

MARCH 2011

Still waiting to hear from a few of you out there who haven't renewed your Society membership for 2011??
Don't miss out on a great year of [events](#)
RENEW NOW! Click [HERE](#)

NOTES FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Last week I saw my first robin. That means that Spring is coming to Saugatuck-Douglas and with it another great season for your Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society. A few highlights for this Spring: first, our Annual Meeting May 11, followed by our 25th Anniversary Party on the Old School House grounds Sunday, May 15th. We plan on having a good start on finishing the gardens for our party, so come out and see what the Garden Committee has done. We plan on having the gardens completed this year instead of over the next two years thanks to a financial gift from Thelma and the late Fitz Coghlin.

Your Historical Society will be one of the hosts for the 31st Annual Statewide Preservation Conference "Just Add Water" presented by the Michigan Historic Preservation Network, running from May 19 - 21. A number of the events are free and open to the public. One of those events is the keynote address by the mayor of Grand Rapids, George Heartwell, at 1:00 pm at the SCA Friday, May 20, don't miss it! This conference will draw over 350 people to our area. Click [HERE](#) for more details.

The museum opening party will be on Saturday, May 28th. This year's exhibit, "Our Village Life", will be

APRIL PROGRAM

Don't Miss It at the Old School House
Wednesday, April 13th at 7 pm



"Looks rough tonight, Boys. Be prepared."
declared Joe, keeper of the Saugatuck lifeboat.

-as the Saugatuck High college-prep writing class presents their 1960s TV version of: *You Are There: the Great Saugatuck Shipwreck and Lifesaving Story of 1852.*

another award winner, I am sure.

As you can see, your Society has been busy over the winter. Additional volunteers will be needed for the museum, walking tours, maintaining the gardens at the museum and OSH as well as manning the OSH, which we would like to have open on a regular basis this summer. You can see that there are many varied volunteer opportunities that require only a few hours of your time. Please consider one of these in your summer schedule. Remember, your Society is only what you help make it. *Harold Thieda, President*

COGLIN GIFT INSURES THAT THE OLD SCHOOL HOUSE GARDEN WILL GROW

The Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society has announced receiving a major gift from Saugatuck residents Thelma and the late Fitz Coghlin. Already well-known for generously investing in their community, the Coghlin's have donated \$150,000 in support of the Society's project to create themed gardens and a "Back-In-Time Pathway" at its Old School House History Center in downtown Douglas. Their gift enhances \$22,000 in recent private donations from area citizens and completes fulfillment of fund-matching requirements for the Society to access a \$47,000 federal Museums for America grant, providing a total funding of over \$200,000 for the garden project.

According to Historical Society President Harold Thieda, the new donations and grant will enable work to proceed immediately toward completion of plans to develop the 1.16-acre grounds surrounding the Old School House, which were publicly announced last April and begun the following summer. "The garden project promises an exciting new addition to our area's already remarkable inventory of cultural and educational assets," Thieda said. "We are grateful and fortunate to live in an extraordinary place where so



Saugatuck High School Advanced Placement Language and Composition students

This program is part of the Francis-Gallinipper Lifesaving Boat project - and the story-presentation is a modern adaptation of a real Saugatuck shipwreck - using the format of the popular 1960s Walter Cronkite television show that brought historical events into the family living room.

Find out more about the Francis-Gallinipper boat and cheer the students on as they work up the text and voices to be used in the new Lifeboat House to be built this summer at the Old School House garden. Your hosts - Mike Shaw (teacher) and Jim Schmiechen (coordinator of Lifeboat project). Lifesaving Refreshments to follow.



Now There Two Ways to Support SDHS's Upscale Sale This Year - By Donation or Consignment

The success of the Society's Upscale Sale is possible

many dedicated citizens step up to become stakeholders in insuring the community's quality of life now and into the future."

The garden project consists of creating a series of topical "learning areas" that explore various facets of our area's history, featuring a peach orchard, a Mt. Baldhead viewing station, children's garden and schoolyard games, and a rhododendron garden, among others. The crown jewel will be a permanent exhibit, "Rowing Them Home: Shipwrecks and Lifesaving on the Great Lakes," which will showcase the Society's rare restored Francis Lifesaving Boat while giving visitors a unique window into Lake Michigan maritime history and the unsung heroes who rescued sailors from shipwrecks.

The Society acquired the Old School House in 2006 with a major gift from the Pleasant T. Rowland Foundation along with matching private gifts and the generosity of Nancy Budd. After extensive interior renovation and as a complement to the well-established Saugatuck-Douglas History Museum in Saugatuck, the building was re-opened in 2010 as The Old School House History Center. Now the site of regular Society monthly meetings, the summer "Tuesday Talks" series, and special events, it houses the Society's archives, Technology Center, offices, meeting spaces, and local history and genealogy research facilities, as well as a gallery for the display of artworks from the Society's collection and a planned community Visitor Center and gift shop.

