March Madness

There are signs of sunshine and open water at the lakeshore. Spring is coming and we have so many exciting programs underway! Read on to see what happening at the History Center this spring and a glimpse of what you might have missed from the winter months.

Membership Update

Watch your mailbox for your 2019 membership renewal statement. Members of all levels will have the opportunity to update their contact information in advance of the printing of the 2019 membership directory, scheduled for later this spring.

Membership questions? Contact Executive Director Eric Gollannek: director@sdhistoricalsociety.org.

The view from Lakeshore Drive this month.

Instagram @sd_historycenter
**Going to the Dogs**

The History Center participated in the third year of Douglas Winterfest on March 2. The popular program brought out dog lovers young and old to learn more about a traditional mode of winter travel. Sixty people visited the Old School House to see our ongoing art and history exhibits. Look forward to more winter programming next season!

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**Burr Tillstrom at the Old School House**

The SDHC has several exciting events underway celebrating Burr Tillstrom's legacy in Saugatuck. Last month we hosted a Burr Tillstrom event at the Old School House where two dozen people came together to share art and artifacts as well as memories of Burr in Saugatuck. In connection with the first annual Kuklafest puppeteers convention coming to Saugatuck in May, Erin Wilkinson, Michael Schwabe, and Larry Basgall helped facilitate the event with a videorecorded panel discussion and interviews. The program yielded outstanding donations to the SDHC including original materials from Burr Tillstrom's childhood, work in television, and puppetry in West Michigan.

The SDHC will present an exhibit on the life of Burr Tillstrom opening at the Old School House on the weekend of May 3-5, 2019. For more information about Kuklafest in Saugatuck, check out their website here: [https://www.kuklafest.com/](https://www.kuklafest.com/)
Save the Date!

We are also looking for sponsors for this joint community program celebrating the Saugatuck High School class of 2019 on Tuesday, May 14, 6-8 PM at the Old School House. This year-long student project facilitated by GVSU's Kutche Office of Local History and Saugatuck High School showcases oral interviews with more than 70 graduating seniors alongside an exhibition of their lives past, present and future.

Please contact Eric for more information of how you can help make this community event at the SDHC a success. Email director@sdhistoricalsociety.org or call 269-857-5751.

From the Archive: Brrrrrr!

Promoting winter sports in Saugatuck in 1968

Mark Your Calendar!

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.

April 11, Heroes, Villains and Just Plain Folks: Twenty Years After - offers an update on what we've learned about people of Saugatuck and the Lakeshore since the 1998 exhibition of the same name. Jack Sheridan and SDHC genealogy group including Judith Thomas and Donna St. Andre will lead this deep dive into research methods and new discoveries.

Contact us to sponsor this program!

May 8, The Ancient Garden Builders of Southwest Michigan presented by historian Lon Kreger.

Sponsored by John Peters

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, 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

Thank You to those folks listed above who have sponsored one of our programs! 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!
Garden Happenings

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!

New discoveries from the SDHC art collections

Member Christa Wise's wonderful reflection on the legacy of Saugatuck painter and art educator, Cora Bliss Taylor was inspired by the recent preservation of the two murals first shared with you at the Holiday Party and the January-February Newsletter. Thanks to the generosity of members we were able to raise over $2,000 to frame these artworks and share them with our community. We hope our collections inspire more memories like these and we encourage you to reach out to us with your own stories. -- Editor

I have summered in Saugatuck since I was six years old. One of the high points of my young life, when I was still counting my age in single digits, was making art with Cora Bliss Taylor. I loved the freedom of being able to take the ferry across the river for a nickel, and spending a couple of hours painting with her. My mom paid $3.00 a week to send me to the "landscape" class on Wednesdays and the studio class on Saturday. I went for many years.
Mrs. Taylor was older than my mom and definitely more, I think we would say now, Bohemian. I remember when we signed up for classes and were invited to come inside her home. Every piece of furniture, every flat surface, was covered with colorful hand-painted paisley, and I was awe struck. It was not like the suburban homes I was used to! She dressed the part as well, routinely coming to class wearing a broad-rimmed straw hat embellished with sequin-covered felt fish, artsy flowing dresses, and always a big smile. As a retired art teacher, I now look back on her teaching with admiration; she was fearless. We loaded up our cupcake tins with tempera paint, grabbed brushes, and a drawing board with three pieces of paper secured with clothespins, and headed off to paint on-location every Wednesday. I cannot imagine sending twenty-odd little kids to sit on the dock of the Big Pavilion without fearing the loss of one or two of them in the river, but it was never a problem.

