



A PUBLICATION OF THE
SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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OCTOBER 2015

Again this year, the Society's Newsletter is being underwritten by a generous donation from the late Life Member, Frances Vorys.

Director's Corner



In early October, I had the opportunity to attend the annual conference of the Michigan Museum Association in Ann Arbor, on the campus of the University of Michigan. It was an inspirational gathering attended by over 200 representatives from institutions across the state - from the tiniest of local historical groups right up to folks from the Grand Rapids Public Museum and Detroit Institute of Arts.

The presentation sessions covered a wide array of timely topics in the museum field: How do we keep museums relevant in a world full

Coming up Next:

Winter Storm and Saugatuck's Greatest Maritime Tragedy: The Mystery of the Fishing Tug "Gotham"
November's SDHS Program

In the days before adequate road and rail transport, Lake Michigan was the not just the principal highway for moving products and people, but a major commercial fishing setting. Ships had to ply the lake in all seasons and hence thousands of shipwrecks occurred during the winter period. Dangerous and risky as it was, wintertime commercial fishing was a fact of life.



Tug Gotham, by Jane Van Dis

On December 17, 1943 the *Commercial Record* reported that "during the heavy

of more and more distractions? How can organizations, both small and large, better engage their audience for a more immersive and memorable experience? Are museum audiences changing, and how do we expand our programming and accessibility to not just accommodate, but welcome this change? And how do we incorporate aspiring young museum professionals - millennials even younger than myself - into all of this?

These are some big questions - far bigger than just the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society, museum studies and public history university programs, or all the combined knowledge and expertise of MMA member organizations. There aren't any silver bullet solutions. What became clear is that partnerships and collaboration will be part of the answer. Not just in-office partnerships, but those between museums, with educational institutions and teachers, and with the general public. It's exciting to look ahead and think of the possibilities!

For me personally, a big part of this conference was about networking. It was great to meet professionals from several nearby historical institutions, and I plan to visit several of these over the coming months to get a better feel for their exhibits and programming, and to be on the lookout for such possible opportunities to collaborate going forward. After all, common themes such as shipwrecks, the fruit belt, and Native American culture extend far beyond the boundaries of our local community. It was great to see many of these professionals are also in my age bracket, and I look forward to reporting back to you on some of my findings over the coming months.

Mark Your Calendar

2015 Monthly Programs

MONTHLY PROGRAMS

November 11, *The Mystery of the Fishing Tug "Gotham"*

**Sponsored by the Star of Saugatuck,
Marilyn & Bruce Starring**

7:00pm at the Old School House

windstorm of Saturday night when a 60 mile gale was blowing in Lake Michigan, the *Gotham*, a steel fishing tug belonging to Lou Gotham and his sons [and two others], in trying to make the harbor at Saugatuck apparently struck the north pier and was sunk."

But striking the pier was only part of the disaster and later evidence suggests a bigger story....

Presented by historian Jack Sheridan, the November program at the Old School House History Center is the story of both the life and the wreck of the 51 ft. steel Saugatuck fishing tug, the *Gotham*. The strong diesel powered tug, built in Saugatuck, was described as an all-weather craft built to move like a knife through rough waves, not over them. What happened on that day in December of 1943 will never exactly be known. Along with an introduction to ship wreck history, Jack Sheridan has pulled together the clues that allow us to make sense out of the *Gotham* tragedy of December 1943.



Gotham sunk, SDHS collection

Why did the Gotham lose the battle to giant waves? Join the talk on November 11th at 7pm.

What You Missed

SAVE THE DATE!

December 13, *Holiday Party*

A little something different this year!

5:30pm at the Saugatuck Center for the Arts, \$10/person *More details to follow!*

Watch future issues of SDHS e-News for the 2016 calendar of popular programs!



Late Breaking News!

On October 24, the Saugatuck - Douglas Historical Society was announced as the winner of this year's **Keep Your Arts Alive!** fundraising and awareness program administered by the Allegan County Community Foundation. Once again, as the first-place winner, SDHS will receive a \$5,000 bonus from ACCF on top of the funds raised. To everyone who gave to support SDHS over the summer -

THANK YOU!

With Thanks & Gratitude

After serving as Society Board President for 2 1/2 years, Sharon Kelly is moving on to spend more time with her dog Lucy enjoying Saugatuck and Douglas as well as winter traveling to where the sun is warm and the snow doesn't fall.

The Society is thankful for her many accomplishments including creating a business-like structure for the Society's financials as well as writing successful grants and developing fundraising programs to *Keep History Alive* in Saugatuck and Douglas. Most importantly, we applaud Sharon for undertaking the challenge to recruit and hire the Society's first full time employee and director, Nathan Nietering.

As a Life Member, we look forward to Sharon's continuing support of the Society's many projects and programs. We wish her much happiness in her future endeavors.

