered by all the other boats and ferries.

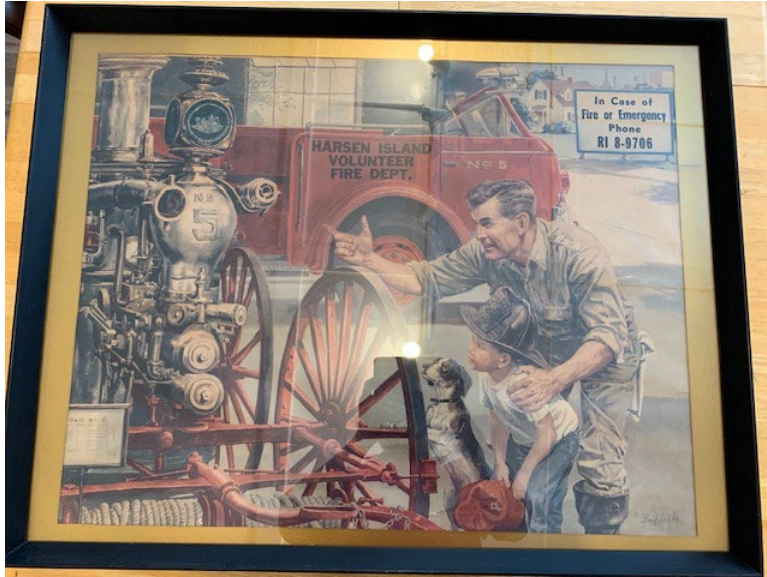
One of the first things when on board, was to locate ourselves in the cabin where it was warm and a good view of the lake

*continued on page 7 . . .*



## Donations

The museum received two great donations in May. A print of the Harsens Island fire department and a folding chair used for ice fishing.



## Fire Rescue Vehicle is Back!

Happy to report the Harsens Island Museum's Fire Rescue Vehicle is back! It was off island for some much-needed repairs.



24 Hour Towing

Used Auto Parts



***Bud's Garage & Auto Mortuary***

9436 Nook Road, Clay, MI 48001  
www.budsgarage.weebly.com

**JUNK AND RUNNING CARS WANTED**

**810-794-3741**

A huge shout out to Bud's Garage for repairing the brakes and donating the labor.

Much appreciated!

*continued from page 4 . . . A Reminiscing Flatter*

was to be had. Then the conversation would be a rehearsal of the winter's doing and the new projects for the year. After matters were pretty well covered, we would have to take a walk around the boat to visit neighbors and friends to exchange greetings. After we viewed Belle Isle, Peche Island and we were heading into the lake, the small lunchroom would be a busy place for sandwiches and coffee. After a short time on the lake the boat occasionally stuck in the ice and would let the passengers out to walk on the ice for pictures. We would then start again and before long we could see the U.S. ship canal at the mouth of the St. Clair River. On many of the trips, the boats would encounter heavy ice which often stalled the boat after which the slush ice and open water were welcome. As we entered the river, when the water was free of ice, the winter residents would come out in small ferries to welcome us.

Among them were Clyde Brusoe, Joe Sears, Bill Soullierre, Bert Stokey, Willie Bedore, Frank Miller, Lawrence Forster, John Upmal, Bill Yax, Scotty Yacques, Jim Clay Jr., and many others.

By this time, we were nearing the Old Club and as the boat's whistle gave the salute of 3 long and 2 short blasts, the familiar cannon at the Old Club answered the salute. From here on the stops at the various hotels were made and the passengers would disembark to their cottage or hotel for a good dinner, the time being around noon. As a rule, dinner reservations were made the previous week for the large parties. The cooks did their best to serve a delicious meal. And such large portions were served. Allowable those days, wild duck dinner with all the trimmings was the popular dish, also platters of fresh fried fish and fried chicken were available at the table. These dinners cost only 75¢ each and later \$1.00, but everyone was satisfied.

While the steamer went to Algonac, and after dinner, many of us walked or hired a ferry at 25¢ per person, to see our cottage. After a general perusal of the house and grounds, we found what changes or repairs were necessary. Soon we were back at the dock having had an enjoyable visit. After a few refreshments and a short wait, we could hear the long whistle of the steamer as she came around the bend of the river to make the dock landing. Gracefully, in the late afternoon, the landing was made by the boat and again we were aboard for the return trip to Detroit. And the boat made other landings; those aboard stretched their necks to see who was at the dock to get aboard with us.

The return trip seemed uneventful as our anxiety and expectations had been fulfilled. There were times when we had excitement such as running aground on the dumps, off our course, or getting caught in snowstorms or mists which would slow our progress. Good seamanship by some excellent skippers landed us safely at Griswold Street about 8:30 P.M.

Another season of pleasure had opened for us. Boat service continued daily at 2:30 P.M. and returned the next day at noon. The attendance was surprisingly large for such an early trip. Three hundred to eight hundred people would go, but the weather regulated the attendance.

The front cover shows some of the types of steamers on the river those days. Among the popular Captains of the Red & White Star Line were Captain William Adams of the *Arundel*, later on the *Steamer Greyhound*, Captain Chris Smith on the *Steamer Wauketa*, Captain William Armstrong of the *Steamer Owana*, Captain Walter Webster, First Officer of the *Steamer Tashmoo*, Captain George Stover of the *City of Toledo* and Captain Don McAlpine who commanded the *Tashmoo*. He was aboard when she sank and handled everything so well that no lives were lost, or any serious injuries sustained. These men handled hundreds of thousands of passengers yearly and with no loss of life by accident.

All we can say in conclusion is that we miss the familiar whistles and the graceful daily passage of the excursion boats. Flatters hated to see their departure. These pleasant memories will always remain. I believe I can hear the boat whistles now!

# Harsens Island Historical Society Calendar 2024

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

Date	Day	Time	Event
June 8	Saturday	11:00 AM	Special Event – Joel Stone The History of the Detroit River through Paintings
June 15	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
July 20	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
July 20	Saturday	11:00 AM	Special Event – Bob Williams History of Harsens Island
August 17	Saturday	9:30 AM	Board Meeting at the Museum
August 17	Saturday	TBD	Annual Membership Meeting
August	TBD	TBD	Special Event –Daniel Harrison
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](http://www.harsensislandhistory.org)

**HISCFHS Board of Directors 2024**

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**Bob Williams**

President

**Joyce Hassen**

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President

**Chris Knight**

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President

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**Corinne Trexler**

Secretary

**Rebecca Verschave**

Directors

**Terry Wiggins**

**Sue Wrobel**

**Nancy Bonacquisti**



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](mailto: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](http://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 \$ \_\_\_\_\_