SEPTEMBER 2014

Again this year, the Society Newsletters are being underwritten by a generous donation from Frances Vorys, a Society Life member.

New Event!

Dine Around:
A Delicious Series of Dinners and Parties

Saturday, September 20 at 7:00 PM
Cocktails at the Historic Riley-Slack-Ellis House
(located on Heirloom Lane in Douglas)
$50 per person
Still a few tickets left!

Upcoming 2014 Monthly Programs

- October 8, Tales from the Cemeteries with Kit Lane and Marsha Kontio
- November 12, Michigan's Hottest Town Revisited with Mike Sweeney
- December 14, Holiday Party at the SCA

Board of Directors Meeting Schedule

Starting with the September meeting, the Society's Board of Directors will be meeting on the third Tuesday of the month at 5:30 PM at the Old School House.

This is a unique opportunity to get a glimpse inside the well-preserved Riley-Slack-Ellis House, built ca. 1880 by carpenter and joiner Thomas A. Riley*.
Join hosts Michigan Supreme Court Justice Bridget Mary McCormack and her husband Steven Croley for a cocktail party in their historic home. $50 per person

*Riley was killed in the Civil War, and his widow, Fidelia, continued to live in the house after she married another Civil War veteran, Anthony Slack. Subsequently, their daughter, married to Claude Ellis, a lake ship's captain, continued to occupy the house, thus keeping it in the same family for generations.

To reserve your ticket, REPLY to this email and we'll be in touch.

Click HERE for more details on this Dine Around event.

Saturday, October 4 at 6:00 PM
An evening at DollyBrook Resort
$50 per person

DollyBrook Resort is a 2011 Heritage Preservation Award winner and a must see for everyone. Park once and stroll the nine cottages at your own pace. Each cottage will serve cocktails and one of the following: Appetizers, Soups, Salads, or Dessert.

Mix and mingle with friends and enjoy each cottage's fabulously unique decor featuring local artifacts and antiques. The cottages will be hosted by different members of the Society doing the cooking and serving up the cocktails.

Saugatuck-Douglas Afghans are now available at the Museum and the OSH for $40. Or if you would like to order an Afghan, just REPLY to this email and we will be in touch. submitted by Steve Hutchins

Garden Happenings

"Designers want me to dress like Spring, in billowing things. I don't feel like Spring. I feel like a warm red Autumn."
Make this event a "must do" on your list of fall activities.

To reserve your ticket, REPLY to this email and we'll be in touch.

Click HERE for more details on this Dine Around event.

Saturday, October 25 - 7:30 PM
Halloween Bash
at the Old School House
$50 per person

The annual Halloween party has become a favorite for many members and friends of the Society. This year's party will be hosted by Sharon Kelly, Janie & Jim Flemming, Ken Carls and Howard & Judi Vanderbeck. Don your costume (or not) and come to the Old School House for drinks and dinner preceding the fantastic Douglas Halloween Parade.

If you would like to reserve your spot for one of these upcoming Dine Around events, REPLY to this email and we'll be in touch.

Donate to the Historical Society

--- Marilyn Monroe

With another beautiful summer behind us and all of its great memories, we now have the season of autumn to look forward to . . . shorter days, crisper nights, and the turning of the trees. The deeper colors of summer are already present in our garden with the blooming of the asters, the sedum and many more beautiful perennials. So put on a jacket and come stroll through the garden in all of its fall glory.

Root Camp lost one of its founding members to cancer. Our friend, Linda Roerig, passed away on Saturday. We can't even tell you how much we will miss her.

Until next month,
The Landscape and Root Camp Committees

Linda Roerig

Linda Roerig, a member of the Society and one
while shopping at amazon.com!

Now you can shop at Amazon and have Amazon donate to the Historical Society.

Just click on

http://smile.amazon.com/ch/38-3010564

to start your shopping on Amazon and your purchase will automatically designate the Historical Society as your charity. There is no additional cost to the shopper and the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price to the Historical Society.