The October 14th Monthly Meeting was a field trip visit to Crane Orchards on M-89 in Fennville. Owner Rob Crane delighted the audience not only with stories of the Crane family history on the orchard, but interesting insights into modern orchard techniques and technology which keep the enterprise competitive and relevant in the modern market. Attendees learned a lot and asked many relevant questions.

Crane Orchards comprises orchard land farmed by the Crane family since 1917, and first cleared and planted in the 1880s. The operation has grown to include traditional seasonal favorites such as the U-Pick orchards, pies, donuts, and cider, and also a "pie pantry" restaurant and winery featuring a variety of fruit wines and popular hard apple ciders. The walls of the restaurant are decorated with hundreds of local antiques collected by the family over the decades - providing a rare "dine with history" experience!

On October 17th, SDHS in partnership with the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) and the Saugatuck Center for the Arts presented *Intriguing Conversation: The Power of Our Past - Stonewall and Saugatuck*. This evening dialogue discussed the events in Greenwich Village in the summer of 1969 and how the riots at the Stonewall Inn helped to launch the LGBT civil rights movement.

Presentations were given by David Carter, author of *Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution*, and Philip Bockman, a participant in the Stonewall riots. A presentation was also given by SDHS volunteers Mark Neidlinger and Jon Schreur about the Gay History Initiative and that project's efforts

At the September Board meeting, Steve Hutchins, a Society Life Member and long standing Board Member was unanimously voted by the Board to be the Society's new President. Steve will continue to keep the Society's icons, the Pump House and Old School House, places for the community to be proud of and enjoy.

Also retiring from the SDHS Board is Sharon Bauer. Sharon served the Society well in the position of Secretary, keeping detailed and accurate meeting minutes and helping to promote the objective of better organization. We thank her for her tenure of service. Board member Christina Lewis will assume the role of Secretary beginning at the November meeting.

Michigan Hometown Stories: Saugatuck/Douglas

The story of Saugatuck and Douglas, as seen on WGUV-TV/PBS in June, is now available on DVD as a keepsake for your film library and a great gift for family and friends. This special one-hour documentary celebrates our history, people, art, diversity, and strong community commitment to preserving our townscape and nature-blessed environment.

Created by Historical Society members Jon Helmrich and Stephen Mottram, working with WGUV's head of production Phil Lane, the project was funded by donations from members of the community, augmented by a generous matching grant from the Pleasant T. Rowland Foundation.

Now it's yours for a mere \$25 plus MI sales tax. **The holidays are right around the corner; buy one for a friend!** Proceeds will help support the Historical Society's many volunteer-based programs and activities.

Click [HERE](#) to purchase your DVD.

to chronicle the gay history of this area. If you have stories or photos you'd like to share for the project, Mark and Jon can be reached at Saugatuckgayhistoryproject@gmail.com

NPCA is spearheading a campaign to add both the Stonewall Inn and nearby Christopher Park to the National Park System. You can learn more about the movement, and sign the petition, at www.npca.org/natlparkforstonewall

Field trips to nearby sites and partnerships with other organizations are just a few of the approaches SDHS uses to bring members and visitors closer to our local history. Stay tuned to upcoming newsletters which will release the full calendar of 2016 Monthly Meetings and Tuesday Talks!



A full house at Crane's Orchard while Rob Crane (standing in blue) presents his program.

Garden Happenings

"There are nights when the wolves are silent and only the moon howls."

~ George Carlin

This is the month that everything is in its final glory....the skies, the trees and our garden all ablaze with amazing color. This is also a good month to plant your spring bulbs. Although the landscape committee has decided to wait until next year to add to our Daffodil Trail, that doesn't mean you can't add bulbs to your garden. You will be really happy next spring that you did! To discourage moles, try adding a handful of gravel on top of your bulbs. It's worth a try!

We are wrapping up our garden with final fall clean up this month and next, but will continue planning throughout the winter. Many thanks to Leslie Thompson for agreeing to act as our



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.

Got questions on how to get going? That is what we are for! Call or email us or take note, the SDHS Family History Group's regular meeting schedule is the first and third Thursday of every month at the Old School House.

Upcoming meetings at the OSH at 3:30 in the downstairs tech room are:
Thursday November 5
Thursday November 19
Thursday December 3

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

Not sure where to begin? 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.

We will soon be back to you with readily found data and with suggestions on the next steps to take. Further help is always available from the Family History group by phone and email. The only requirement is membership in the SDHS.

Mayflower ancestor, Revolutionary War vet, great grandparents, WWII vet? Stop wondering and get the facts.

liaison with the board now that Steve Hutchins is board president. Another thank you goes out to Roseanne and Jim Davis for donating some 'Ice Dance' Carex to our garden. Carex is a beautiful tufted ornamental grass that we will place around the garden.