Built in 1866, The Old School House is listed on both the Michigan and National Registers of Historic Places. It is one of the oldest multi-classroom school buildings in Michigan and considered one of the finest examples of 19th century school architecture in America.

Funded by donations and grants, the Society has been able to make a nearly \$1.5 million investment in the Old School House, giving it new life as a community resource where children and adults alike can explore the area's history, culture, ecology and architecture. The Center will expand our area's educational infrastructure with informative programs, recreational activities, special events and access to the Historical

because of our members' donations of high-quality items such as antiques, framed art, collectables, jewelry, small-scale furniture, toys and games, housewares and small appliances.

This year you will be able to participate in the success of the sale in two ways - by donating or by consigning your treasures to SDHS for the sale. The sale will be on held Saturday, July 16 with a special preview event on Friday evening, July 15.

The consignment sale option gives you the opportunity of having the hundreds of shoppers who attend the sale see and purchase your high quality art, antiques or fine collectables. The process is simple:

- You price (\$250 minimum) and deliver your consignment items (maximum of 3 per household) to the Old School House prior to the event. (The number of consignments is limited, so please apply early to ensure you are included in the sale.) -
- Consignment items will be displayed inside the Old School House during the sale.
- The sale of the item will be handled by Upscale Sale staff. (We take credit cards!)
- If your item sells, you will receive a check for 60% of the selling price. The other 40% will be SDHS's commission -- a win-win for both you and SDHS! (FYI: Most consignment stores take a 50% commission.)
- If your item doesn't sell, you pick it up after the sale.

Ideally, you should provide a "story" about the history and details of the item you are selling. There are plans to feature unique and interesting consignment items in Upscale Sale advertising.

The *Consignment Sale Agreement* form is available now. [CLICK HERE](#) for a printable version of the form. Complete the form and mail it to the address indicated on the form.

So whether you are going to donate items for the sale or place goods on consignment, start setting them aside now. Donation collections will begin in May. For additional information or questions, call (269) 857-5751 for information.

Society's unique archive of local artifacts, photos, records and newspapers. As such, the Center also is expected to enhance the area's destination appeal in the growing heritage tourism industry.

The Society will honor the Coghlin's and acknowledge their gifts to the Old School House Center as part of the Society's community wide 25th Anniversary Celebration to be held at the Center on Sunday, May 15.

GLAD YOU ASKED

Editors Note: "Glad You Asked" is a new column to answer questions that have been asked by Society members. Hopefully the information will be informative to all members.

Q. *What's the latest on the old root beer barrel project??*

A. The Barrel Crew, encouraged by the SDHS and the City of Douglas, has been actively meeting and preparing for the dismantling of the old structure early in April. A preliminary project budget and calendar are completed. Funding sources are being examined. As you know, the barrel as an object is both an important example of mid-century highway architecture and the history of early drive-in fast food culture.

The [Barrel Blog](#) on the SDHS website is growing with many revealing and fun entries. You are encouraged to enjoy it and add yours - even if you think your comment might not be important. The barrel, yet to be officially named, will be home to a local history and information center. Other uses are under consideration.

A brief project outline includes:

1. Dismantle
2. Store and await restoration weather
3. Refinish and varnish each of 120 staves and prepare foundation
4. Reassemble and construct

HELP WANTED

The Society's web site has been undergoing a major redesign which is nearing completion. Once the design is done, there's the huge task of converting the existing pages to the new format.

We could use some help!

It's not necessary for you to be a web guru to be able to help. If you have at least a minimal knowledge of HTML and are willing to pitch in, please contact James Cook at Jim@JamesCook.biz or call Jim at 720-252-7042.

"SDHS 101" SESSIONS PLANNED

If you are a new member or a former member who is interested in learning the history of our organization and the opportunities that it has to offer, then you should plan on attending one of the "101" sessions planned for this year. There are so many new and exciting things happening in the organization that are worth knowing about, and its history is memorable. The meetings will be held on May 14 and July 30 and will be held at the Old School House in Douglas, beginning at 10 a.m. If you have any questions or plan to attend, please contact Nyla Hensley at 269-857-5704 or noteablenyla@yahoo.com

HISTORY by CAMERA

5. Install visual/artifact elements and signage
6. Open to the public

A search for the ideal location of the barrel continues. SDHS and community member input is encouraged on this exciting barrel of fun adventure.

