NOTES FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

It's hard to believe that the summer of 2011 is drawing to a close. The museum has had very good attendance in July and early August. The walking tours are doing well, with many people from foreign countries taking them this summer. The annual picnic was held at the Mt. Baldhead Pavilion with some of the best food I have ever seen at one of these events. Some of the recipes were from our new publication "The Village Table". There was a contest for those who brought food made from one of the recipes in the book. A twenty five dollar gift certificate from the Butler Pantry was won by Mary Kamman.

On a sad note I have to inform you that one of our Life Members has passed away. Arlene Sherman passed away on Monday, August 15, 2011. Arlene was a great supporter of your Historical Society being very instrumental in getting the Pump House for our museum, and she was a recipient of the Charles J. Lorenz Award in 1999.

The new Francis Life Boat House is moving along. We expect to have the exhibit ready for the Heritage Tour in mid September. This will be the end of another major project for your Society. Many individuals have worked for years on restoring the life boat as well as raising funds to provide a permanent home for this valuable piece of local as well as national history. Your President Harold Thieda

A Series of Talks About People, Places and History in Douglas and Saugatuck

August 30 The Douglas Root Beer Barrel: Good Times and Highway Architecture, sponsored by Osman Flowers and Firs

These fun and informal talks will take place on Tuesdays, 11am at the Old School House History Center in Douglas. Free admission.
UPDATE: SHIPWRECK-LIFESAVING EXHIBIT

What in the world is going on at the Old School House property?

It is the new home for Society’s restored 1854 U.S. Lifesaving lifeboat (the Francis "Gallinipper"), which includes an accompanying exhibit on Lake Michigan shipwreck and lifesaving history. We looking at a full completion target of sometime late September or early October. Contractor Jason Dedic has the 'boathouse' framed up, the tin roof is on, the boat will be moved in within days, and the structure's plank siding will go on next.

Two large sliding doors will welcome visitors into a 'class-room' size area that will feature 6 large display panels that tell the story of shipwrecks and lifesaving on the Great Lakes - with a giant shipwreck mural as a back drop.

The writer/curator for the project is Jim Schmiechen, with Kristi Mueller as the display designer - with organizational help from Steve Hutchins and Fred Schmidt, and lighting help from the architect, Nic Wilkens.

We promise you there will be nothing like it in Michigan. The project is partly funded by the Society with a matching grant ($47,000) from the Museums For America program (a federal program) and a part of the Society’s 'Back-In-Time' garden project. We still are in need of funds to meet the match. So just go to the Society's web site and click on the Donate button to be part of history.

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Saturday, September 17, 11 to 4

The 2011 Heritage Festival Home Tour celebrates the charming village character of Douglas, Michigan. The buildings opened for this special event are modest in size but ideal for today’s "small is beautiful" design and living sensibilities - and they range in time from the village's oldest (1851) to stylishly contemporary. Together, they mirror the interesting lives of the people who live in Douglas today. See the various ways that historic structures have been preserved and re-imagined for contemporary use. You’ll be delighted by the sophistication and appeal of this West Michigan village.

The completely walkable tour includes access to 12 unique sites in Douglas. For an additional $5, tour goers can opt for a Trolley Tour of the lakeshore. This 40-minute, narrated tour will include the charming 1904 Arts and Crafts lakeshore chapel. Tours, conducted by Dr. Jim Schmiechen, depart the Old School House at 1, 2, and 3 pm.

An introductory talk by Marsha Kontio will give visitors the context and background to get the most out of the tours. Talks presented at the Old School House at 11 am and 1 pm.

Due to the private nature of the homes, tour tickets will be limited. Advance tickets are available by calling Fred Schmidt at 269-857-1620 or Info@SDHistoricalSociety.org. Day-of-tour ticket sales will be at the Old School House, 130 Center
**ANYBODY SPEAK DUTCH?**

We have been featured in *AmericA* magazine, one of the most prominent publications in Europe - a beautiful six page spread. The article is on Saugatuck-Douglas and the ghost town of Singapore entitled "The Pompei Of The Great Lakes". Both the Society and Jim Schmiechen are mentioned. Click [HERE](#) for a copy of the article written in Dutch. If you can translate some or all of the text into English, we'll include it in next month's Society Newsletter, just REPLY to the email.

