The Saugatuck-Douglas History Center preserves local history and inspires learning to inform and improve our community.

April - May 2019
THE PUBLICATION OF THE
SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORY CENTER
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B&C Directory

- Summer Program Lineup: Tuesday Talks
- Burr Tillstrom in Saugatuck Pop-Up
- June Meeting: Stories of Summer Party
- Garden Happenings/Root Camp
- In Memoriam
- Family History
- ASK JACK: Saugatuck Schools

Members Party May 25

Join us for the annual Members Party for the opening of the new exhibit at the History Museum. Come out and see us on Saturday, May 25th from 5-7 at the Pump House to mix and mingle with friends new and old. You'll also get your first look at the brand new exhibit Then and Now: Snapshots from the Archives.

Ride the Interurban for free to the party: pick up and parking at the Lake Vista Supervalu (Demond's) at 237 Center St.

Springtime at the SDHC

We are enjoying the garden after the TLC from our garden committee. Stop in to see the spring flowers and new blooms; the Back-in-Time garden is always open!
Contemporary Stories of Saugatuck Program Success

May 14 saw the completion of the year-long project collaboration between GVSU's Kutche Office of Local History and Saugatuck High School. The effort taught students about our community's history and the process of doing oral interviews with more than 70 graduating seniors. Christina Lewis and her journalism students led the project at the high school. The exhibit at the History Center Old School House will be open until May 30th where you can view display boards made by GVSU featuring each SHS senior.

Special thanks to the many supporters who made this project and event possible: Saugatuck Schools staff Superintendent Tim Travis, Mark Neidlinger, Christina Lewis; SDHC supporters Board President Steve Hutchins, Ken Kutzel, and Renee Zita; past interns Meghann Stevens and Kaitlyn VerMerris; and GVSU Kutsche Office Director Kim McKee and Courtney Sherwood.

Upcoming Monthly Meetings

Our Monthly Meeting presentations are open for free to members and the public and begin at 7:00pm at the Old School House at 130 Center Street in Douglas, unless otherwise indicated below.

June 12, Opening for Stories of Summer: The Exhibit - Join us for the story behind Stories of Summer with SDHC Director Eric Gollannek, PhD and GVSU Kutsche Office Director Kim McKee, PhD showcasing themes on the Red Barn Theater, Tuesday Talks

Tuesdays in July & August at 11 AM at the Old School House

Before we know it, we'll be in the thick of the summer season and the start of the ever-popular Tuesday Talk series! We have a great line up so mark your calendars and consider sponsoring a favorite program or presenter.

July 2
Retro Road Trip 1959: Tour West Michigan with Christine Byron and Tom Wilson
Sponsored by Bill Hess and Mike Mattern
Take a tour through West Michigan as it was in 1959 with Tom and Chris

July 9
Camp Gray Stories with Larry LaBine and others
Sponsored by Leslie Thompson

July 16
Boat Building in Holland with Geoffrey Reynolds
Sponsored by Renee Zita and Bill Underdown
Ox-Bow, Rivers and Dunes, the Big Pavilion, Beaches, and Youth Invasion.

**Sponsored by Button Gallery, Don Olendorf, John Thomas**

**July 10, Field trip to Summerhouse Lavender Farm in Fennville** - The lavender should be in full bloom for our visit. A multi-sensory delight you will not want to miss!

**Sponsored by Renee Zita**

**August 14, Only the River Remains: History and Memory of the Eastland Disaster in the Great Lakes Region** with Caitlyn Perry Dial, PhD

**Thank You** to our sponsors. Multiple sponsors are welcome and encouraged and all will receive billing in future announcements. If you would like to sponsor one of our 2019 programs, please REPLY to this email and we will be in touch. Sponsorships are $150 and help support our high caliber of presentations and field trip activities!

**July 23**
**Local Art: Then and Now** with Mary Jo Lemanski

**July 30**
**Burr Tillstrom, Kukla, Fran, and Ollie** with Michael Schwabe and Larry Basgall of the Village Puppeteers

**Sponsored by Bill Hess and Mike Mattern**

**July 6**
**Stories of the "Morgan J"** with Saugatuck Fire Chief Greg Janik

**August 13**
**Kalamazoo Lake Water and Sewer Authority** with Barry Johnson

**August 20**
**Pokagon Band of Pottawatomie** with Nicole Holloway

**Sponsored by Bill and Nancy Woods**

**August 27**
**Cora Bliss Taylor: The Artist, the Teacher** with Ken Kutzel

**Sponsored by Denny and Buzzy Maurer**

Would you or your organization like to sponsor a Tuesday Talk? We encourage multiple sponsors! Please contact us at info@sdhistoricalsociety.org for more information.

For up to the minute program schedules and updates check out our Facebook page and our website!
Burr Tillstrom in Saugatuck pop-up exhibit at the History Center / Old School House

The History Center delighted participants from the Kuklafest at Ox-Bow School Of Art puppetry convention on May 3 with the pop-up exhibit at the Old School House building celebrating Burr Tillstrom's legacy in Saugatuck.