Also don't forget to add

http://smile.amazon.com/ch/38-3010564

to your internet shopping Bookmarks or Favorites today.

If you have any questions on this program, please REPLY to this email.

Every little bit helps. Thanks for participating.

Fred Schmidt, Administrator

Was It Arson?
The Big Pavilion Fire Mystery Solved?

A recent (August 18, 2014) Tuesday Talk program at the History Center on gangster presence in Saugatuck included a number of testimonies and known facts about Saugatuck's most famous fire, the enormous (May 6, 1960) conflagration that destroyed "The Brightest Spot on the Great Lakes" - the Big Pavilion, which was made up of a huge dance-ballroom, bar, and film theater complex.

The "take away" from the session was that it was most probably arson - undertaken by Chicago "hit men," but for what reason it is not clear.

There was much speculation at the time. Arson was always whispered to be a possible cause, but never proven or even investigated (the fire of the founding members of the Society's Root Camp passed away recently. Click HERE for more details,
Welcome from Jack Sheridan and Chris Yoder, leaders of the Society Family History Group.

Please visit us to see what we are all about and most importantly, share "lessons learned" about the many tools available for family history research.

Census information is by far the most valuable in the research of family history. All federal censuses [except 1890 which was destroyed by a fire] and many state censuses exist and most are available for review and search on the internet.

The first Federal census was taken in 1790 and another made every ten years since. Over the decades, the census data gathered each decade has expanded and changed. Prior to 1850 the name of the head of each household, number in the household, their age and gender was asked. Starting in 1850 all household members were identified. Data is not made public until seventy two years have passed, so the most recent census now available is the 1940 census.

Think about it - this information is a treasure trove of family history clues! So how about giving a search of the Federal censuses a try? All you need is the ability to use the internet plus a bit of patience and perseverance.

Ancestry.com has a marvelous Federal census database because it is 100% complete and easily searchable. The Ancestry folks would like to sign you up as a subscriber. But before you seriously consider that alternative try searching the 1880 and/or the 1940 Federal census, for no charge, to get an idea of how it works.

Here is an easy way to do that: Go to the Ancestry.com search page at this address: Ancestry.com/search

This takes you to a free [no strings attached] Ancestry.com search page. Enter information on a family member who may have been in either

commissioner ruled it out for lack of evidence). The most popular cause set forth was that the fire was by a bird bringing a lighted cigarette in the Pavilion tower!

New evidence. The passage of time appears to have encouraged some people to speak out. Revealed at the Tuesday Talk was a "death bed" confession by a witness nearly a half-century after the event. This "death bed" testimony (disclosed for first time at the History Center event), centered on three well-known Chicago mobsters who told an acquaintance the day before the fire that they were in town "to torch the Pavilion." This testimony was investigated privately, with considerable assurance that the "confession" was true, but the investigation was halted. It appears that someone is alive that was implicated. "Never to be proven?"

Audience collaboration. Comments at the session provided further accounts that confirm the "arson" claim - including the testimony that prior to the fire a local businessman was advised that it would be a good idea to remove his valuable equipment from the building. Others at the Talk, came forth with (some anecdotal) evidence passed on to them by people who were alive at that time: the point being, a person (or persons) set the fire who was paid by an interested party, most probably the owner of the building who was interested in an insurance payout.

One wonders what other stories known on that fateful day went untold to the grave.

More text and photos are to be found in the SDHS publication, Saugatuck’s Famous Dance Hall, The Big Pavilion, by Kit Lane, available
the 1880 or the 1940 Federal census. Start out by entering minimal information [name, birthdate, state of residence], especially if the person’s surname is an uncommon one. If you get a lot of results with the same name enter more data to differentiate your target person from similar hits.

A few tips to help in your search. Remember that the original census documents were hand written by a census enumerator as he interviewed a member of the household. Very often names were written as they sounded, not as spelled. In addition, exact information was often not known by the interviewee. The search software is designed to help you overcome these problems but you should expect challenges. Call or email me if you get stuck or have questions.

