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

September 2019
THE PUBLICATION OF THE
SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORY CENTER
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August Gallery Opening

Cody's World: Cora Bliss Taylor, Artist and Teacher now on view

On August 10th the History Center welcomed 150 guests for the opening of a new art exhibit showcasing the life of Cora "Cody" Bliss Taylor, Saugatuck's most beloved artist. Visitors were greeted with lively music, good food and even

Upcoming Programs and 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.

October 8, S.S. Keewatin, the Last Edwardian Steamer -- new program! -- at the Saugatuck Center for the Arts See feature story in this newsletter!

October 9, Inside Saugatuck's Christian Science Church -- Field Trip

November 13, History of Invasive Species in the Great Lakes
better wine. The exhibit has stimulated lots of community interest leading to the sharing of new artwork and oral histories from the Taylor Art School. Stay tuned for more on Cora Bliss Taylor this fall.

Thank you to all our dedicated volunteers who worked the event: Lori Ferlito, Steve Hutchins, Bill Kelleher, John Kerr, Ken Kutzel, Leslie Thompson, Bill and Nancy Woods, and our interns Jen Cimmarusti and Alanna Smollen. We couldn't do it without great people like them!

If you did not have the chance to be at the opening, don't worry! Cody's World will be on view all Fall and Winter with regular hours on Friday and Saturday noon-4 PM Friday and Saturday through October.

Taylor Art School Mural circa 1960 on display at Cody's World art exhibit

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**December 4, New Event Announcement!**

**Holiday Party at the Saugatuck Yacht Club**

**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!

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**Fall Season Museum Hours**

**History Center–School House:**
Saturday from 12 - 4

**History Museum:**
Saturday/Sunday from 12 - 4

Summer may have reached its unofficial end with the Labor Day holiday, but the History Center remains open for autumn travelers and residents alike.

It's not too late to volunteer at either site! Call the main office at 269-857-5751 for more information!

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**Final Days for Stories of Summer**
With sun setting earlier and the wind getting chiller, it is clear that summer is drawing to a close. With that, it is time for our current exhibit, *Stories of Summer*, to come down. At the end of September we will be taking down Stories of Summer to make way for a new fall/winter exhibit.

There is still plenty of time to come explore. Stories of Summer showcases what was learned from the History Harvests conducted with GVSU in the summer and fall of 2018. The project sought to document what life was like in the Saugatuck area from the 1950s to 70s.

Located at The Old School House on 130 W. Center Street  
Hours: Saturday from 12 - 4 and by appointment

But the summer fun doesn't end when the exhibit comes down. Grand Valley State University has digitized all of the photos and interviews recorded and transcribed during the 2018 History Harvests.

Visit their website to see the entire collection and learn more about summer time in Saugatuck!

Explore the Stories of Summer digital collections online here: https://digitalcollections.library.gvsu.edu

**GVSU Digital Library - Stories of Summer**

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**New SDHC Program in October: S.S. Keewatin Then and Now**

On Tuesday, October 8th, the SDHC in partnership with the *S.S. Keewatin Museum* in Ontario, Canada will host a special program at the *Saugatuck Center for the Arts*.

The lecture will tell the story of the S.S. Keewatin from its construction in Glasgow in 1907 to its current life as a floating museum in Georgian Bay, Ontario.
Presented by our special guests from Canada, Eric Conroy, President of the S.S. Keewatin Museum and Corey Keeble, Emertius Curator at the Royal Ontario Museum, this hour long program explores the full history of this Edwardian steamship from the golden age of travel on the Great Lakes, to its years in Saugatuck (1967-2012) under the care of R.J. Peterson, and its return to Canadian waters and full restoration today.

To learn more about the SS Keewatin, come to this free presentation and hear the rest of the story!

Where: Saugatuck Center for the Arts  
When: Tuesday, October 8th from 7 to 8  
Doors open at 6:30

New commemorative books published by the S.S. Keewatin Museum will be available for purchase at the lecture. Check our Facebook page for more information.

Annual Members Picnic and SDHC Awards

The SDHC held its Annual Member Picnic on Wednesday, September 11th this year. The potluck event in the Back-in-Time Garden at the School House campus in Douglas was a fun evening with 75 members in attendance. At the event, Mary Voss received the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center's top-honor Charles J. Lorenz Award of Achievement for 2019, while Bill and Nancy Woods were named the Center's Volunteer(s) Of The Year.

