



# **The Life and Times of Minnie Harm**

**diary entries from  
1938 – 1976  
about her life on Harsens Island**

**Compiled by  
Michele Komar**

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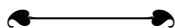
Cover design and text layout by Michele Komar  
Photos from the personal collection of Michele Komar

# Forward

After the death of my mother in 2006, I felt a need to explore my family history a bit further other than to know there were other relatives out there. I really didn't know who they all were or how we were all related. While going through my mother's things, my grandma's diaries turned up. They covered the years from 1938 to 1976. They made fascinating reading not only for my family history but also for the history of Harsens Island and its people.

There were several reasons to put my grandma's diaries in book form. My brother, Joe, expressed an interest in reading them when I finished with them. I was leery of letting the diaries out of my possession as they are rather fragile so I had the brilliant idea of typing all of them for posterity. One thing led to another and I added photos and some abbreviated family trees to help figure out who is who. I wanted to preserve that bit of history for all to enjoy and to keep their memory alive.

I would especially like to thank Judy Harm, the family historian, for all her help.



Wilhelmina Carolina Sophia Koehn was born in Detroit on October 4, 1891. Her parents were Ernest Koehn and Sophia Awe Koehn. They lived on Jay Street in Detroit. She had one brother and three sisters. Two of the sisters, Marie and Louise, died young. She was quite close to her older sister, Alvina, or Winnie as she was called.

Minnie met her future husband, William Carl Harm at the Harm family farm on what is now 9 Mile Rd. in St. Clair Shores, MI. They were married July 17, 1912.

They had a son, William, in 1914 and a son, Harold, in 1916. Their daughter Dolores or Dolly as she was known was born in 1928.

William's father, William Christian Harm, worked for the White Star Line and managed Sugar Island near the end of the 1800's. When Tashmoo Park opened in 1898, William was anxious to

move out of Detroit due to a recent mugging. The White Star Line was anxious to find a manager that was willing to move his family to Harsens Island. Another deciding factor for White Star Line was that William had six sons that could help at the park. He accepted the company's offer and started the manager's position in 1900 leaving his oldest son, Louis, to manage Sugar Island.

When his father retired in 1921, William Carl or Bill as he was known moved to Harsens Island and Bill became the park superintendent and his wife, Minnie was his right hand gal. She was the chief cook and handled a lot of the finer points that go into managing a park of its time. In preparation, Minnie attended the Woman's Institute of Domestic Arts & Sciences in Scranton, PA in 1920 majoring in the culinary arts. Bill and Minnie lived in a house at the back of the park. After the Tashmoo boat sank in 1936, visitors to the park dwindled and the park eventually closed for good in the late 40's.

In 1944, Bill and Minnie took over management of the confectionary store on the island. Harold and Dolly along with several cousins and friends worked there. Dolly would meet her future husband, Joe Komar, at the store. The Komar family owned the Rothschild house on S. Channel for many years during the 1940's and 50's.

By 1946, they had to move from the park property and bought the Raether house at 3020 S. Channel Dr. on the island. Both William and Harold had married by this time and William with wife, Emmy, had two children, George and Wilhelmina or Sue as she was known. When the diary begins in 1938, Dolly was still in grade school.

Bill also worked for the island school as a janitor and bus driver and was affectionately known as Uncle Willie. As they lived next to the Post Office on S. Channel, Minnie was good friends with Postmistress Evelyn Rattray Wycoff and spent many years working part time at the Post Office. Evelyn and Bill's brother, Norman, struck up a romance and eventually they married in 1952.

Bill and Minnie had purchased several lots at the back of the park in 1942. This property was located on the northeast corner

of M-154 and Bar Harbor. For many years they had a fruit and vegetable garden and sold the produce in front of their home on S. Channel. The Garden, as it was known, was a fascinating place to be. There were several outbuildings with one of them known as the bunkhouse. It was jammed with Tashmoo Park memorabilia. It contained all types of furniture, pinball games, dishes, paper products, etc. left from the park. It was a great place to explore! At one time it housed a floor model arcade game with a life-sized mannequin dressed as a fortune teller. I was afraid she would come to life and I would always run past her so she couldn't catch me if she did. Scary stuff for a 5 year old!

Bill and Minnie spent a lot of time visiting relatives. Birthdays were also a time to get together and celebrate. As they lived in such an inviting place, they had frequent summer visitors. Many of these visits were faithfully recorded in the diaries. In 1972, Bill and Minnie celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary.

Unfortunately, Bill passed away in 1973. Minnie stayed on alone in the house being as self-reliant as she always was. I recall spending a lot of time there along with my brother, Joe, and cousin, Judy, helping her of with a variety of chores. She was a wonderful cook and made the best bread that she baked from scratch.

Eventually as her health started to fail she went to live with her daughter, Dolly. The diary ends in September 1976. I don't know why she stopped writing or what events may have occurred at that time. The diary still had plenty of blank pages left to fill.

On November 19, 1982 Minnie Harm passed away.



*Minnie Harm in 1982  
91 years old*