DECEMBER 2009

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE SOCIETY'S E-NEWS EDITOR

If you haven't renewed your Society membership for 2010, better do it now or Santa may remove your address from the Newsletter list!

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Mark your new 2010 calendars
- Wednesday, February 10, Tell Your Story -- You Are The Program, 7:00 PM, Old School House
- Wednesday, March 10, Other Female Artists of the Saugatuck-Douglas Area, 7:00 PM, Old School House

A list of possible artists to discuss could include: Olive Williams, Mabel Wheelock, Minnie Harms Neebe, Elsa Ulbricht, Dorothy Helmuth and Christiana Ackermann Hoerman.
If you have any information or images of works by the above mentioned women artists, please contact Ken Kutzel evenings at 269.857.4475 or by email at kkutzel@yahoo.com

- Wednesday, April 14, Annual Heritage Preservation Awards, 7:00 PM, Old School House

HEAR-YEA HEAR-YEA

The Society's Holiday Party A Huge Success

Vic Bella, Erik Kirchert, Sally Winthers and new members Bill & Jean Lawrence

The food and drink was terrific. The tables were stunning. The SCA setting was beautiful - and the 141 guests were lively and beautiful. Stay tuned for more photos from the Holiday Party on the Society's web site.
At the Old School House

Haven't finished your Christmas Shopping? Well, the Society's Holiday Gift Shop will be open this Saturday and Sunday, December 19th and 20th from 1 to 5 p.m. at the Old School House, 130 Center Street in Douglas.

The shop's gift selection reflects pride in its community's heritage with such items as the Society's popular books on area history, framed prints of historical photos and maps from the Society's archives, commemorative art notecard sets and coffee mugs, plus a return of the unique Saugatuck-Douglas afghan throw in both blue and multicolor formats. Some items will be available in colorful holiday gift-wrapping.

Proceeds will benefit the Society's many volunteer-driven programs. Volunteers to help staff the shop are welcome; contact Jon Helmrich at 857-3574 or jon@ibctv.info for details.

In this time of giving, please remember your Historical Society & Museum. Please view the updated Old School House project "prospectus" by clicking on the image above.

MAKING IT EASY!

We may bemoan the challenges of the digital age, but we also love the connections and conveniences it has brought us. One such convenience is the ability to make financial transactions over the internet. And the Society is not behind the times in this regard! On the front page, upper left hand corner, of the Society's web site home page is a "Donate" button.

Click on this button and you will be able to donate either by credit card or, if you're really with the times, through PayPal. Yes, it has been tried and it does work. Our thanks go to Erin Wilkinson for researching and suggesting this feature, and to Fred Schmidt for making it a reality. We love preserving the past, but we are also in line with today's technology.

MAY FRANCIS HEATH MEMORIAL PLANS
NEW FROM THE ARCHIVES

One of the great things about working at the archives is that I never know what bit of history will cross my desk on a given day. Recently I opened a box with items that were given to us by the Allegan County Historical Society. Inside were all the business records of the Saugatuck Douglas Arts and Crafts Company later known as the River Guild. Items include the Certificate of Incorporation signed in 1941, stock certificates, employment records and sadly a long list of creditors who brought about the demise of the company in 1949. The Petter and Button Galleries now occupy the former River Guild building along Blue Star Highway.

What happened to this promising organization and what brought it to its end is part of the Saugatuck Douglas story. Who could tell us more?

There are many more stories here at the archives just waiting for someone to discover them. There is a large backlog of items that need to be entered into the computer database and help is desperately needed. If you enjoy history and have some computer skills this might be the opportunity you are looking for. We would love to have more volunteers involved. Please contact me at archives@sdhistoricalsociety.org if you would like more information or better yet drop in at the OSH.

The Memorial Committee which was chartered in the spring has been developing its plans for not only a public memorial to Mrs. Heath, but also for a number of related activities leading up to the 50th anniversary of her death in 1961. In August 2010 we intend to place a memorial marker in her memory in the Saugatuck Town Square. The city council is currently coordinating details of this placement. A second small marker will be placed beside the "Treaty Oak" on Holland St., which she was instrumental in saving. Click HERE for a related story.