On Saturdays we painted in her backyard. On rainy days, we painted in the studio, a garage-like outbuilding. I remember the pitter-patter of the rain on the roof and coziness of the structure on those gray mornings.

In that time, my parents rented weekly apartments at Holiday Hill, and we had many returning families with young daughters. They discovered I was a built-in playmate, and I enjoyed my role as tour director revealing paths through the woods to the Oval, leading the climb to the rope swing on Mt. Baldhead, and cajoling their daughters to take art classes with Mrs. Taylor.

My favorite projects were the murals we painted every summer. The concept of a mural was new to me, but I quickly embraced the collaborative project with gusto. To my surprise and delight, the S-D History Center has found and restored them for display.

While it has been nearly 60 years since I worked on these pieces, I really enjoyed the memories they awakened. Mrs. Taylor allowed her "serious" students to work on them. When I saw the circus, I remembered painting the polka-dots on the fat lady's costume, but even better, I recognized the my contribution to the river side mural. My family bought "Holiday House and the Rancho Villas" (now Holiday Hill) in the early 50's. This mural, painted in the 1950s shows Holiday House.
The building was a two-story frame structure that I was told was the home of a lumberman in the 1800's. It had been converted into five apartments that were rented on a weekly basis during the summer with a big communal "Sundeck" overlooking the river. Unfortunately, the building burned in 1960.

When I first saw the work, it jogged my memory. I recognized the building that was ours and remembered advocating for its inclusion in the piece. The driveway up the hill was my first clue and while the memory of what the building looked like is fuzzy, I do recall painting it. About six to ten students worked on the murals, but this part was my effort. For a moment, I could not figure out what the "pinwheels" in yellow, pink, and blue were until I remembered the patio tables with the same colored umbrellas on the Sundeck. They are a bit wonky, as I had not yet learned about "perspective." What a pleasure it was to reconnect with this artwork, and how amazing it is that it was saved.

There are many in this community who learned to love making art with Mrs. Taylor. She was the gateway to the art world for children of my generation, and I am in her debt. At the end of summer, Mrs. Taylor matted the three best paintings of each of her students and staged a clothesline art show in Cook Park. Mom saved these matted works of mine, but they all perished in the Holiday Hill fire. Getting to revisit the nascent artist that I was when painting this piece is why it is so special to me. I must admit, however, these paintings were far more magnificent in my memory. To my young self, these murals felt as huge and masterful as the Sistine Chapel ceiling.

Mrs. Taylor was truly a seminal influence in my life and I suspect in the lives of many of the children of Saugatuck. I loved her and her classes, and I was always disappointed when the it was time to clean up and leave. As an artist and a retired teacher of art, I can only hope I have left a legacy as treasured as hers.

-- Christa Wise
By Jack Sheridan

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 March 21, Thursday April 4, Thursday, Thursday April 18.

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

By Jack Sheridan

REMEMBERING THE BASKET FACTORY

Lynn McClure, who has a professional eye for the job, is selecting some great historical photos for inclusion in the 2019-20 SDHC museum exhibit.

I am of course available to answer photo questions.
The other day she asked, "What do you know about the basket factory?"

Hmmmm, great question for the March ASK JACK feature, eh?

Here goes. First, check out the 1907 birds eye rendering of Douglas - BELOW. The Douglas Basket Factory dominates the waterfront, just upstream of the swing bridge. Remember this drawing was made thirty years before the present Blue Star bridge and highway came into existence. Today's bridge is about fifty yards south of the old bridge site.

In the early 1850s the area was known as Mill Point at it was the site of the sawmill established by Jonathon Wade. When Wade's pine-log sawing business declined, the sawmill operated as a planing mill.
Then in the early 1870s, fruit growing came on strong and the mill was sold to Robert Reid, a ship captain, for the manufacture of fruit containers.

