On Saturday evening January 14, several hundred people attended the 'opening' of the exhibition “Small Towns, Big Picture - the Photography of Bill Simmons” to see 31 giant 'blow-up' photos from the huge Simmons collection of the Society's photo library of Saugatuck area life in the 1940s and 1950s. The exhibit, which runs through March 9, is sponsored

Sponsor a Monthly Program

These fun and informal programs will kick off on Wednesday, February 8th. A complete schedule with topics and speakers is shown below. For only $125 you can SPONSOR A MONTHLY PROGRAM! You will be acknowledged as a sponsor of the program on the press release, the Society's website, newsletter and at the Program. Just REPLY to this email and let us know which Program you would like to help sponsor and we'll take care of the rest.

Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society
2012 Monthly Program Schedule
Sin, War, Base-Ball, Shipwrecks, Circus & More
submitted by Jim Schmiechen

- FEBRUARY 8: Small Towns, Big Picture - Simmons Photo Stories Uncovered. 7 p.m., Saugatuck Center for the Arts. Walk onto the SCA's Big Screen and into the 1940s and 1950s with Jack Sheridan's Q & A examination of the Bill Simmons Photo Collection. Refreshments served in the SCA Gallery following the presentation. This program is part of the SCA "About
jointly by the Society and the Saugatuck Center for the Arts and is featured in the Center's gallery.

Ken Carls viewing one of the exhibit 'blow up' photos.

When he died in 1966, photographer Bill Simmons left nearly 3,000 photographs documenting life in Saugatuck and Douglas from 1940 to 1961 - filed away in little envelopes, numbered, named, and placed in two wood boxes, some with date and identifying information. Making up what must be one of the largest "photo shoots" of any mid-century American town, the collection disappeared until it was given anonymously to the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society in 1998.

This exhibition presents some Simmons photos which are shown here for the first time. The exhibit curators/designers were Jim Schmiechen and Ken Carls. Jack Sheridan will present a program about the Simmons collection at the SCA on Wednesday, February 8. Walk onto the SCA's Big Screen and into

It" series and will be held at the Saugatuck Center for the Arts, in conjunction with the SDHS-SCA collaborative exhibition "Small Towns | Big Picture" through March 9.

- **MARCH 14: The Wages of Sin and Other Tales.** 7 p.m., Old School House History Center. A sit-down photo tour with Marsha Kontio at the Old School House. Sinful refreshments served.
- **APRIL 11: How the Home Folks Followed the War.** 7 p.m., Old School House History Center. Jim Schmiechen uses images and the little-known "Douglas Dope" wartime newsletter to examine the news that connected the local boys at the "front" with the folks at home during World War Two. War-time ration refreshments served.
- **MAY 9: Shipwrecks, Heroes, & Scallywags - an Exhibition.** 6:30 p.m., Old School House History Center. Saugatuck Middle School Sixth Graders tell Lake Michigan stories through words, artwork, and model building. Join in this "exhibition opening" and reception hosted by Wendy Colsen's 6th Grade Language Arts Class." Massive desserts. Note early starting time. The exhibit continues until June Old School House History Center.
- **JUNE 13: Michigan's Titanic: The Mysteries of the Wreck of the Steamship Chicora.** 7:30 p.m., The Boathouse at the Old School House History Center. Join us in the Old School House garden as Kit Lane presents the disaster story and the attempt to find its remains. Shipboard refreshments. The Annual Meeting/Report by the SDHS Board precedes this program at 7 o’clock.
- **JULY 11: The Circus Comes to Douglas.** 7:00 p.m., Old School House History Center. Our summer spectacular. Learn about the history of the old-time circus and hear SDHS member Bob Sapita tell how this amazing model circus was built - complete with sound and animation that will leave you spell bound. Circus time refreshments. The Circus will be on display at the OSH until July 23.
the 1940s and 1950s on February 8th with Jack’s Q & A presentation of these and more from the Simmons Collection.