A monthly "story of May Heath" will be prepared for the SDHS Newsletter starting in January 2010, and other events anticipated for the summer of 2011 include a special program and/or exhibit and a new memorial edition of her 1930 book "Early Memories of Saugatuck". Pledges are being accepted toward the memorial at this time. If interested in working with this committee, or in making a pledge, please contact: Chris Yoder (857-4327) or Marsha Kontio (616) 566-1239.

submitted by Chris Yoder
In the late 1950's, the Village of Saugatuck was experiencing a rapidly changing community environment. The commercial fishing business was still strong, the Fruit Exchange, American Twisting, and Harris Pie were for all appearances thriving. The principal town economy of tourism was, however, changing. An increase of the younger "party-type" of visitor was beginning to overshadow the family environment. Also during this time a major concern was the influx of motorcycle groups and the beginning of a loosely organized gang type influence in the community known as the "Rebels."

I was a police officer in Saugatuck for the summer of 1957. I then returned to Michigan State University in pursuit of a bachelor's degree in Law Enforcement. In the spring of 1958 I received a call from then Saugatuck Mayor Richard Hoffman, asking me to be a candidate for the vacated office of Chief of Police. I began serving as the Police Chief in April of that year. The Town Council wanted a Police Department that was helpful and friendly, but that would maintain a high level of safety for the community. Promoting Saugatuck as a fun, family vacation destination was a high priority.

In 1958 we had five full-time police officers, including myself, and a host of local part-time officers, which included among others, Jim Boyce, Floyd Maycroft and Maury Herbert. The Allegan County Sheriff's Department and the State Police provided significant levels of patrol and back-up support for the town. Part of my Michigan State training was with the State Police (South Haven Post), so I was known to many of these fine State Police Officers, which provided a basis for our interagency cooperation and mutual support.
The following year (1959) the police budget allowed for increasing the number of full-time officers to seven positions, with an increased number of part-time officers.

During the 1957-1959 summer seasons, we employed less than half the number of police officers as recommended nationally, at 1.5 officers per 1,000 persons. As it was, the town’s economic base and government infrastructure was taxed to the limit to be able to provide adequate town services. Also to be expected, the weekends would bring the largest influx of persons to the town. Many nights the Pavilion bar capacity of 950 patrons and the Old Crowe bar capacity of 350 patrons would be completely full by early evening. Persons would line up at the doors waiting for someone to leave so they would be permitted entry. The two lines would extend backward until they merged into Water Street. The town would often be grid locked by automobile traffic, prompting us to block off the three entrances into town from the highway (no interstate highway at that time), allowing traffic to only exit. Persons seeking to enter the town would often park their cars on both sides of the highway and walk to downtown area. Policing was a real challenge with the numbers of people and the grid locked traffic. We really didn't want to walk (or carry) an arrested person down our streets to a lock up facility. There were two police holding cells in the Public Works building, but there was no one in attendance and no meal capability. In this respect, prisoners had to be transported to the Sheriff's Office in Allegan, which often required continuous round trips during a single evening, even transporting three prisoners at a time by a single officer. This time-consuming activity was drastically
Reduced when I was successful in establishing night court on Friday and Saturday nights (summer). Court was held upstairs in the City Hall from around 9 PM until 2 AM each of the two nights.

During these years, the main police dispatch center was the front desk of the Maplewood Hotel. A separate telephone (the Police number) would be answered by the desk clerk on duty (who was frequently hotel owner Bobbi McCray) as the Saugatuck Police Department. The "dispatcher" was in contact with officers in vehicles via two-way radio. In this era of time there was no such thing as a radio that could be taken out of the police car to be carried by a walking officer. When performing walking patrol the officer was basically on his own until he could get to a telephone or have someone, often a bystander, make the call for needed police assistance. With the grid lock of traffic, numbers of people, and frequent criminal activity, it was imperative that a high percentage of police officer duty was performed by foot patrol.