The 1880 and the 1940 censuses are free, as are a number of other databases [such as Find-a-Grave], but most census years and databases are not free. However, remember all the databases are available to you at no charge if you come to a Family History Group meeting. Good luck and I hope to hear from you!

The Group’s regular meeting schedule is the first and third Thursday of every month at the OSH. Upcoming meetings are:

Thursday, September 18
Thursday, October 2
Thursday, October 16

Remember, your family history does not have to have any connection to the Saugatuck-Douglas area !!!

Still not sure how to get going? Let us provide a helpful jump start by recording what you know about your parents, grandparents, and great grandparents and send it along for a review by Chris Yoder or myself. The snail mail address is SDHS Family History Box 617 Douglas, Michigan 49406, or email a copy to either cyoder@tds.net or jack.sheridan@gmail.com.

through the Society's web site or at the Museum.

Please send any comments or stories relative to the Big Pavilion fire to either Kit Lane at kitlane@wmol.com or Jim Schmiechen at james.schmiechen@gmail.com

submitted by Kit Lane and Jim Schmiechen

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Jarrett Zeman

The Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society is pleased to announce the addition of Jarrett Zeman as our new Museum Specialist. Jarrett will work part-time at the Old School House on the renovation of the First Floor Event Space into a new exhibition gallery. He will also advise the Society on collections management and the development of new public programs.

Jarrett, a native of West Michigan, earned his Master's Degree in Museum Studies from The George Washington University in Washington DC, where he had the privilege of working on exhibitions at the Library of Congress. Closer to
We will soon be back to you with readily found data and with suggestions on the next steps to take. Further help is readily available from the Family History group. Again, the only requirement is membership in the SDHS.

Mayflower ancestor, Revolutionary War vet, great grandparents? Still wondering? Questions/comments/advice/needs - contact jack.sheridan@gmail.com 269 857-7144 Chris Yoder cyoder@tds.net 269 857-4327.

This newsletter column is produced by Jack Sheridan

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**SAVED: The Old Fernwood Farm Resort**

Rich in history and of architectural interest, the Joshua Weed House, 2488 Lakeshore Drive, Fennville, is now under reconstruction.


Original house, ca. 1860 with additions up to 1880.

Said to be a stop on the underground railroad and long abandoned, but with partial restoration by the Horist family, the house had 23 rooms, and functioned for many years as the Weed home, he has contributed his curatorial skills to two major exhibitions at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum.

Jarrett is excited to get to work with the Society, and he looks forward to your suggestions as we continue to build a world-class historical organization together.

Please feel free to stop by the Old School House and introduce yourself.
The Baldhead Panoramas – One by One - Piece by Piece

This month starts a new History by Camera series of old photographs taken from the top of Mt Baldhead. We are very fortunate to have photos from this great vantage point over a long time period. The photos are accurately dated and in most cases the photographer identified.

Two other factors make them special. First, when the first photo was made in 1874 most of the town trees had been logged off and there were few to block the view. Second, the photographers used quality big glass plate cameras that were capable of capturing details. Though most of the glass plates are lost, the prints made from them, faithfully contain the details. When scanned at high resolution, the images yield marvelous results.

In order for you to see a historical progression, I have selected a partial view of the town at one date and contrasted that with a view of the same area at a different date. The numbers on the images are the key to comments below the images. This month's comments are on 1874 and next month they will be on the 1895 view.

We start with the earliest photo, taken in 1874, photographer unknown. This is contrasted with the same exact area taken in 1895. The photographer in 1895 was Miller Robinson, professional photographer and grandfather of Peggy Boyce.

1 – Now, Uncommon Grounds coffee house – Then, a home. May be the oldest structure still existing in Saugatuck. Built in the 1840s as home by Daniel Plummer, first township supervisor.