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**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

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

- Penny Shuff, Sarasota, FL
- Chris & Eileen Raphael, Saugatuck, MI
- Palmer Fey Family, Wilmette, IL

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**HARNESSING THE BEAN**

Chicago Dance Master R. G. Huntinghouse (1861-1954) (see June and August 2010 SDHS Newsletters) was not just a great terpsichorean, but also quite a wit.

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Click [HERE](#) to be the first to see the details of the The Heritage Tour Menu.

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**HISTORY by CAMERA**

Click on the picture for a higher resolution copy.

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**The B & L in Her Grave**

It was the summer of 1956. I slowed the Sheridan family dinghy, took aim with my Kodak Pony 828, and snapped this photo. She lay there, in a grave of water and mud just off shore somewhere close to where the Keewatin is moored today. Her presence enhanced the harbor scene for artists and lovers of local ambience. I don’t remember the year she was first abandoned but Kit Lane says in her book *Built on the Banks of the Kalamazoo* it was about 1953. Her name was the B & L - the initials of owners Bertha and Lew Gotham. She was fifty one feet long with a fourteen foot beam.

The B & L was built for the Gotham family by Hank Perkins in 1931 and launched from his little shipyard which was located on Lake Street in Saugatuck. Initially she was steam powered but in 1935 a Kahlenberg diesel was installed. Lew and sons Sam and Fred used her to fish lake trout by long line and hook.

About 1941 the Gothams built an all metal fish tug, the
In 1931 he published a small booklet entitled "Harnessing the Bean" which dealt with neutralizing the aromatic and sonic after effects of a meal of beans. The SDHS has a digital copy of this rare work. How did it come to be written?

As the owner of a farm in Saugatuck at the northeast corner of South Maple and Old Allegan,

"Each summer he takes a number of his children (members of his dancing classes) to this farm for an outing. Beans seem to be the popular food of these youngsters. The "morning after," while still in their dugout, these kids began relating their experiences of the night. The following are some of the expressions heard by the writer: "Say, did you hear anything during the night?" "I'm afraid I've been shell-shocked." I dreamt of a terrible bombardment." "Gee, I've been gassed," etc., etc."

"R.G., and his crew of thinkers got to work finding a way to remove the cause of all these disturbances." And thus the book began to be constructed.

ill-fated Gotham, and powered it with the Kahlenberg from the B & L. They then sold the B & L to Chuck Diepenhorst who fished with her until the early 50s. Finally he sold her to Albert Guilfoil. Albert leased her out but the lessee damaged the hull and she sank. Her bones are still there in the mud, sad end to a bit of our history.

Regarding the picture below, some of you drive by here every day - where could it be? Tune in next month.

Click on the picture for a higher resolution copy.

submitted by jack.sheridan@gmail.com

NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES
ODORLESS, PERFUMED AND MUSCIAL BEAN CO." with officers including: A. Low Rumble; Rose Fragrance; R. U. Sniffing; O. Sweet O'Dore; and Violet Toots. Capital "1,000,000 scents", organized with the aim "to produce noiseless, odorless, perfumed and musical beans, and give the bean something to live for, and make our life worth living too."

He goes on to write of many wonderful new species of bean he was to breed on his farm, to include: musical bean; conversational bean; lullaby bean; short-circuited bean; saxophone bean; non-skid bean; and the sound-proof bean---

"A BOON TO GOLF PLAYERS"- "The sound-proof bean has been especially cultivated to meet a demand for total abstinence of noise during a game of golf. These beans, as we grow them on our noiseless, aromatic and musical bean farm at Saugatuck, Mich., will entirely revolutionize the cultivation of beans. All old fashion beans will now go into the discard."

---"On the experimental farm at Saugatuck, Mich., we are working on a giant bean developed into a fog horn. This we plan to sell to the government for signal stations."