Our Root Camp committee will start meeting next month to start preparing for our 2016 camp. If you know anyone that could possibly be a "teacher" in the basket or Native American department, please contact Ruth Johnson at ruthannj@frontier.com. Our past teachers, John Migas and Lee VerShure, proudly wear their Root Camp t-shirts and get comments or questions about our camp. Every little bit of advertising works. Thanks guys!

Until next month,
The Landscape and Root Camp committees

August Cow Story Raises Local Tale (Tail?)



The August SDHS newsletter story of cows wandering in the streets of Douglas, and a photo of Andrew Schumann with some of his bossies, brought a reader comment from Lesa Werme, owner of the property on Spear Street in Saugatuck where the original Schumann/Till barn still stands. She writes:

"After spending a considerable amount of time the past few years in the probate offices in Allegan County pouring attention over the last will and testaments of the elders of our community, I believe Andrew Schumann was the grandfather of Olga Schumann Till, the wife of Henry Till and the

Questions/comments/advice/needs - contact
Jack Sheridan:
269 857-7144
jack.sheridan@gmail.com

Chris Yoder:
269 857-4327
cyoder@tds.net

This newsletter column is produced by Jack Sheridan

HISTORY by CAMERA

The Bill Simmons Scrapbook



Bill Simmons

This is the second month of the ***History by Camera*** feature - the BILL SIMMONS SCRAP BOOK. Bill was a semi-professional photographer, originally from Chicago, who moved to Saugatuck about 1940. He had a

mother of Augusta Till who passed in 1994 at 101. "On another note, the late Mr. Fox told me of the times that as a prank, he would paint a red bullseye target on the side of "Gussie's" cows as they enjoyed their free pasturage in the town streets. Accordingly, she would get quite upset with Prankster Fox since the cow's milk would have the bitter taste of turpentine for weeks after her futile attempts to remove the "target" from the cow. Mr. Fox's story along with your most recent article reminds me of how the locals of the past, much like the locals of today, are still actively engaged with their opinions of "liberal legislation"! LOL"

This brought to mind another story of youthful hijinks told by the late Ervin (Bud) Sewers. In the June issue I wrote of Bud's revelation that he and neighbor boy Paul Moker unsuccessfully tried in 1937 to make a "firecracker" by appropriating some unguarded dynamite (less blasting caps) from the "New Bridge" construction site.

As Jack Sheridan and I went on a recorded "ride around" with him telling his memories of houses and owners up and down some of the streets of Saugatuck, we drove down South Maple Street just north of Old Allegan. He chuckled, pointed to the west side of the road and told how he and some pals once appropriated several chickens from the farm of Percy L. Griffin so they could have a cook-out on the beach. Mr. Griffin, who had the last farm "grandfathered" into Saugatuck Village, was the grandfather of SDHS member Patricia Meyer Diepenhorst. After selling a 60 acre farm in Gibson, he bought about 8 acres of land on Maple Street where he raised chickens, had a couple of cows and some ducks.

-contributed by Chris Yoder

Time to Adopt an Orphan in Our Cemeteries?

couple of stints as the editor of the *Commercial Record*. Over the next twenty two years he took numerous black and white photos.

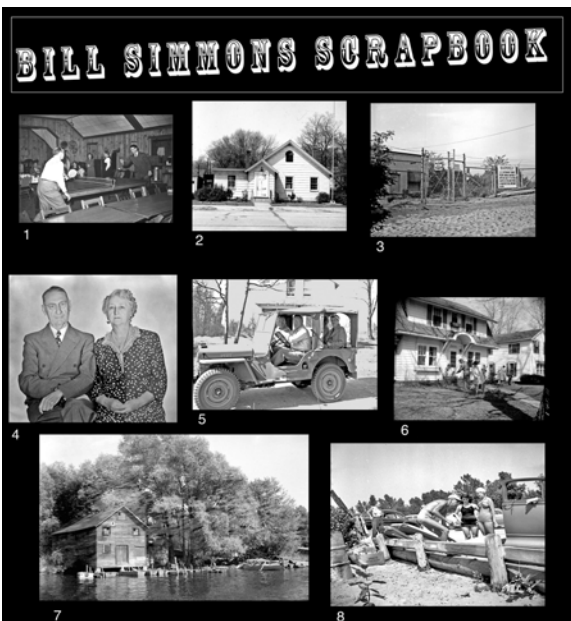
He died in 1962 and these photos went unnoticed until 1998 when some 3000 negatives were given to the SDHS. What a record of our town in the middle of the twentieth century!

Many have appeared in SDHS books and exhibits. However, others ended up - so to speak - on the cutting room floor, because Bill often took numerous shots of a subject. We have used only the best of them and many subjects have not been published.

Please examine the images [a history mystery of the mind] to see what you can identify before reading my brief captions. This is a form of my History Mystery series exercise, without hints. Many of subjects are still here, right in front of us. Have fun.