The exhibit features original drawings and artifacts from Burr's time in Saugatuck. Best known for his role as the creator and performer behind the stage in the pioneering television series *Kukla, Fran, and Ollie*, Burr first came to Ox-Bow School of Art in Saugatuck in 1943 and returned regularly until he settled permanently here in 1975.

Thank you to Jim Sellman and David Balas, Chris Spencer, Steve Williford, Jackie Ladwein, and Jeanne and Randy Rifkin for their loans and donations. Special thanks to Sally Winthers for design work as well as Steve Hutchins, Ted Reyda and Ken Kutzel who helped with artifact moving and installation.

The Kuklafest team of Erin Wilkinson, Michael Schwabe, and Larry Basgall also provided essential support. Stay tuned for more information about their documentary on the life of Burr Tillstrom a portion of which debuted at the Kuklafest Gala at the Woman's Club on May 3rd.

The exhibit will remain at the Old School House and expand over the next year with original film footage of *Kukla, Fran, and Ollie* and additional artifacts. Stop in and see the progress this summer!

Stories of Summer events starting June 12

Our June 12th Monthly Meeting marks the opening of the exhibit showcasing the results from the GVSU Kutsche Office of Local History partnership *Stories of Summer*. Funded in part by an NEH Common Heritage grant, SDHC volunteers interviewed 31 community members about their "stories of summer" at the lakeshore in the mid-twentieth century; GVSU processed the oral history recordings for transcription and digital access/preservation. The exhibit at the History Center/Old School House includes interpretive panels made by GVSU staff and students as well as select artifacts and artwork that evoke themes and topics including beach life, Ox-Bow, the Red Barn Theater, "youth invasion" and LGBTQ history.
To start the evening, the community is invited to a reception sponsored by our friends from Century 21 Affiliated. The event runs from 5-7pm in the gardens behind the Old School House. There will be appetizers, beverages and entertainment by the band Halfway Creek. Special thanks to our supporters from West Michigan Blue Star Chamber and friends at Huntington Bank Douglas who will bring an Ice Cream Truck for 'tastes of summer!'

**Garden Happenings**

**Root Camp 2019**

We're excited to announce registration is now open for our 6th year of Root Camp: a summer program for our youngest community members age 6-11 right here at the Old School House in Douglas.

This hands-on camp offers Root Campers new ways to look at their surroundings while having fun outdoors and making new friends. This year will include: visits with animals from the Critter Barn, learning about Saugatuck's Burr Tillstrom and building your own puppet with the Village Puppeteers, and visiting the Ox-Bow School of art to explore the Kalamazoo River and the Lagoon.

Thanks to Jim Cook, [registration is now up and running](#). Please share the gift of camp with young ones in your lives and sign them up. Click the image below to learn more about this year's camp and to register online! Be sure to follow our [Root Camp Facebook](#) page to keep up to date on what's happening!
Garden Tours

SAUGATUCK DOUGLAS GARDEN CLUB TOUR OF AWARD WINNING GARDENS
Saturday, June 8th from 10 AM to 4 PM -- starting at the Old School House

The Saugatuck-Douglas Garden Club is excited to announce our first annual tour of award winning gardens in our communities. Each year the club honors 2 residential and one commercial garden each in June, July and August. This year several of those gardens will be available for the public to tour on Saturday, June 8th. The tour will begin at the Old School House located at 130 W. Center Street, Douglas. There are five additional gardens to stroll through at your leisure between 10AM - 4PM. Tickets are $10 in advance ($15 on the day of the tour), $5 for children under 12, and can be purchased from:

- V.S. Flowers, Douglas
- Respite Cappuccino Court, Douglas
- Huntree Nursery, Fennville
- Dickinson True Value, Fennville
- Uncommon Coffee Roasters, Saugatuck
- Butler Pantry, Saugatuck
- Jonkers Garden, Holland

All proceeds from the tour go to fund scholarships to students at Fennville and Saugatuck HS.
In Memoriam

We take this time to remember our members who gave so much to the community: H. Kirke White and George Schumann who passed away in April and Betty Klage in May.

Both gentleman came from Chicago with deep connections to Saugatuck-Douglas and the lakeshore. Kirke through his lifelong interest in sailing and the Saugatuck Yacht Club; George through his passion for architectural history and Frank Lloyd Wright, nurtured by his childhood in Oak Park and studies with Vincent Scully at Yale University. George and his wife Dawn Schumann made a lasting impact on the SDHC as preservation leaders and generous donors who supported the technology group, oral history programs, architectural education, and the Old School House.

Betty Klage, of Calumet City, Illinois, retired Douglas business owner was a loved member of the SDHC.

All will be missed and remembered as their legacy lives on.

For full obituaries, please see http://www.thecommercialrecord.com/obituaries
Greetings from myself and Chris Yoder, leaders of the History Center Family History Group. Please come to a regular Family History meeting to see what we are all about and join the group discussion. We share "lessons learned" and a whole lot more about the many tools available for family history research. The SDHC Family History Group can answer your questions and help you get started!