There still is a limited quantity available of the book Off the Record: The Unpublished Photographs of Bill Simmons. A Pictorial History of Saugatuck in the ’40s and ’50s published in 2001 and authored by James Schmiechen and Jack Sheridan - a perfect complement to the current exhibit. To order your copy, just REPLY to this email, and we’ll take care of the rest. The cost is $29.95 plus Michigan Sales tax and shipping.

INTERESTING TIDBITS FROM THE ARCHIVES

In early February 1950, a letter was sent to then Michigan Governor G. Mennen Williams from Miss Dee Whipple inviting him to attend an Old Time Square Dance sponsored by the Saugatuck High School Senior Class on February 25 from 8 p.m. to 12 p.m. The governor’s response was as follows: “Thank you very much for your recent letter cordially inviting me to attend the Square Dance being sponsored by the Senior Class of Saugatuck High School on February 25, 1950 in Saugatuck. Much as I would like to be on hand for this dance, I sincerely regret a previous commitment in the Upper Peninsula makes it impossible for me to accept your invitation for that date. Kindly extend my best wishes to members of the Senior Class for a most enjoyable evening of square dancing."

From the Sunday, July 5, 2009 Holland Sentinel written by Jim Hayden. Bob and Kay Sapita are members of the Society

* AUGUST 8: The 'Don’t Panic' Shipwreck Picnic. 6:00 p.m., Old School House History Center Garden. Gather at the OSH garden and boathouse for the traditional SDHS summertime good-food picnic - with a garden treasure hunt.
* SEPTEMBER 12: Take Me Out to the Ball Game - and buy me a Hot Dog. 6:00 p.m., Old School House History Center Courtyard. Meet the Douglas Dutcher Team and hear the story of baseball in Douglas through the years. On the School House courtyard. Beer and Hot Dogs.
* OCTOBER 10: Strange-But-True and other Cemetery Tales. 7:00 p.m., Old School House History Center. Join Kit, Marsha, and Chris on a photo and story tour through the nearby (and ancient) Taylor and Plummerville Cemeteries. Refreshments to die for.
* November 14: Houses Talking. 7:00 p.m., Old School House History Center. A wine and cheese reception as the backdrop for an instructive view of area building renovation-preservation stories - and meet the 2012 Heritage Award Winners.
* December 2: The Society’s Annual Jolly Holiday Dinner Party. 6:00 p.m., Saugatuck Center for the Arts. Begin the holiday season with your fellow SDHS members. Good cheer, great food, and a special story presentation.

Pick your program and become a sponsor. Just REPLY to this email.
dancing. Sincerely G. Mennen Williams, Governor."

On the evening of the big night, a Western Union telegram was sent to be delivered at 9 p.m. It read, "KINDLY EXTEND MY SINCERE BEST WISHES TO MEMBERS OF THE SENIOR CLASS OF SAUGATUCK HIGH SCHOOL AND GUESTS FOR A MOST SUCCESSFUL AND ENJOYABLE SQUARE DANCE. – G. Mennen Williams, Governor."

Both pieces of mail as well as the invitation and the 50 cent ticket to the event were donated by Sandra Finch Edson via Cynthia Sorensen to the SDHS archives.

PS: postage in 1950 was 3 cents. submitted by Mary Voss

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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.

- Keith Walker, Saugatuck, MI
- Durenda Walker, Holland, MI
- Conrad Campbell, Medway, OH

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**THE MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF ORRIN LAWRENCE**

In the mid 19th century, there was an interesting landmark in the Saugatuck Village Square called the Republican Liberty Pole. Our nation's flag flew 130 feet tall, unfurled, to be seen by residents and visitors. The September 26, 1868 edition of the Saugatuck Commercial reported that new halyards had been strung to replace those that had been stolen the week before.