---"With the introduction of the perfumed, or odorless bean, there will be no further need of a hostess providing her guests with clothes pins when entertaining at card parties, or other social gatherings."

"Ungainly, and unattractive signs, formerly hanging over a dining room table "eat beans at your own risk," can now be removed."

The above two photos were recently donated to the collection by Mr. Frank Zellens of Minerva, Ohio. In 1940 when he was 5 years old, his family spent a year in Grand Junction where his father worked for an oil company. These photos were taken on a day outing to Saugatuck.
As a part of the forward to this booklet, local boy Charles Samuel Dailey, then 26, penned a 13 stanza tribute entitled "Ode to R.G. Huntinghouse", which ends:

So in loving tribute, we
Pay just homage thus,
To one who did so much for us,
A name, nay - not just that; but a man indeed.
So as we eat and toot so sweet and merrily,
Let us all give thanks to our R.G!

Dailey (1904-1949) had been born in the family home on Richmond Road (Old Allegan now) moved with the family to Oregon, only to return to live at "Slumber Bluff" (later to be called "Oak Openings"). He was a 1923 graduate of Saugatuck High School (and senior class president), went on to attend the Milwaukee School of Engineering, and in 1925 began sailing the Great Lakes on the steamer "Harvester". He was later to receive Captain papers.

A full copy of this scientific work of humor can be found on the society web site by clicking HERE.

This photograph was recently among a batch of pictures that were donated by the Saugatuck Township Fire District along with a fire suit belonging to Bert Van Dis and a Hand Drawn Hose Cart from the 1920s.

Does anyone recognize the beauties in the photo? If you know, please e-mail me at archives@sdhistoricalsociety.org or call 269-857-7901.

A huge word of appreciation to Cynthia Sorensen who has been volunteering in the archives regularly on Monday afternoons. Cynthia has been a great help in sorting though our backlog of un-accessioned (cataloged and acknowledged) donated items that have been in storage in the bank basement.

Also a big thank you to Jennifer Fisher, our summer intern who brought our computer records up to date. Every bit of help is so appreciated. If anyone wants information about volunteering in the archives, you can find me in the archives office in the lower level of the school house on Monday afternoons. (except Aug. 29.) I'd be happy to talk to you.

Mary Voss - volunteer archivist/collections manager
On October 9, 1871, Fennville and Holland, Michigan burned to the ground, on the very same day as the great fire in Chicago. Saugatuck was spared but the citizenry were suddenly highly aware of the need for modern fire protection.

Saugatuck's first fire department had just been established in January of that same year. After the Fennville/Holland/Chicago fires, Saugatuck purchased 200 pails that were distributed around town.

By 1881, the city's engine company had 32 members with a hand pumper and hose cart. A photo, circa 1910, shows the Saugatuck fire department posing with two hose carts. Although horse-drawn hose carts existed, Saugatuck's carts transported hose to a fire scene using only manpower.

For a complete look at the Display Panel, click

"The winter that the war began, my Dad was working in Battle Creek. I was in college at Western, and we were traveling between Kalamazoo and Battle Creek. We had gone there for the weekend and we were in my father's car on the way to my uncle John Bird's house when it came over the radio. What a shock. From then on it was war and more war, and we had to learn to live with it. " Seventy Years ago this December. Send your Pearl Harbor memories to Chris Yoder, cyoder@tds.net or call 857-4327.
Among all her many accomplishments and adventures, the most rewarding to her were being a mother to daughter Gladys and son Ted, grandmother to Anne and Bette, and great-grandmother to Bill, Lisa and Jim. Her children and grandchildren adored her, and passed down these feelings to the present day. The family has shared some stories of their "Nanan".

May could be strong-willed when needed. Her husband Doc didn't think much of kids going to college, after all he had done very well for himself without a college education. May, however, never got over her lost dream of going to Normal School (state teacher's college). She saved up the money to send her son Ted to the university -- and then snuck him out of town before Doc found out. (Future governor and presidential candidate Thomas E. Dewey was one of his friends and classmates at U of M.)