Note the Family History Group's upcoming meeting schedule below:

**Thursday May 23, June 6, June 20**

These meetings are in the Old School House (use the back door) and begin at 3:30pm. Note that your family history does **not** have to have any connection to the Saugatuck-Douglas area! If you can't attend a meeting, we can still provide by email or phone assistance. The only requirement to participate in Family History is a current membership in the SDHC.

Family History questions/comments/advice/needs - contact:
Jack Sheridan: 269 857-7144, jack.sheridan@gmail.com
Chris Yoder: 269 857-4327, cyoder@tds.net

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**EARLY HISTORY OF SAUGATUCK SCHOOLS**

The earliest Saugatuck schools were one-room. The first was a warehouse shed in Singapore. The next was at the end of Dug Road in the area of the Pine Trails Camp. The next two were the Pine Grove School and the Ward School. The former still exists and is a home at the dead end of Mary Street between Butler and Griffith. The Ward School was in the area between the Riverside Cemetery and the Pine Trail Camp.

Then Douglas set a new standard in 1867 with the splendid Union School. Not to be outdone, a few years later Saugatuck followed with a slightly larger building of similar design. This building was destroyed in a
terrible windstorm and fire in 1896 but was replaced with a grand brick structure a year later.

The Saugatuck Union school was eight grades until 1874 when the upper four grades and a high school program was adopted. Douglas Union School graduates often attended high school there. The first class graduated in 1878. School attendance in those days was often limited and graduation from high school was an honor and distinction comparable to present-day graduation from college with an advanced degree. Graduating classes were small, often less than four before 1900.

The principal, always known as the "professor", was expected to be an outstanding personage in the community. The professor was not expected to have involvement in anything not on a high academic plane, but was expected to attend to the hiring and firing of the teaching staff. Teachers were often cream of the crop, recent high school graduates. Though underpaid, they were much respected. Teachers compensation in part, often consisted of room and board provided by the student's parents.

The professor did not manage any part of the school operation except for education. The school board reserved the right to run the school which included, besides finances, management of the janitor, building maintenance, supplies and physical changes or improvements in the school plant.

The local educational system was run with pride. And the honor of being elected a member of the school board anointed a citizen as being in the top echelon of local leadership.

Now to the photo archives. Here is one of my favorites, the Saugatuck graduating class of 1894. A handsome bunch, they were. May Francis Heath is top right. She became a school teacher:
ASK JACK is presented each issue by Jack Sheridan. This column "lives" off reader interest and inquiries. Please send your questions to jack.sheridan@gmail.com or call me at (269) 857-7144

Membership Update

We have had a great response to our membership mailing in April. Thank you to volunteer Arthur Ashley for his assistance with membership updates.

If you did not receive a form to renew your SDHC membership or update contact information, please reach out to us; we would love to hear from you!

Membership questions? Contact Executive Director Eric Gollanek: director@sdhistoricalsociety.org.
ABOUT THE SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORY CENTER

The Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society was founded in 1986 by a group of charter members interested in preserving and sharing the unique history of Saugatuck, Douglas and the surrounding area. In 2016, the Society was renamed the **Saugatuck-Douglas History Center** to celebrate its growth and to recognize the development of the History Museum and Old School House sites. We are a vibrant organization with nearly 700 members residing in nearby communities, around Lake Michigan, and across the country.

Members are the lifeblood our largely volunteer organization. To join as a member, select from the following categories:

- **Individual** $50
- **Household** $70
- **Premium** $300
- **Corporate** $500
- **Lifetime** $1,000
- **Senior (65+)** $30
- **Senior Household** $45

Send check payable to the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center to: PO Box 617, Douglas, Michigan 49406.

Click [HERE](#) for a printable Membership Application.

Newsletter submissions: Eric Gollannek, PO Box 617, Douglas MI 49406 or info@sdhistoricalsociety.org

SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORY CENTER FACILITIES

The Saugatuck-Douglas **History Museum** is located at 735 Park Street in Saugatuck, in the historic Saugatuck Pump House building. The History Museum will reopen on May 26, 2019.

The **Old School House and Francis Surfboat Exhibit** is located at 130 Center Street in Douglas. For group tours of the School House, please contact director Eric Gollannek 269-857-5751 or by email at director@sdhistoricalsociety.org.

The adjoining **Back-in-Time Garden and Surfboat Exhibit** are open daily. Admission is free but donations gratefully accepted.

The **History Center Archives** is available for research by appointment. For more information, call 269-857-7901 or e-mail the archives directly: archives@sdhistoricalsociety.org

History Center main phone: 269-857-5751
Museum phone: 269-857-7900
Tech Center/Archives direct phone: 269-857-7901

www.MySDHistory.org
Follow us and learn more history on Social Media! Click the logos below.

Again this year, the SDHC newsletter is being underwritten by a generous donation from the late Life Member, Frances Vorys.

Saugatuck-Douglas History Center, P.O. Box 617, Douglas, MI 49406