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**A Swinging Bridge**

On our historical bridge tour via the past two newsletters, we have progressed southward from the Saugatuck river bank over a fixed bridge and then a causeway toward the swing bridge on Douglas side. This ca 1910 photo is of the swing bridge located between the end of the causeway and the Douglas shore. Headed upriver is the ferry boat Grace which ran from landings downriver and a landing at the end of Center Street in Douglas. The basket factory can be seen in the background. Probably the men at the rail of the bridge are the attendants. The head attendant lived in a house at the end of the causeway out of the photo just to the north.

The bridge which was completed in 1902 was in use until 1936. This steel framed wooden plank swing bridge was a hundred feet long and eighteen feet wide. It was low to the water requiring the swing bridge to be swung open for the passage of vessels. The bridge attendants opened the bridge by walking-pushing a geared lever that turned a wheeled structure atop a center abutment. The abutment was constructed by sinking a barge loaded with stone which was then capped with concrete.

By the mid 1930s the bridge was wearing out and the road traffic was rapidly increasing. The government embarked on a huge road and bridge building program - part of many great depression works programs. A historical time to begin building what we still have today. Stay tuned.
Republican Liberty Pole -1874

Twenty-three year old Orrin Lawrence was the one to climb the pole and string the new ropes. The young man, son of Asa Lawrence and Emeline Moulton, was born May 22, 1845 and served in the US Navy during the Civil War. Orrin had been discharged in August of 1865. He had hazel eyes, brown hair, and a dark complexion. We do not know what became of his father Asa, but his mother Emeline died September 20, 1855, and rests in the Plummerville cemetery under an attractively carved stone erected by her son Orrin. Her age is given as "27y 11m 9d." It is thought that Emeline was a daughter of Almarin Moulton, an engineer at the Singapore mill who served as justice of the peace in 1839.

submitted by jack.sheridan@gmail.com

MIKE PHILLIPS LETTER

The letter below was sent from Mike Phillips and is reprinted with his permission. Mike was a member of the Society Board for several years and served as Membership Chair. Fred Schmidt

Dear Fred (Janet) a voice from the past is contacting you. Thanks to you Fred, (I think), I have enjoyed so much reading all the news from the SDHS, seeing the improvements, current events and savoring the memories of past involvement with you and the others of my era that you know of. I am so impressed with all that is happening and often realise what I have left behind when I moved permanently to Naples. Then I read today about the call from Marsha Kontio (more memories!) and the need for cookies and etc for meetings. I also thought of Jane U and her leadership, for so long on such issues. I just had to write to you.

Though I guess it is certain that I will never return to Pier Cove/Saug/Doug to live again, and the chance that I will even visit lessens with each passing year, I want you to knows how much I appreciate that despite my non-membership status, somehow I am still on the distribution list for SDHS info.

I am well satisfied to be in my Independent Living Retirement community, the Carlisle in Naples. Emphasis on the Independence, for I still drive and
Orrin Coates, age 5 in that census, is shown to be residing in Ganges Township in a boarding house living with 14 year old Elvira Moulton, perhaps a sister of his mother Emeline. Others listed as living in the same boarding house at that time included Plummers, Pincheons, Weeds, and others, many of whom seem to have been in the tannery trade. In the 1870 census, Orrin is shown in the village of Saugatuck and his occupation is listed as "sailor."

Orin A. Lawrence married Susan Ensfield on May 12, 1872. In the 1880 census, the young couple was shown living in the household of his father-in-law Christian Ensfield, in Ganges Township, and Orrin's occupation is still given as "sailor." By that time the couple had lost 2 daughters Foola and Tula, both of whom rest under small stones at the Taylor cemetery. One rests under a carved lamb, and the other under a small cross.