For the manufacture of baskets, hardwoods were cut during winter, sledded to the river bank and log booms were rafted downriver in the spring and summer. At the mill, special equipment sliced logs into thin strips. The flexible strips were then used to make boxes and baskets that were essential containers for fruit, mostly peaches for the Chicago market.

Reid operated the factory for a short time before selling it to Joshua Weed and his son William. Another son, E. E. "Deacon" Weed, eventually bought and ran the business along with partners James Wark and D. Milton Gerber. By 1910, heyday of area fruit growing - there were 5000 trees in Douglas alone - the factory was among the largest of its kind and employed up to 200 workers.

We might have predicted the end. The factory suffered the same fate that befell many steam-powered mills of the era. It burned to a crisp in the spring of 1927 and was never rebuilt.
SAUGATUCK BASEBALL TEAM FORMED IN 1871

In March comes the start of Spring Training and baseball season! Chris Yoder brings us the history behind the sport in Saugatuck-Douglas.

According to Wikipedia, the earliest mention of baseball in the U.S was a 1791 Pittsfield, Massachusetts, ordinance banning the playing of baseball within 80 yards of the town meeting house.

Only 2 years after the first American openly professional base ball team was formed (the Cincinnati Red Stockings of 1869) Saugatuck had its own team! From the July 22, 1871 Commercial Record:

A bright future for Saugatuck is ensured. She has a base ball club. It was organized Wednesday evening, and is doing as well as could be expected. All interested in manly sport are invited to meet in the Reading Room next Monday evening.
And the next issue of the paper reports its sister city closely followed, from the July 22, 1871 Commercial Record:

_Last Saturday evening the Douglas Base Ball Club was organized. T. B. Ducther is president. Mrs. Popplewell kindly offered the use of a suitable ground in the center of the village, for which she has the thanks of those interested in the game._

A report in the paper the following week (Aug 5, 1871) revealed that both of our villages were latecomers as it detailed the result of a game between Fennville and Ganges teams:

_The match game of base ball between the White Stockings of this place (Fennville) and the Rough and Readys of Ganges came off according to notice, resulting in a victory for the Ganges boys. The Rough and readys made 60 tallies to the White Stockings 24. H. A. Warner is captain of the W. Stockings and R. L. West of the Ganges club. Both sides worked hard for the victory. Capt. Warner made the only home run, letting in three White Stockings. Everything passed off very pleasantly. H. B. Hudson umpired the game, and H. Pullmon and J. T. Henderson acted as scorers. Among the many spectators were several of the leading citizens of Saugatuck and Douglas._

T. B. Dutcher, son of a founding family of Douglas which arrived in 1855, was born in 1836 in Pennsylania and died in 1903 in Fennville. He and his wife rest with his parents in the Douglas Cemetery.

Thomas Popplewell, born in England in 1816, and wife Maria Popplewell appear in the 1860 Saugatuck Census, his occupation being shoemaker- the apparent family trade in England. Thomas arrived in New York from Liverpool on 27 Oct 1838 on the "Ship Brittania". By 1870 Thomas was engaged in agriculture. In 1880 the family had moved to Big Meadows, Plumas, CA, where Thomas had renewed the shoemaking trade. Mariah (nee Marsh) (b. 1827 NY City) died in 1899 in Mesa, AZ and is buried in the City Cemetery there. Son, Frank Lessage Popplewell (1846-1927), served in the Union Army and is buried in Chico, California. A daughter Roceious (b. 1847) (widow of Richard Roche who is buried in Saugatuck's Riverside Cemetery with the couple's only child) died in 1931 in Mesa, AZ. A daughter Sarah (b. 1849) (wife of C. L. Whitehead) died in Mesa in 1915 (she had lived in Arizona 36 years).