If you would like to Donate to the Root Beer Barrel Project using PayPal, just click on the "Donate" button below and type Root Beer Project in the message line

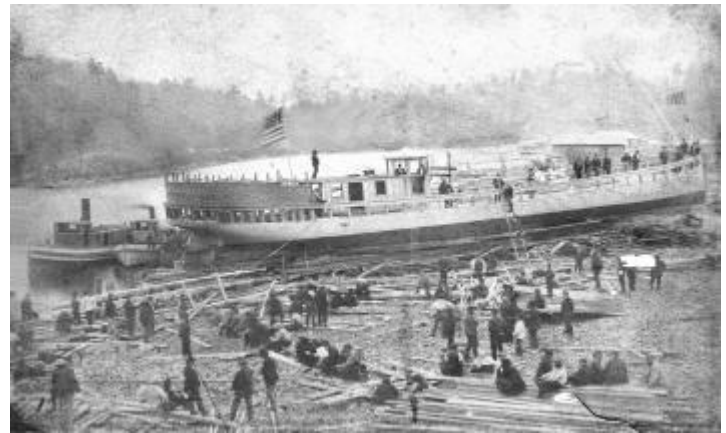
[Donate](#)

UPDATE FROM THE ARCHIVES

As more and more items are coming into the new archival area from their previous storage places - interesting things are coming to light. We would like to share with you some of the stories behind them. We now have on board a new volunteer named Elizabeth Reid Austin . Liz is between studies and is currently working at Butch's Dry Dock in Holland and The Wild Dog in Douglas. She enjoys writing and has taken up the challenge of researching and writing articles for the archives. Below is her first story.

"The Dope." A series of letters edited by Mrs. Otis Thomas, a local resident, tell the tales of the brave young men who battled overseas during the second World War. A humorous and casual newsletter, named "The Dope" brought an upbeat report of local Douglas happenings to the young men serving their country, while also reporting on those in the service 'over there'. It brought a lighthearted spirit and the comforts of home to those who were fighting thousands of miles away.

Here is an excerpt from a letter written April 1, 1944:



[Click on the picture for a higher resolution copy.](#)

I love this photo. The primary reason is the early date and the scene. An unknown photographer captured the enthusiasm of the day. Flags flying in a brisk east wind, VIPs posing on deck, ready for a short ride. A man of Chinese appearance with pony tail sits on the rail. Ship building raw materials are scattered about, cribbing supports the hull. Ship building took place right there on the banks of the Kalamazoo. A crowd waits - mostly workers probably, and spectators. No women on the scene - they were leery of this rough section of the town. The tugs A. McMillan and William B. Minter stand ready to pull her off the bank.

The date, May 1872, the location Water Street between Main and Mary Streets in Saugatuck, the partially built vessel about to be launched, the G. P. Heath. The Heath was designed and built by Aurelius McMillan who died before she was completed. The G. P. Heath was a good sized 74 gross tons, 97 feet long, with a beam of 17 feet and a depth of 7 feet. The first owner was George Peter Heath who had a grist mill located on the river bank very close to this shipbuilding site. G. P. Heath [the father of Doc Anderson Heath, entrepreneur and husband of May Francis Heath] soon sold a majority interest in the Heath to others, including the first captain, Ralph C. Brittain. The vessel would carry lumber and general cargo up and down the Lake Michigan shoreline and to Chicago and on the Chicago River. In 1887 the Heath came to a sad end when she caught fire near Sheboygan, Wisconsin and burned to the waterline.

Read Kit Lane's wonderful book: *Built on the Banks of*

"Corporal Arnold Garrelts has been in town again; and we must say we don't know why anyone would leave Miami Beach in March to come to wintry Michigan. Perhaps a 13-month-old son & a pretty wife have something to do with it. In any case, Arnold sure hated to leave Douglas. Mrs. Garrelts, by the way, now sports 3 stars on her service pin; one for Arnold, one for her brother and one for her father. "And if that kid of mine doesn't stop growing", remarked Arnold, "they'll soon have him too".

"The Dope" was mailed to the Douglas men in the services through the generosity of local residents. Those listed in the letters include Mr. & Mrs. George Durham, Bill Wanner and Floyd Thomas. The letters give reports that extend from all over the world: Iceland, India, Corsica, Puerto Rico, England and Italy.

The letters also describe the rewards and tribulations our soldiers experienced:

"News has just reached Douglas, that in the pre-invasion bombing of South Italy, Bud Standish's plane was shot up over Sicily, was forced down on a friendly island in the Mediterranean - and it took Bud and his shipmates two and a half weeks to get back to their base in North Africa. And to cap the whole business, Sgt. Standish, top radio gunner, was decorated for his part in the action. We salute you, Bud - every one of us."

These letters depict our small town during an era that was difficult to endure, while also keeping our young men glad in spirit. "Same Old G.I. Line":

*We stand in line to get a pass, we stand in line to wash;
We stand in line to find a place to stand in line by gosh!
We stand in line to draw our pay, we stand in line to spend it;
But damn it, Pal, we never have to stand in line to lend it."*

If there is anyone within the Historical Society who would like to share their experiences during this trying era, or may have more information

the Kalamazoo for many more interesting details.

