APRIL 2011

UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

Opening April 29 Through June 20
EXHIBIT Saugatuck Center for the Arts, Exhibit Gallery "PIE. From Michigan Orchards to the American Dinner Table and a Factory for the Arts." This exhibit follows the village economy and the history of fruit growing, fruit export, and the adaptive re-use of old pie factory into a major art center. An SDHS exhibit in collaboration with the Saugatuck Center For the Arts

Wednesday, May 11
ANNUAL MEETING 7pm at the Old School House History Center

Saturday, May 14
SDHS 101 10am Old School House

Sunday, May 15
ANNIVERSARY PARTY 2pm at the Old School House, celebrating the Historical Society's 25th Year - with the dedication of the "new" Union school as History Center and the first public viewing of the OSH Garden and Back-In-Time Walkway. Event will include the official opening of the SDHS Art Gallery.

Opening May 15 Through July 1
OLD SCHOOL HOUSE HISTORY CENTER EXHIBITION Exhibit of model "village places" built by students from Saugatuck-Douglas

Ed Demeter and the Seabee

Like a photograph come to life, the scene and the sound are etched in my memory. 1954 or so, I often stood on the Sheridan dock at the street end of Griffith Street. Behind me [now Coghlin Park] was the Fruit Exchange, and to my left the Sewers fish shanty and beyond, up the river bank, the Ed-Mar Hotel.

First heard were the clicks of the rotating prop, then cylinders fired, then loud revs with a tinny rattle, finally prop wash across the water. The Ed-Mar Seabee would taxi by me along the shoreline toward the Pavilion. Through the open gull wing door I could see pilot Ed Demeter at the controls. Fascinated, I would skip through the lumber yard to stand next to the Hotel Butler on the Yacht Club dock.

In front of the big red dancehall, Ed would make a wide
school's fifth and sixth grades. The student teams build models of "village places" as a way of documenting and understanding "village life." At the Old School House History Center, Douglas.

**Thursday-Saturday, May 19-21**
**MICHIGAN HISTORIC PRESERVATION NETWORK 31ST ANNUAL STATEWIDE PRESERVATION CONFERENCE**
"Just Add Water: The influence of Michigan's lakes, rivers, ponds and streams on its culture and architecture" is the theme of the 2011 Michigan Historic Preservation Network Annual Conference - to be held in Saugatuck & Douglas with the SCA and the SDHS as conference hosts. Public invited.

The MHPN is Michigan's largest non-profit organization dedicated to recognizing and preserving Michigan's cultural and architectural heritage. Each spring the Network sponsors the state's largest annual preservation conference - offering a wide number of interesting sessions relating to the conference theme. The Conference Keynote speaker will be the Mayor of Grand Rapids, a well known advocate for architectural and land preservation.

**Thursday, May 19**
**MHPN "TWILIGHT WALKING TOUR"**
**WINE AND CHEESE RECEPTION** 6:30pm to 8:00pm at the Saugatuck-Douglas Museum

**Saturday, May 21**
**MUSEUM HOSTS' ORIENTATION**
Saugatuck-Douglas Museum

**Saturday, May 28**
**SDHS MEMBERS MUSEUM EXHIBITION RECEPTION** 5:00pm-7:00pm at the Saugatuck-Douglas Museum

**Opening May 28 through October 30**
**EXHIBIT** Saugatuck-Douglas Museum

U-turn and close the door. Pausing for an engine check rev and checking for boat traffic he would shove the throttle full forward. With a gutteral roar, the Seabee hull would at first, push at lot of water, then as momentum increased she would surge to the surface, then skittering along the surface to the "step", Ed would aim her toward the Douglas corner of the lake. At this point I would hold my breath, sure that the Seabee and Ed would not clear the bridge, much less the street lights stanchions above the railings.

But, as always, I was able to raise my fist in delight and relief as in the last hundred yards the Seabee would climb steeply and trundle into the blue yonder!

Best I can tell Ed's plane was a Republic Aviation RC-3 Seabee manufactured after the war and designed to carry four passengers at a cruising speed of around a 100 mph. Because of limited use - a flight or two each week - I suspect that Ed flew her mostly for fun rather than profit.