The Lorenz Award was established in 1997 to honor the memory of Charles "Chuck" Lorenz, who gave generously of his time, talent, money and energy in researching the early history of Saugatuck and Singapore, as well as the formation and development of this organization. Winners are selected each year by a special History Center committee, recognizing distinguished leadership in fulfilling the Center's mission to "help the community understand its past and use its history to shape its future and preserve its quality of life".

Voss, who was recognized as Volunteer of the Year in 2011, was cited for exceptional leadership in caring for our historical treasures in the Archives Research Center and art/artifact collections. For more than 15 years she has brought a focus on best practices in caring for collections, seeking out professional development for herself and the SDHC's team of volunteers. With the SDHC's 2018 "Year of Collections" project, she guided relocating the collections into the 2nd floor of the Old School House, and mentored interns and volunteers. In additional to her long service in the archives she has also served on SDHC's board of directors and helped to fundraise for archives and preservation.
The Volunteer Of The Year Award honors outstanding service to the History Center. Candidates are nominated by standing committee chairs, and winners are chosen by majority vote of the Board, which this year opted for a rare joint husband/wife selection. Nancy Woods has long served on the collections committee and worked in the archives caring for historic building and property records. This summer she processed new materials given by Dawn Schumann from her and George Schumann’s decades of historic preservation advocacy at the Lakeshore. Nancy has also played an essential role in development, putting her expertise in higher education administration to use in reviewing grant applications. That builds on her previous work as a SDHC Board Member and development committee leader. In addition, she volunteers at the History Center and Museum as a docent opening the building and greeting visitors throughout the summer.

Bill Woods is SDHC’s longest serving volunteer in the Old School House galleries, enhancing that mission with his zeal and talent for recruiting volunteers, as well as compiling stats on visitor attendance and analyzing trends to document the Center’s community impact and provide critical feedback for future improvement.

Thank you to all our volunteers. You bring history to life and make everything possible at the History Center!

Our Volunteers
A feature by communications intern, Jen Cimmarusti

Last month, we here at the History Center thanked our many docents who volunteer at the Saugatuck Douglas History Museum and the Old School House. All of our docents and the volunteer coordinators have have been working hard this summer to welcome guests to the SDHC.

By popular demand, we have decided to continue this series and highlight the many wonderful volunteers who help to make what we do possible. This month, we will be highlighting the gals who work in the History Center archives. Mary Voss and Cynthia Sorenson have spent years working in our archives to collect and catalog each new item added to our collection. In addition is Nancy Woods, a new recruit to the archives, and our summer intern Alanna Smollen.

Cynthia got her start at the History Center back 80’s. She and her sister would attended society meetings and volunteered at the Pumphouse when the building opened. On Mondays, she remembers getting her broom out and sweeping the sidewalk and steps leading down to the museum. Later, she and Jane Osman would help fold and mail out the monthly newsletters before everything went digital! In 2010, when the Old School House opened, she joined Mary Voss in the basement to start work in the archives. Cynthia won Volunteer of the Year in 2013.

Mary got her start in the 2000’s, helping Jack Sheridan to digitize photographs. When the Old School House opened she relocated her scanning operations from Dutcher Lodge to the new building. There she
brought on different volunteers to help her organize the History Center's collection, including Cynthia. Together the ladies recalled how small the archives were in the beginning. "All we had in the beginning were three boxes and a shelving unit," recounts Mary. But as word got out that the organization was collecting historical artifacts, the ladies soon became swamped with work.

Over time, the small basement space was not enough to contain the many pieces of the collection. There was hardly any room for our volunteers to get work done! So in Spring of 2018 the archives was relocated to the second floor of the Old School House, giving Mary and Cynthia plenty of space to work.

And with extra space means more room for volunteers! Nancy Woods started working the archives, organizing a recent donation about historical building in Saugatuck. This Summer we welcomed Alanna Smollen as our archive intern. Alanna has done amazing work to help organize the collection and updating the catalog. The archive team is currently conducting an inventory of all of the items, to make sure everything is present and accounted for. This summer she updated records for more than 2,100 items.