Our feature photo preview [below] will be explained in April. It predates the Blue Tempo! Stay tuned, [email](mailto:jack.sheridan@gmail.com) me comments and enjoy the photos.

submitted by Jack Sheridan
jack.sheridan@gmail.com



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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

James Motif, Fennville
Bruce and Donna Henke, Saugatuck

25th ANNIVERSARY

about "The Dope", don't hesitate to contact the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society. Call John Shack 269.857.8644 or e-mail archives@sdhistoricalsociety.org

Thank you! - Liz *submitted by Mary Voss*

"EARLY DAYS ON THE LAKE SHORE"

by Dorothy Garesche Holland, presents a wonderful history of the early lakeshore by an early and long-time summer visitor. Her aunt, Marie Garesche, built one of the first summer cottages on the lakeshore in 1902, and her father, Ferdinand Garesche, built their own cottage in 1912. After retiring in 1960, she wrote three books on genealogy and several articles for the Missouri Historical Society Bulletin. Mrs. Holland, an educator and writer, died in 1997 at the age of 92. She was the subject of an SDHS oral history interview in 1995.

Thanks to Fritz Baker, Eric Brungard, and John and Tom Bredemann for passing along a copy of this hand typed history, originally written in 1977 and updated in 1983, which has now been OCR'd, proofed, and added to the SDHS On-Line Research Center archives. Click [HERE](#) for the complete article.

submitted by Chris Yoder



The four members of the historical society committee who wrote a constitution and by-laws toast their work after finishing the task in April, 1986. They are, seated Spring Ten Kley, and standing, left to right, Terry Tatsch, Charles Lorenz and Mike Sweeney. The first meeting of the newly organized Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society was held April 16, 1986. Terry Tatsch and Charles Lorenz have since died.

submitted by Kit Lane

Has it been that long?

25 years ago the Saugatuck Douglas Historical Society was formed. Since 1986, the Society has been enriching community life by connecting to and preserving our history while using our understanding of the past to shape our future.

Help us mark this milestone: Saugatuck Douglas Historical Society 25th Anniversary Open House Sunday, May 15, 2011; 2:00-5:00 pm; Old School House Discovery Center; Douglas, Michigan. More information to come. Save the date and we will save you a piece of cake!

submitted by Kristi Mueller

MEMORIES OF MAY FRANCIS HEATH: A SERIES May Heath's Diaries



Doc and May - Late 1920s

One of the treasures kept in the Heath family is a set of her personal diaries covering the period from 1930 until her death in 1961. These record personal and village happenings with some detail, and provide a wonderful perspective on Saugatuck history.

Inside the front cover of this 1930 diary, May lists her residence phone number as "133"; her height as 5'8"; her weight as 175 lbs; her shoe size as 7½ C; hosiery - 10; hat - 22; gloves -7; union suit - 44; and coat- 44. At the back, she lists the names of over 90 folks to whom she sent Christmas cards that year. To give you just a taste, here are some extracts from the month of October, 1930, just a few months after her triumphant role in shepherding the successful Saugatuck Centennial Celebration.

MAY ELECTED PRESIDENT OF LADIES AID

Oct. 1st - "First Aid Meet and I am elected for President - well, I'll do my best. First Club (Woman's) of the year with 75 in attendance. Gus Butler Speaks". (Allegan Co. Probate Judge)

BUSINESS DEALINGS:

Oct. 5 - "We bought out Williams & Lelands News Depot in order to protect our building, It may find us a grocer, & it is too bad to have empty stores."

Oct. 8 - "Almost the first day Parrish tries to get the GR Press, so I go to GR and confer with Mr. Smith, the circulation manager. I win. We keep them."

MAY LEARNS TO DRIVE:

Beginning October 13, 1930, the 57 year old May Francis Heath wrote:

"Oh so busy, up and down that hill, my old ankle is giving out. So I determine I'll learn to drive the Buick and engage Joe Snay to teach me (Joe Snay was a WWI vet). I'm to hire him one hour a day. So today I learn to start and stop and I myself drive to Richmond. Tomorrow I tackle the gear shifts. I sort of dread that."

"Try to drive all week and go to New Richmond, Macatawa, Holland, South Haven, and lastly on Oct. 24- Allegan. So I feel quite a confidence in myself and Saturday I drive home for dinner alone".

LEE TAYLOR DIES

Oct.25 - "Young Lee Taylor shot while hunting".

Oct 28 - "Lee Taylor buried. Very large funeral- church- most gorgeous flowers" (the Taylors were fellow members of the Congregational Church).

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:

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-Historical 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 2010 exhibit was titled:

"A Place Called Ox-Bow: 100 Years of Connecting Art, Nature, and People"



The Museum is now closed and will reopen in May 2011 with a 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.sdhistoricalociety.org