Great-grandson Bill Bleeker writes "I know my Mother and even my father (who was no relation) adored her. My mother would tell me that she could not sleep the night before a visit to Nanan's. My parents spent their honeymoon in Saugatuck and Nanan rented a small cottage on Spear street. My dad said the bed was an old feather bed and when you laid on it you sank about 3 feet --- they spent the night on the floor---some honeymoon. He thought maybe Nanan was playing a joke on them. Nanan was such a big part of our family and still is to this very day."
Nanan promised her treasured music box to the 1st great-grandchild. Bill Bleeker beat cousin Lisa Diaz Nash by 2 months and has it today. The music box was used in her girlhood for dancing on the board walk in Saugatuck (board walks were in place long before cement sidewalks began to be constructed - a continuous cement sidewalk on Lake Street was proudly announced in June 1905). Bill writes "I know we saw almost the same music box on Antiques Roadshow, it was from the 1860's plays 7 songs and was worth about $5,000.00."

contributed by Chris Yoder

This series on Saugatuck Historian May Francis Heath (MFH) will continue until the 50th anniversary of her death in September, 2011. 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:

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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](mailto:info@sdhistoricalsociety.org)

**MUSEUM AND TECH CENTER**

The Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society History 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 2011 exhibit is titled:
A Village Patchwork: Everyday Life in Saugatuck-Douglas

The Museum is open daily from noon to 4 pm through August and weekends in September and October with the 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
WHAT IT’S ALL ABOUT | The Saugatuck-Douglas Heritage Tour for 2011 is about everyday structures and homes that reflect the old-fashioned “village character” of this former port village in the heart of Michigan’s fruit-growing area. Behind its veneer of attractive shops and eateries and fine waterside cottages, Douglas is energized by scores of residents, both straight and gay, interested in the arts and the village’s cultural roots—working together to preserve and re-invent the this place they call “home.”

Today’s twelve tour sites range in time from the village’s oldest to quite recent. Most are modest in size but ideal in design for today’s “small is beautiful” living sensibilities. Taken as a group, they mirror the interesting lives today’s village residents. Tour participants will see firsthand the various ways that Douglas-ites have put older structures into contemporary use—and come to understand some of the restoration/preservation issues contractors, designers, and homeowners faced in achieving their goal to retain the village’s small-scale character.
THE HERITAGE TOUR MENU | Pick and choose or do them all:

1) **The “Downtown Walking Tour”** Walk Douglas’s commercial hub and meet the Center Street shopkeepers.

2) **The “Lakeshore Trolley Story Tour”** conducted by a local historian. Drive along the Douglas lakeshore and hear the stories of the many Douglas lakeshore cottages—some grand and some not so grand—of a century ago and the charming 1904 Arts & Crafts Lakeshore Chapel designed by a student of Frank Lloyd Wright.

3) **The “Front Yard Stops.”** The tour also highlights another dozen or so Douglas neighborhood houses that tell their story with a story-stop at the front yard—as well as stories of some of the village’s “lost” houses and people from the past.

4) **The “Village History Narrative and Picture Show,”** conducted by a local historian at the Old School House, one of Michigan’s finest architectural gems of the Civil-War era.

5) **The “Open to View Tour.”** Go inside. Look around. Twelve of the villages most characteristic structures will be open with docents and some owners — present to show you through and answer your questions.

- **The Old School House** (1866-67), 130 Center Street. Tour headquarters. This noble structure demonstrates Michigan’s most important public education reform program as of that date, promoting school consolidation, free high school education, and professional teacher training. With its fine bell cupola and imposing Italianate roof brackets and Classical architectural detail, this is a stellar example of Civil War era public school architecture. Its use as a school ended in 1957, after which it was converted to four rental apartments. In 2006 it was purchased by the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society and after a $1.3 million restoration, it was reopened as The Old School House History Center and Art Gallery, putting in back into service as a center
for community education. A jewel in the History Center crown, a new structure has been added on the property house the Society’s rare 1854 “Francis” iron life saving boat—built by the company that built the Civil-War-era ironsides.