It will soon be time once again for SDHS volunteers to plant daffodils on the graves of "orphans" (those without descendants or whose family has moved away) in our Riverside and Douglas Cemeteries (and Taylor south of town as well, if we get enough bulbs). If you would like to donate daffodil bulbs or join in the annual bulb-planting event, contact Chris Yoder at cyoder@tds.net or phone 616-212-3443. At last check there were still some low cost bulbs to be had at Sam's Club in Holland. There may be others available elsewhere.



With captions, click [HERE](#).

I appreciate your feedback on my captions, and the selection of these images. Please point out my good choices, errors or omissions by sending an email at jack.sheridan@gmail.com. No feedback from last month - how about some discussion? Subject suggestions encouraged.

More Commercial Records Up, News from the 1970s



"Bozo the Clown will begin Douglas Centennial festivities Monday" - Aug 13, 1970

We expect the remaining CRs through 1977 to

This newsletter column is produced by Jack Sheridan

be on-line by the time of the next newsletter.

Go to:

<http://sdhistoricalsociety.net/CR/find.php?NS>



Welcome New Members!

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

Rachel Thome, Fennville, MI
Ingrid Boyer, Saugatuck, MI
Nathaniel & Kristen Nietering, Holland, MI

New Life Member

Alan Van Wieren, Saugatuck, MI

ABOUT THE SOCIETY

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

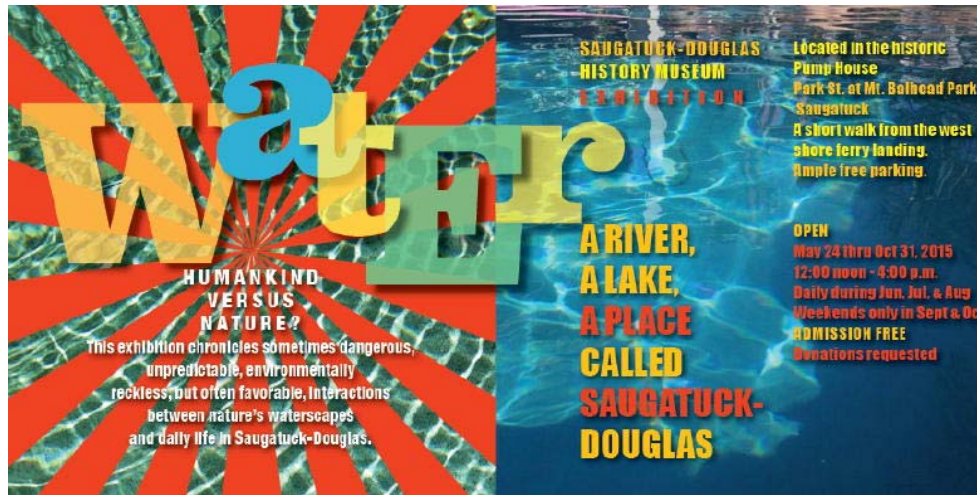
Individual	\$50
Household	\$70
Premium	\$300
Corporate	\$500
Life	\$1,000
Senior (65+)	\$30
Senior	\$45
Household	

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: Nathan Nietering, PO Box 617, Douglas MI 49406 or email info@sdhistoricalsociety.org

THIS YEAR'S EXHIBITION

Historical Society Museum Exhibit Examines Area's Relationship With Water



2015's all-new exhibition at the Saugatuck-Douglas History Museum opened for the season on Memorial Day weekend, Sunday, May 24. The exhibition presents multiple stories of how the Kalamazoo River and Lake Michigan have shaped and reshaped our area's way of living, working, relaxing and thinking since the mid-1800s.

The History Museum closed for the winter season on October 25. *WATER* will reopen, with some new elements, over Memorial Day 2016.

Click [HERE](#) to learn more about the Museum and recent past exhibits.

SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY FACILITIES

The Saugatuck-Douglas **History Museum** is located at 735 Park Street in Saugatuck, in the historic Pump House building. Now closed for the season, the History Museum will reopen on Memorial Day, 2016. Always free to the public but donations gratefully accepted.

The Old School House **History Center** and **Lifeboat Display** is located at 130 Center Street in Douglas. For group tours of the School House, please contact Nathan Nietering at 269-857-5751 or by email at director@sdhistoricalsociety.org. The Lifeboat Display and **Back-in-Time Garden** are open to the public 10am-4pm daily.

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. Open by appointment.

The Society's **Archives** office is located in the lower level of the Old School House and is open for research on Monday afternoons 1-4pm. Use the back stairway for easy access. E-mail: archives@sdhistoricalsociety.org

Society Main Phone: 269-857-5751

Museum Phone: 269-857-7900

Tech Center/Archives Phone: 269-857-7901

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