Edward Demeter and his wife Marie are a history mystery. Limited sleuthing leads me to believe that he was born in Chicago around 1910. In the 1930 census Ed may have been living and working in a Chicago hotel owned by his father. In the 1940s we know he came to Saugatuck and bought the Buerle Hotel which logically was renamed the Ed-Mar. The business survived, maybe prospered, for a decade. In the early 1960s he sold the Ed-Mar to Toad Davis and the place became the Blue Tempo. What happened to Ed, Marie and the Seabee? Anybody know?

The May photo features another character of Saugatuck in the 1950s. Here he is with members of his entourage!

REMINDERS

- Upscale Sale Donations - Donation collection for the July's Upscale Sale will begin in May. Look for more information coming soon.

- Museum Hosts - If you are interested in being a volunteer host at the Saugatuck-Douglas Museum this season, please CLICK HERE.

CHARTER MEMBERS

Still trying to locate a few Charter Members of the Society. If you know the whereabouts of below, please REPLY to this email.

submitted by Marsha Kontio

Suzanne Erickson  
Mrs. Berkley Jones  
J. E. Nachod III  
Joe and Lynda Petty  
Joseph Shirk  
Marie Singer  
Cindy Tatsch  
Robert Van Dyke  
Patricia Vinge

"SDHS 101" COMING UP

REV. ALEXANDER THOMSON  
MINISTER AND POET

When he died in Saugatuck of liver and pancreatic cancer March 10, 1914, Alexander Thomson had led a full life. Born in 1844 in Aberdeen, Scotland, he and his family sailed to Canada in 1856. In 1864 he came to the U.S., serving briefly in the Civil War to obtain his citizenship. In his twenties he taught school, first near Allegan, Michigan, and later in Wheaton, Illinois, where he also attended Wheaton College. Feeling a call to the ministry, he was ordained in the Congregational church on Oct. 21, 1887. He began his service at Bartlett, Illinois, and was in active ministry for 21 years, both in Illinois and Wisconsin. He first married Laura Jane Holt, who died leaving three children, Mabel, Laura and Alexander Jr. His second wife also died young. While pastoring a northern Wisconsin church he met and married a young teacher, Jeanette Harris, by whom he had another daughter, Jeanette. Mabel was to marry Saugatuck
The first informational session for new members and interested former members will be held on Saturday, May 14, at the Old School House in Douglas, beginning at 10 a.m.

By attending, you will discover facts, history, and opportunities that our great organization possesses. For more information contact Nyla Hensley at noteablenyla@yahoo.com or phone 269-857-5704.

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

We would like to welcome these new members who have joined the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society since the last newsletter.

Robert and Ruth Marx, Saugatuck

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boy J. A. Falconer, later a Congressman from Washington State.

His obituary remarks that he had first come to Saugatuck 28 years before (c1876) and spent a portion of his time here ever since, eventually making it his permanent home. As early as the 1889 assessment record, it shows that Alexander owned 28 acres of land downstream from Saugatuck on the east bank of the Kalamazoo River. This property was called "Slumber Bluff" and was left to his wife Jeanette. From 1923 to 1950, Jeanette and two friends from Chicago operated this property as "Oak Openings" camp. Jeanette died in 1956 and is buried at Riverside beside her husband.

The Jan. 20, 1950 issue of the Commercial Record announces the donation to the library of the book "Selected Poems of Alexander Thomson" which had been compiled by his son Alexander. Daughter Mabel Thomson Falconer wrote "Alexander Thomson wrote poetry from early manhood. It seems that there never was a period of his life when he did not express his thoughts and his emotions by means of verse. His poems were quite widely published in various papers and localities, and especially in "The Christian Cynosure," Chicago, Illinois, which paper was his best literary friend." (No, the book is no longer in the library holdings, but we have found a copy for the future SDHS research library.)

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**REV. ALEXANDER THOMSON MINISTER AND POET**

(continued)

The following poem from the book first appeared in the Feb 7, 1908 Commercial-Record:

**WINTER NIGHT IN SAUGATUCK**

Old Baldhead lifts his golden crown above the forest bare
The stars are like a silver swarm in deep blue fields of air,
And Night bows to the Living God, a worshiper at prayer.