Fans of baseball may follow the adventures of our local vintage team the Douglas Dutchers at: [http://www.douglasdutchers.org/](http://www.douglasdutchers.org/) The Dutchers report: "Like so many other American traditions, base ball was ever changing. Over time and in different parts of the country, shocking behavior like overhand pitching, bunting, calling balls and strikes, sliding, and wearing gloves was slowly accepted. The Douglas Dutchers were fashioned after a local club, the Douglas Athletic League, which first played in 1905. In 1996, the Vintage Baseball Association was formed to preserve the historical presentation of America's favorite pastime. The Douglas Dutchers Club has been a member since its inception in 2003."
Commemorating All Saints at 150

Last month we shared news of the effort underway at All Saints Episcopal Church in Saugatuck to commemorate their 150th anniversary. SDHC Member Don Olendorf has more background on the history of this church building, congregation, and the sesquicentennial program. -- Editor

The Episcopal Parish in Saugatuck-Douglas originally conducted rites at the Congregational Church on the hill where the two denominations shared the building. The first known service was in February 1862. Commencing in 1868 the All Saints' Congregation met at the Union School, current home of the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center. The growing parish and their Priest, J. Rice Taylor felt the need for their own building and raised the funds locally to accomplish that goal as well as a new building for Grace Episcopal Church in Holland. Father Taylor received substantial pledges from Colonel F.B. Stockbridge and Otis Johnson noted lumber barons. Stockbridge later became a US Senator. Father Taylor later traveled east and secured donations from interested parties in New York, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Cleveland.

In the 1870s the construction of All Saints' Episcopal Church at 252 Grand Street created quite a community hubbub. The Commercial Record commented, "Aren't our Episcopal Friends finishing the finest little church in Michigan". Rector J. Rice Taylor acquired the services of the Midwest's premier church architect, Gordon W. Lloyd, to execute plans for both Grace in Holland and All Saints here in Saugatuck.

Lloyd also designed a sister church, St. James Episcopal Church in Grosse Ile, MI. Interestingly, this church building had as its largest financial donor, Elizabeth Forth, a freed slave. Other notable Carpenter Gothic/Gothic Revival Churches attributable to Gordon W. Lloyd are the aforementioned Grosse Ile church and Grace in Holland that burned in the famous 1871 fire. The Good Shepherd Episcopal Church in Allegan is not credited to Lloyd but proximity to Holland and Saugatuck and Rev. Taylors shared service as rector are good indicators of its shared lineage. Gordon W. Lloyd's other notable house of worship designs include Christ Church in Detroit, St. Andrew's in Ann Arbor, St. Paul's in Flint, St. Paul's in Marquette, Trinity Church in Marshall, Trinity Episcopal Church in Pittsburgh and Christ Church in Springfield, OH.
In 1981 All Saints’ Episcopal Church received a History Society of Michigan (HSM) Historic designation and a plaque was locally funded and placed prominently at the church entrance. Additionally, a National Historic award was achieved in 1984. The All Saints’ Episcopal Church celebrated its Sesquicentennial in 2018 and Father G. Corwin Stoppel authored the volume Built to Last, The first 150 years. It is a fascinating history of the church and our Saugatuck area past. Copies can be purchased at the church.

The church now qualifies for an additional HSM Plaque that will be placed outside of the Parish Hall entrance on the East side of the church. $500 is needed. The All Saints' Vestry and their Archival Committee are now partnering with the Saugatuck Douglas History Center to achieve this goal.

Donors can make their tax-deductible gifts to:
All Saints' Episcopal Church Historic Plaque - Funding the Future
252 Grand Street Saugatuck, MI 49453 or call (269) 857-5201

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 is now closed for the winter but will reopen on May 26, 2019.

Click HERE to learn more about the Museum and recent past exhibits.
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 Gollanek 269-857-5751 or by email at director@sdhistoricalsociety.org.

Visit the newly opened art exhibition **Keeping an Eye on History**, showcasing 31 unique artworks of local scenes recently given to the History Center by members Kenneth Carls and James Schmiechen as well as Michigan Dunes, an exhibit of paintings from along the Lake Michigan shoreline on view until May of 2019.

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


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.
STORIES OF SUMMER

EXHIBIT OPENING
JUNE 12, 2019
Old School House, Douglas MI
7:00 - 9:00pm

This project was funded by a generous National Endowment for the Humanities Common Heritage grant and reflects a partnerships between the Kutsche Office of Local History and Saugatuck Douglas History Center. For more information please contact kutsche@gvsu.edu or 616-331-8099.