Policing in Saugatuck during those years was truly different than today. We did not have the Miranda law at that time (advising arrested persons of their rights before interviewing them), vehicle search laws were more permissive, and parents supported both the schools and the police. The Justice of the Peace officials rendered a quick and sure resolution for the town's law enforcement program.

When I reflect on some of my police experiences during the time I served Saugatuck, a variety of mundane, scary, and unique events emerges from my memory:

- Climbing the endless stairs to Mt. Baldhead (location of the old radar tower) to put out fires, break up fights, and assist ill or injured tourists.

- At the request of the State Police, we frequently manned a "road block" at the Kalamazoo River Bridge in the rain, sleet, snow, and freezing temperature, but we did manage to apprehend some really bad persons.

- Being called out of bed at 3 AM to respond to a vehicle running into a parked cement mixer-the car was gone but he had left his license plate hanging on the mixer as he had apparently backed away. Guess who I in turn got to wake up! He said he had been sleeping as I observed steam and smoke pouring from the engine of his not too well hidden car.

- Horrible fatal automobile accidents.

- Assisting distraught parents find their missing children.

- A late night raid on illegal after hours selling of alcohol in a residence with about 200 partygoers at the scene.

- Too many suicides.

- The pregnant woman who told me I'd better step on it getting her to the hospital or she would deliver in the back seat of my patrol car - I stepped on it.

- The man sitting at the restaurant breakfast counter with a concealed weapon. After asking him to put his hands in the air he produced his FBI credentials.
These, among other Saugatuck experiences were instrumental in preparing me for my future careers and goals. These included completion of my Masters Degree at Michigan State University, college professor, Titan missile security, hospital administrator, and my long-lasting engagement in the hospital security field that resulted in my publishing of five college textbooks along the way.

My family and I return on a frequent basis as just another tourist family enjoying the wonderful environment, activities, and residents of Saugatuck.

* Russell Colling was appointed Chief on April 1, 1958, two days before his 22\textsuperscript{nd} birthday, after having served as a regular officer in town the year before. At 21 years of age, he remains the youngest Chief not only in Saugatuck, but in the history of the state. He was 22 when he subsequently applied for and was granted membership in the Michigan Police Chief Association. This article has been synopsized for SDHS Newsletter for the sake of space. To see the full article, click HERE.

HISTORY MYSTERIES

by Jack Sheridan

(Answers are at the bottom of the Newsletter)

HISTORY: Ca 1893 Between Douglas and Fennville, the James Wark farm had a good crop.

MYSTERY: What was the crop?

HISTORY: Ca 1938 Located near two busy roads, this operation does a great business.

MYSTERY: What is the business?
HISTORY: Ca 1955 A busy Saturday race day.  
Mystery: What is going on here?

HISTORY: The government vessel General Meade is entering the harbor.  
Mystery: What was her mission and when?
ABOUT THE SOCIETY

To become a member or renew your membership select from the following categories:

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Send check payable to the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society to: PO Box 617, Douglas, Michigan 49406. You can also click HERE for a Society Membership Application.

Send items for the newsletter to: Fred Schmidt, PO Box 617, Douglas MI 49406 or email info@sdhistoricalsociety.org

MUSEUM AND TECH CENTER

The Saugatuck-Historical Museum is located in the historic Pump House at the foot of Mt. Baldhead on the west bank of the Kalamazoo River. The Museum's 2009 exhibit was titled:

"Summertime: A Century of Leisure at the Lake Michigan Shore"

The Museum is now closed and will reopen May 31, 2010. Click HERE to learn more about the Museum and view images of the 2009 exhibit.

The Society's Technology Center has moved to the Old School House.

Society Phone: 269 857-5751
Museum Phone: 269 857-7900 (temporarily disconnected)
Tech Center Phone 269 857-7901
www.sdhistoricalsociety.org