One of the Weed sons (Elmer) was manager and part owner of Saugatuck's Big Pavilion dance hall. The house, with pastiche of Greek Revival and Italianate features, had two dining rooms, one of which seated 65. The farm consisted of 120 acres, part of which was devoted to fruit growing, piers on the Lake to carry fish and fruit to Chicago and a grand barn which was destroyed in the 1990s.


submitted by Jim Schmiechen

Recent Acquisitions

The Society is excited to announce a series of recent acquisitions from SDHS Member Bart Woloson, owner and operator of Lake Forest Antiques in Glenn, MI. Mr. Woloson has generously donated a model of a ca. 1900 family's Fernwood Farm Resort.
2 – Now Pumpernickels Restaurant – Then, saloon and pool parlor. Probably built first in the eastern US, then dismantled and brought here as early as 1860s – corner of Mason and Butler.


4 – Lumber drying and waiting to be shipped on Culver St waterfront. Sawmill will be seen later.

5 – Morrison’s tannery built in the 1840s.

Located near the foot of Butler at the river.

6 – Morrison’s Dutch windmill built in the 1840s. Source of well water.

7 – Mill in Douglas at the junction of the bridge and Washington St. Note the schooner with sails hoisted.

8 – Wilson Empire Saloon and hall – next to it to the south is the Coates and Arnold hardware and general store. All the buildings in that block were destroyed by a disastrous fire in February 1876.

9 – Another saloon – Saugatuck was a hard drinking town in those days.

10 – George Peter Heath grist mill. Steamed powered – that is steam you see. Built in 1866, burned in 1879.


This newsletter column is written by Jack Sheridan.

Welcome New Members

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

lifesaving surfboat, of the type once used on the Great Lakes (Woloson is pictured above with the lifeboat model, and SDHS Museum Specialist Jarrett Zeman).

This style of lifeboat evolved during the late 19th Century, and was designed to loosely resemble mid-century whaling boats. At a 1/10th scale, the lifeboat model represents a vessel 30 feet long with a 9 foot long beam. Lifesaving surfboats were outfitted with a single collapsible mast, which held a sail that stabilized the craft upwind and aided in the boat's return trip to the beach. It also features a two-wheel carriage underneath, which would aid in pulling the boat into the water.

Along with the lifeboat, Mr. Woloson has also donated a treasure trove of 25 antique logging and lumber tools, similar to the type used in the West Michigan lumber industry during the 19th Century. The tools include a one-man buck saw used to cut trees into logs, a "goose wing" axe used to trim logs into square beams for construction, and a two-man bow saw, which was used to trim the limbs off a large log.

We thank Mr. Woloson for these important objects. His donation, and others like them, help to advance the Society's mission to collect, preserve, and interpret the rich cultural heritage of Saugatuck, Douglas, and Saugatuck Township.

submitted by Jarrett Zeman

Last Chance to See the Exhibition: "Dunelands"
John & Barbara Burmeister, Fennville, MI
Dave & Jan Ryder, Fennville, MI
Diana Badion, Douglas, MI & Napa, CA
Charles & Victoria Ebeling, Chicago, IL
Louise Brode, Coshocton, OH
Peggy Bowe & Liz Stern, Clayton, MO & Kirkwood, MO
Don Wiley, Fennville, MI
Thomas & Janice Krakowski, Douglas, MI

New Life Members
Margaret Gipson, River Forest, IL
John & Barbara Ludlow, Saugatuck, MI

"Fall" Means Back to School

As things start to warm up in the Saugatuck and Douglas areas classrooms, your Museum and History center hit the planning road toward collaborative local history education programs with a number of grade levels at our local schools. The photo below is of a Douglas Elementary grade visit to the museum a few years ago.

Take the "Dunelands" trail once again - or for the first time. Twelve "trail sites" with the giant Jim Cook "dunes panorama," and much more including Ted's amazing hanging "beach trash" display, the outdoor environmental display by Christa Wise's Saugatuck High School art class, and a flight over miles and miles of the dunes by way of Jeff Zita's popular "drone show."

Experience it. Fall schedule: Saturdays and Sundays from Noon to 4 until October 25.