- **Douglas Village Hall** (“Dutcher Lodge”)(1875-1902, restored 1995?), 86 Center Street. The home of the Masonic Lodge and the Village Council—and the venue for the village’s traditional Saturday night dance—Dutcher Lodge was the most important building in Douglas daily life. With its simple façade and contemporary interior, today the building houses Douglas city offices and council chamber.

- **Wickes-Welch House** (1900, recently restored) 149 Main Street, at South Street. This imposing example of a turn-of-the-century Queen Anne farmhouse has an impressive 51 ft. enclosed curved front porch and notable interior woodwork.

- **Douglas House** (former Hotel), 41 Spring Street. This is a remarkable post-fire historic “recreation” from the portions of the 1861 Greek Revival village hotel-stage stop and tavern. Learn how the owners, converted the remains of the old hotel into a charming new family home.

- **Kirby House** (1890), 294 West Center Street. Built in the Queen Anne style, the Kirby House was originally the private residence of Frank and Sarah Kirby. Eventually Mrs. Kirby and daughter converted it into a guest-house, then later as Douglas’s first hospital. In the 1980s it underwent extensive restoration/renovation to be become a Victorian jewel and one of Saugatuck’s best known “gay friendly” B&Bs.

- **Herman Bekken’s Blacksmith Shop** (1887),---Washington Street.

Douglas in the later 1800s was a busy industrial-agricultural port town. A swing bridge allowed steamships to access docks at end of Center Street and this shop was busy repairing wagons and carriages and shodding horses.
• **Gerber Building** (1890), *Corner of Spring and Center Streets*, *(enter via Spring Street)*. Douglas’s most prestigious commercial structure, built by Daniel Gerber, Jr., of one the town’s principal families. The family farmed large orchards within the village and experimented with preserving fruit products and the manufacture of fruit containers. For many years the building housed a side-by-side drugstore and ice cream shop. The decline of Douglas by the 1940s led to the building’s “re-purposing”—including use as the village’s Catholic School and convent. The lower floor was restored in the 1980s. You are invited to view the upper floor with its stylish condos—enter by way of a new courtyard and residential wing facing Spring Street.

• **Congregational (UCC) Church of Douglas** (1884), *Spring and Wall Streets*. Built by a local furniture maker/carpenter in the country-gothic style popular at the time, this was Douglas’s most prominent church. It was known for its music. It has been carefully preserved. The stained glass windows are original. A memorial garden was added to the north in the 1990s. It is a UCC “affirming” church with a large and diverse “gay and straight” membership.

• **Putnam-Greenwood House** (1870s), *Corner of Freemont at Spring Streets*. Dyer Putnam was Douglas’s first Postmaster (until 1885) and general store merchant. Restored and “modernized” in 1920s with porches, fireplace, and stylish French doors/windows, the house later became a boarding house and later still fell into considerable decay. Now under on-going restoration by owners Lesa and Jeff Greenwood. Note the exterior *Italianate* trim work, interior hardware, floor restoration, an addition and some re-arrangement of rooms.

• **Wade Cottage** (1851), *149 Washington Street*. Douglas’s first house. Built by Jonathan Wade, founder of Douglas (then called Dudleyville), this is a traditional two-room up and two-room down settler’s house, with a “lean-to” dining/kitchen addition and pedimented front porch added in the 1920s. Original vertical “plank” construction can be
observed from the interior. Currently used as the shared part time country home of artist & designers.

- **Crow Cottage** (2007), 31 Spring Street. On a narrow lot smack in the middle of the village, this small contemporary open-plan house was built on a small budget. Note the interesting wood finishes, upper sitting porch with fireplace, use of concrete block — and striking art collection. The enclosed garden leads to an even smaller guest house called “the Bird.” Designed by the owner.

- **Fleming House** (ca. 1865?) Corner of Wall and Main Streets. Traditional millworker dwelling with a “salt box” character, within a neighborhood of other houses built in 1860s for local lumber (and later basket factory) workers. Here the owner and contractor sought to restore exterior to its 1860s form, including the fieldstone foundations—but with a contemporary garden side porch addition that maintains the original scale of the house. The interior is ready for 21st century use with material upgrades appropriate to and respectful of its past.