On October 2, 1890, Orrin Lawrence was sailing as first officer of the steam barge, H. A. Root, under Capt. O. E. Parks. The Lake Shore Commercial gives the following report:

"The steamer was light, bound north about 12 miles from Michigan City, and about six miles from shore, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon of Thursday October 2, when Lawrence was seen entering the pilot house with a piece of watermelon in his hand. Soon afterward it was noticed the boat was swinging, and it was found the wheel was deserted. Search was immediately instituted and the captain and crew were dismayed to find that the missing officer was not on the vessel. The boat was immediately put about and in just seven minutes from the time the search was instituted, a cap worn by the missing man and two cigars were found to be floating on the water which solved beyond doubt the fate of the owner. How the accident occurred is a mystery almost beyond conjecture. The watermelon was found on the deck opposite the pilot house door and near the rail, as if the unfortunate man had stepped there and fallen overboard, but it seems almost impossible that this should occur, as the deck is protected by a two foot railing. But this must have been the case from some reason, which will never be known, and once overboard he must have been drawn under the boat and struck by the wheel as he was a good swimmer and could easily have made his predicament known to the others of the steamer. There is no probability that

I still have local contact occasionally with folk from Michigan. Bud and Max, Judy and Tom Anthrop, Shirley and Larry Akins, for example, and I hope to be seeing Dawn and George soon. But, as said earlier, when I think about it, I am so grateful for the opportunity to have worked with folk like you, Jim S, Ken C, Ron Hirsch, the Yoder's at SDHS, as well as Kristen Armstrong and the SCA folk, and the many others in both organisations that you know of. Incidentally, I still have frequent Skyping contact with Kristin Gebben, now of course mostly living in the UK with Duncan Jackson and their daughter Lily. There are others too from along the Lakeshore, neighbours and those that were not much involved in the activities you and I shared. My memories of the area for both June and I, and the view from the front of my house of the Lake do not diminish much. You, who live there now are so blessed.

Am in pretty good health too, at least for my age. I work out with a personal trainer three times a week, barely making it through, but at least I try. I also traveled to the south of France last Oct to be with old friends for a month, so I'm not too limited in my journeying.

Nuff about me and the rambling comments. I trust you and your family are well. Clearly you are continuing to be busy with local organisations. Keep it up Fred!!, you are a great asset. Again thanks for rekindling the memories. Very sincerely, Mike
The family did not accept this conclusion readily. His wife's brother Christopher had worked for three years on his brother-in-law's ship, and when Orrin was lost at sea. Christopher and his father Christian walked the shore between Benton Harbor and Muskegon looking for the remains.

Floral Memorial to Orrin Lawrence

In January 1891, a memorial service was held at the Methodist Episcopal Church in Ganges. The Jacob G. Fry Post, Grand Army of the Republic (of which Orrin's father Lawrence was a member) turned out in force for the ceremony. About 30 people from Saugatuck attended, including Capt. and Mrs. O. E. Parks, Capt. and Mrs. R. Ames, Capt. and Mrs. William Trumbull, and Capt. George Phelps. "The church was crowded to standing room to accommodate the attendance, "The memorial service was given by Rev William Nelson Breidenstein, who used the Revelations 21:25 scripture for his message, "And there shall be no night there." An excerpt from the newspaper report of that service read as follows: "The mystery surrounding the casualty occasioning the death of Orrin Lawrence will never be cleared."

In the summer of 1893, the grieving widow erected a beautiful marble memorial to her husband in Taylor Cemetery. The work had been done by a Plainwell firm. She had reportedly been completely prostrated by the news of her husband's death and rarely left the house of her father for the balance of her life. She died November 9, 1894, at the age of 43 and rests beside her husband.

Welcome from Jack Sheridan leader of the Society Family History Group. The Group meets on the first and third Thursday of every month at 3:30 in the Old School House. Our next meeting is Thursday January 19th. Please join us to see what we are all about and most importantly, discover what you are all about.