A new exhibition "Water" opens Memorial Day weekend, 2015. Thanks to our 2014 sponsors, your support, our host team, and our exhibition team. submitted by Jim Schmiechen
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

Historical Society Museum Exhibit Celebrates Area's Duneland Treasure

This year's all-new exhibition at the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society Museum offers a multifaceted look at the Kalamazoo River duneland and its archeological, historical, environmental, social and recreational significance, in contrasting tales of change and permanence. The Museum is open daily from noon to 4 pm through Labor Day and then noon to 4 pm on weekends through the end of October.

Titled "Dunelands: Footprints on the Sand", the exhibition celebrates our piece of the world's largest freshwater dunes system in the world, according to Museum Curator Dr. James Schmiechen. "It's a marvelous collaboration of restless beaches, rolling forests and ravines, hidden streams, ponds and marshland habitats," he says. "This exhibition tells of how they came to be, how human activity has changed them and how people have changed in response to them, while giving special attention to historic sites scattered across the area and how history has set the stage for today's
vibrant local community."

Researched and written by Schmiechen, and designed by Society volunteers Judy Hillman and Sally Winthers, the exhibition pulls together an array of photographs, artifacts and stories, set before a sweeping 50 x 10ft. mural dunescape captured by local photographer James Cook, intended to visually transport the viewer outdoors.

Informative wall panels weave text and graphics together to view the dunes from three different perspectives: The Preservationist's Notebook surveys 12 nearby "critical dune" sites with an eye toward "best use" protection of the natural environment while allowing appropriate public access; The Photographer's Notebook presents aerial views of local shoreline geography by Chicago photographer Bill Werme, documenting changes resulting from both natural and human causes; The Archeologist & Historian's Notebook, recalls the late 1800s "lumber rush" that disregarded nature, creating millionaires but sentencing the village of Singapore to its ultimate burial by shifting dunes.
Another series of wall panels presents a compilation of photos taken along dune trails, accompanied by hiker quotes revealing personal impressions and expressing thoughts inspired by their duneland experiences.

Centerpiece of the exhibition is a simulated "Dunelands Trail", marked by trail-stop signposts showing and describing a variety of sites encountered on an imagined hike through the dunes, including: Dune Rides; Goshorn Lake & Dune; New Harbor & Basin; Old Harbor & Lighthouse; Fishtown; Oxbow Art School & Lagoon; Pier Cove; The Oval; Mt. Baldhead; and Lake Shore Chapel.

Hovering above it all is "Beachcomber's Folly" a whimsical-while-thought-provoking hanging sculpture by Saugatuck artist Ted Reyda. The colorful composition was meticulously assembled from thousands of items that were washed up on local beaches and collected by Reyda over more than 20 years. Below, Reyda transforms other types of manmade flotsam into spherical standing artworks. In their own playful way, all serve to raise serious questions about human carelessness regarding our environment and disregard for protecting nature's gifts. Museum guests will find themselves silently drawn to interact with Reyda's art by identifying its components...sometimes obvious, sometimes not.
Augmenting the Historical Society's exhibits is a video display created by the Saugatuck High School students of art teacher Christa Wise, inspired by the work of British sculptor Andy Goldsworthy, known for combining natural materials such as twigs, stone, thorns, mud and pinecones into temporary in-situ constructions that weather the elements and return to nature.

After watching "Rivers and Tides", a 2001 documentary featuring Goldsworthy at work, the class set out to Oval Beach and the dunes to create site-specific sculpture and land-art using whatever they found. Their short video, in the style of "Rivers and Tides", documents the students' efforts to follow in Goldsworthy's footsteps, in the process discovering (in the words of one student) "how difficult it is to even begin to approach the quality of his work".

--- Award-Winning Books Highlighted ---

Continuing the Society's tradition of offering books created to accompany exhibits past and present, the Museum's south gallery gift shop this year highlights two of its most popular award winners -- The Village Table: A Delicious History of Food in the Saugatuck-Douglas Area; and Off The Record...the unpublished photographs of Bill Simmons.