Her Sable robe becomes her well, broоched by the crescent moon,
Whose radiance falls with shimmering light on every golden dune
And gives a mournful glory to the frozen wild lagoon.

The fisher now has housed his lines, and drawn his boat ashore
And 'gainst the Winter's icy blast has fastened well the door.  
The Great Lake beats against its beach with long and muffled roar.

Night holds her solitary reign yet with her own sweet grace  
The snow flower on the window pane her artist hands will trace,  
And if she has a frozen heart, all kindly is her face.  

--- Alexander Thomson


The Rev. Thomson's obituary speaks of the inspirational way in which he faced his final painful days. The following was written shortly after his doctor had told him his illness would be fatal:

Not like the dog to his kennel,  
Not like the ox to his stall,  
Not like the horse to his stable  
When the night begins to fall:  
But I look for the beams of gladness  
To break through the clouds of pain:  
I wait for the call of the master  
And his sunshine after the rain.

For additional poems by Rev. Thomson, see the expanded version of this article on the SDHS website,  
contributed by Chris Yoder

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MEMORIES OF MAY FRANCIS HEATH: A SERIES  
May Heath's "Early Memories of Saugatuck"
The Saugatuck Centennial of 1930 drove May Francis Heath to complete and publish her long planned book of Saugatuck history. She wrote in the Preface:

"For a number of years, in fact ever since my girlhood days, has a plan been living in my mind whereby someday I would attempt to write, or rather compile, the many bits of early Saugatuck history which have come to me through the associations of the years, all pertaining to its early settlement---"

"For much of my information I am indebted to letters and clippings written in the day when the woods were lonely and the paleface had few neighbors except the Red man; some of my sketches are written on torn scraps of paper, showing not only the scarcity of paper, but the pioneer spirit of thrift as well. Interesting accounts were often told to me by my grandfather Morrison as we drove through the country and along the old lakeshore road.---"

Her selection as General Chairman of the Centennial was testimony to May's reputation as a local historian. After many months working and writing, her diary records on May 11th "Work all day on my book. Even Doc Proof Reads" and the 12th "Go to Grand Rapids - Eerdmans (publisher), with my book to publish. Here's hoping". The next day (the 13th) was her 57th birthday. Her books arrived from the publisher on 27 June 1930, and the first ten of them sold the following day.

An early article in the SDHS newsletter outlines the five editions which were published in May's lifetime and describes how to tell the difference between them: 1930, 1946, 1947, 1953, and undated (with a photo added of William G. Butler). Most recently, the many hours of effort by Rob Carey and Mary Lyons allowed the SDHS to reissue this wonderful volume in 2008.

As one of the final acts of the May Heath Study Group, and in commemoration of the Golden Anniversary of her death in Sept. 1961, a "Memorial Edition" is being prepared which we hope will be available in time for the 2011 museum opening. It will contain a special introduction by May's three great-grandchildren and a collection of family photographs.

This article is part of a series on Saugatuck Historian May Francis Heath (MFH). The MFH Study Group continues to seek information, documents, photographs of May, her paintings, and personal recollections of Mrs. Heath. If you have any to share contact: Chris Yoder at 269-857-4327 or Marsha Kontio at 616-566-1239.
ABOUT THE SOCIETY

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

- Individual: $30
- Household: $50
- Premium: $250
- Corporate: $500
- Life: $1,000
- Senior (65+): $20
- Senior Household: $35
- Student: $5

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 2010 exhibit was titled:

"A Place Called Ox-Bow: 100 Years of Connecting Art, Nature, and People"
The Museum is now closed and will reopen in May 2011 with a new exhibit. Click [HERE](#) to learn more about the Museum and view images of the 2010 exhibit.

The Society's Technology Center is located in the lower level of the Old School House History Center at 130 Center Street in downtown Douglas.

Society Phone: 269 857-5751  
Museum Phone: 269 857-7900  
Tech Center Phone 269 857-7901  
[www.sdhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.sdhistoricalsociety.org)