Presently, Group focus is on building family trees by learning and utilizing web based digital research techniques. In our current meetings we have been learning new ways to search United States censuses - which are available with ten year intervals from 1790 to 1930, with 1940 to be released this April 2. These records are a treasure trove of information and are computer searchable in many different ways. For instance a 1900 census record can be searched by state, by city, by first name, by last name, by year of birth, by country of birth – all of these categories can be searched for at the same time or by any category that you select. All records that come up [a scanned document] can then be viewed just as written by the census taker 112 years ago.

Now here is an attractive offer for our members: Send to us information on a person and we will find them for you [if possible] in the U. S. Census. If I can't find them Chris Yoder can!

Each month in this column a member will tell you about an exciting, family history discovery. A family history discovery is called a EUREKA! Moment. One such moment occurred last month in the Czech Republic. That’s right the Czech Republic.

Chris Yoder relates:

A EUREKA! Moment

Czech Cousin Finds Douglas Postmaster Joe Dornak
her husband's memorial in the Ensfield family plot.

Orrin Lawrence Memorial

The Ensfield family was not to forget this honored brother-in-law. Beginning with the birth of Christopher Ensfield's eldest son in 1880, three generations of Ensfield's have borne the name "Orrin." Ensfield family members believed that because Orrin had the reputation of being a strict task-master, a member or members of the crew may have "helped him over the side" instead of this being a simple accident.

Susan Ensfield of Ganges writes: "The story of this man was often repeated because our 'limb of the tree' was a namesake bearer. My husband is a III-third; his father would tell the story of family members walking the shoreline looking for remains of Orrin for several seasons." The story went on - "I was surprised to read that he disappeared in the middle of the afternoon. We had always assumed it occurred in the dark of night, when there was no one around to witness what happened. When Orrin Ensfield Sr. told the story no one ever questioned; just listened as it was a sad one for him because he remembered the pain his family felt all of their lives. Yes, the family of his generation (Orrin Lawrence and Orrin Jr.) definitely believed that he was "helped" overboard."

Many thanks to family historian Susan Ensfield for sharing the wonderful memorabilia from her family collection.

contributed by Chris Yoder

Our SDHS Web Records have worldwide reach! Douglas Community Hospital death records scanned years ago by Howard Vanderbeck have been searched across the internet from the Czech Republic. A couple weeks ago, we received an email from Peter Svach, age 42. Five siblings of his great-grandfather came to America around 1910. Their names were Frantisek (Frank), Josef (Joseph), Marie, Anna and Frantiska (Frances) Svach.

From the Czech Republic, Peter emailed, "Our family kept in touch with their relatives here in the Czech Republic during the second world war and even in early 1950's but since then we have not had any information about them or their families." By searching the internet, Peter found the death certificate for Joseph Svach on our SDHS On-line Research Center and contacted the SDHS as a result.

Using our on-line obituaries, and making some phone calls, I learned that daughters Francis, Anna and Marie still have family in the area. Frances married Louis Sikora, Anna married Joseph Smutny, and Maria (Joe's grandmother) married Anthony Dornak. The families of the brothers are in the Chicago area. We were able to provide Peter with email addresses to reunite the family.

Contributed by Jack Sheridan. Contact me at: jack.sheridan@gmail.com or 269 857-7144.
TOWNSHIP ADDS NEW CEMETERY ACCESS

Saugatuck Twp Sexton Aaron Sheridan has announced new on-line access to the records for the Saugatuck Riverside and Douglas cemeteries. The cemetery management software in use allows search of the two cemeteries by name of plot owner or plot resident. You can access this page at:

http://saugatucktownship.org

Then click on "Cemetery Data Search" and again on "Cemetery search". Or just visit the SDHS On-line Research Center and click on the "New Saugatuck Twp Cemetery Search" tab.

Please use this access to help Aaron improve our records. Feel free to send him any corrections you may find at aarons@saugatucktownship.org.

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-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
A Village Patchwork: Everyday Life in Saugatuck-Douglas

The Museum is now closed. 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