The Village Table, authored by Society volunteers Kit Lane and Stacy Honson with graphic design by Sally Winthers, won a 2012 Leadership In History Award of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH). It celebrates the Saugatuck-Douglas area by exploring its food: what the settlers found, what was fished, what was gathered and grown, what each wave of newcomers brought, what the restaurants served to visitors, and what we eat today. Each chapter focuses on a different aspect of the food scene and concludes with a selection of menus and recipes that favor locally-available ingredients.
Cues for the recipes came from history, and some less-palatable historical dishes, like the infamously dry Johnnycake (a cornmeal flatbread), are served up with a modern twist such as delicious cornbread French toast. Local restaurants and businesses contributed the recipes in chapter seven “On the Menu.” The final chapter “Cooking Local” presents a wide range of family favorites from Historical Society members. This 144-page book, richly illustrated in color with lay-flat binding, also features separate historical and culinary indexes.

*Off The Record*, written by James Schmiechen with help from Society volunteers Kit Lane and Jack Sheridan, and designed by Ken Carls, received a Historical Society of Michigan Award of Merit in 2001. It offers a fascinating pictorial history of Saugatuck in the '40s and '50s seen through the eyes and camera of an insatiable photographer whose skills ran the gamut from art photography to photojournalism. Simmons (1891-1966), worked for The Chicago Evening Post and Time-Life, Inc., later was editor of The Commercial Record for 10 years in mid-century. He left a collection of some 3000 unpublished photos, mostly negatives, shot in and around Saugatuck from 1941 to 1961.

SDHS received the long-lost collection in 1998, and discovered that its images witness the changing geography of the waterfront and village streetscape while connecting us with life in the mid-1900s in an unusual way. Unlike most photographers, Simmons was not interested in getting people to pose, preferring to catch them off-guard, being themselves, in conversation, at play, absorbed in thought or responding to events around them. As a result, his work shows how ordinary people interacted with each other, the village they lived in and the land they lived on.

The 157 photos selected for this book represent many hours of research and writing by many SDHS volunteers, as well as the townspeople they interviewed, plus extensive efforts in printing old negatives, digitizing photos, and pulling it all together into book form.

--- Interactive Map Tells Stories ---

The south gallery also features the Society’s popular "SuperMap" -- a 6-foot high, 12-foot wide illustrated color wall map of the Saugatuck-Douglas area with an interactive computer display to provide a virtual tour through these historic villages, highlighting significant people, places and events of both past and present. Map artwork, created by Holland artist-cartographer Mark Cook based on Historical Society research, recalls the entertaining illustration/poster maps of the 1940-50 era, combining street layouts with stylized sketches and notes.

The map offers Museum visitors an engaging way to soak up the story of the Saugatuck-Douglas area. As many as 70 map-highlighted references are keyed by number to let visitors select and learn about sites of interest by calling up information, narratives and images using several video/interactive touch-screen terminals near the map. The screens also offer topical "interactive programs" such as *History of Hotels/Boarding Houses; History of Boatbuilding and Boat Builders; Buildings and Architecture; Artists and Painting; Local Biographies; History of Saugatuck-*
Douglas Schools; 13 Tales of the Villages and A Video History of Saugatuck and Douglas.

In addition, the terminals allow public access to the Historical Society's digitized archives of historical photos, pages of *The Commercial Record* dating back to 1868, the Saugatuck-Douglas Building Survey and more.

*Article and photos submitted by John Peters. Click on any photo for a higher resolution copy.*

The Museum is open daily from noon to 4 pm through Labor then on weekends in September and October from noon to 4 pm. Click [HERE](#) to learn more about the Museum and recent past exhibits.

The Old School House History Center and Lifeboat Display, located at 130 Center Street in Douglas, is open Thursday through Sunday from 11 AM to 4 PM. For group tours or to schedule another period, please contact Steve Hutchins at 616-801-3735 or by email at hutch343@frontier.com

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

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