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HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S AUGUST 4 "TUESDAY TALK"  
TRACES EVOLUTION OF PEACHBELT SCHOOLHOUSE

JULY 24, 2015 -- The evolution of Fennville's historic Peachbelt Schoolhouse will be the focus of Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society's next "Tuesday Talk" on August 4 in the Old School House History Center, 130 Center Street, Douglas. The one-hour program begins when the school bell rings at 11 a.m. Admission is free, public attendance is invited and audience participation is welcomed.

Presenter Dawn Stafford will share stories and photos documenting the schoolhouse's rehabilitation and various reincarnations. Through it all, The Peachbelt remains the oldest surviving and best preserved one-room schoolhouse in Allegan County that has not been structurally altered or moved from its original site.

Listed on the Michigan Registry of Historic Sites, it was built in 1867 at a rural crossroad just two miles inland from the shore of Lake Michigan, at what now is the SE corner of M89 (124th Ave) and 63rd Street. The name Peachbelt dates back to the mid-1800's when local fruit growers discovered that peach trees flourished in the temperate climate along Lake Michigan...and that Chicago markets had a big appetite for peaches.

A full time artist who lives and paints in West Michigan, Stafford grew up in New York and received her BFA from Swain School of Design in Massachusetts before moving to Michigan in 1992. She rehabilitated the school building and in 2005 opened it as the Peachbelt Studio & Gallery housing both her private painting studio and seasonal gallery.

"The iconic little red schoolhouse is something close to people's hearts," Stafford says. "It's a national cultural symbol that easily evokes feelings of affection and nostalgia, but around here it's also a true life experience for many of whom are still among us."

Stafford plans a public celebration of 10 years at her Peachbelt Schoolhouse studio on Saturday August 8th, 6-9pm., exhibiting her original oil paintings. Also exhibited for sale are gemstone jewelry by Elaine Decker, steel garden sculpture by Caroline Fink, and architectural birdhouses by Susan Burger. For more information, visit [www.peachbeltstudio.com](http://www.peachbeltstudio.com). Collections of Stafford's work also can be viewed locally at two area restaurants, *Every Day People Cafe* in Douglas and *Salt of the Earth* in Fennville.

A summertime tradition since 1996, "Tuesday Talks" present entertaining and informative insights into our community life weekly throughout July and August. This talk is sponsored by S-DHS members Fred and Janet Schmidt in memory of Holland's Fran Vorys, Life Member of S-DHS, Museum exhibit sponsor and longtime supporter of the Society's newsletter, who died earlier this year.

For more information about the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society, its Museum and Old School

House History Center, or its activities planned for 2015, visit [www.sdhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.sdhistoricalsociety.org).

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