Thank you again to Mary, Cynthia, Nancy, and Alanna for their dedicated and endless work in the Saugatuck Douglas History Center archives.

From the Archives

Root Beer Barrel Memories

LaVerne S. Wise of Fennville shared this photo with the SDHC Archives in June of 2019. The picture shows LaVerne and Morine Herring at the famous Root Beer Barrel. LaVerne recalls how fun it was to work at the Barrel during the summer. "I remember the foot long hot dogs and the frosted mugs of root beer were so good!" said LaVerne. The female servers were required to wear skirts, penny loafers or saddle shoes, and bobby socks.

The photo was taken in 1949.

A modern photo of LaVerne S. Wise.

Taken in 2019 at the History Center.
Welcome from Jack Sheridan and Chris Yoder, leaders of the Society Family History Group.

Please visit a regular Family History Group meeting to see what we are all about and join the group. We share "lessons learned" about the many tools available for family history research.

Questions/comments/advice/needs:

Mayflower ancestor, Revolutionary War vet, famous cousins, great grand parents, ...

Where did you come from?
Thinking about a DNA test?
Answering questions: we are best at ....

Call or email us, meetings are normally the first and third Thursday every month at 3:30 at the Old School House.

Upcoming meetings: Thursday September 19. and Thursday September 19.

Your family history does not have to have any connection to the Saugatuck-Douglas area !!!

Not sure how to get going? 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, 49406, or email 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 Chris and myself by phone and email.

The only requirement is membership in the SDHS.
Join the group and find the answers.

jack.sheridan@gmail.com 269 857-7144 or cyoder@tds.net 616 212-3443

Family History Guest Writers

For this month's edition of the Ball and Chain, Chris Yoder invited two guest writers, Ken Denison and Karen Kratky Lehrer, to share their Saugatuck stories.

THE SAUGATUCK YACHT CLUB SONG STORY by Ken Denison
IT’S NOT THE ISLAND QUEEN THAT IS CALLING TO ME.
IT'S NOT THE SAND ON THE BEACH OR THE FISH IN THE SEA.
BUT IT’S THE LITTLE YACHT CLUB ON THE SANDY SHORES
OF THE KALAMAZOO.....THAT'S MY BABY!

This song was written by Helen Kindred, who played the piano and sang this song with the members of Saugatuck Yacht Club, at most of the potluck dinners we had at the club in the fifties and sixties. Her children, Pete, Charles and Suzie, were all sailors at the club, and had a pink lightening called Passum. Pete Kindred taught me to water ski.

Our lightening, named "shoosh" was constructed and built, in part, by my older brother Kit, who used mahogany as its primary wood, making it very elegant looking but unfortunately very heavy. We were not the fastest, "Lightening" of the fleet. The boat was named "Shoosh" as it was my mother's nickname, given to her by my oldest cousin, Win Ryder, who, at a very young age, could not pronounce Gertrude. It came out as ger-shoosh and it stuck! Hence the name for the boat.

Dick Hoffman, who owned the Island Queen, along with his wife Deborah, were first readers at the CS Church in Saugatuck and also where Burr Tillstrom taught Sunday School. My brother Skip and I were part of those classes. The Kindreds, Ryders and many other summer lakeshore/SYC members, attended the church at that time.

Burr Tillstrom Memories from Spear Street and the Red Barn Theater
by Karen Kratky Lehrer

He would briskly walk thru the Village of Saugatuck, stroll along the sandy shores of the Oval Beach, and shop at Taft's Supermarket on Blue Star Highway, usually without fanfare or autograph seekers. The town respected him and left him alone.
His name was Burr Tillstrom. He spent years in Saugatuck, summer after summer, and eventually bought himself a barn-like red home on the hill, on Spear Street. His winters were spent traveling and in Chicago until in his last year of life, he bought a home in Palm Springs, California to find warmer winter months. His love for Saugatuck was deep and I remember him telling us that this gem of a Village he preferred over the famous Martha's Vineyard.

My parents, Warren and Estel Kratky, my brother Bryan and I spent every summer in Saugatuck, too, eventually buying a home on Spear Street a few houses from Burr's. As children, Bryan and I would walk Oval Beach to the private harbor setting, holding hands with Burr Tilstrom and his loved doggy, Lucy. Mr. Tillstrom was a fit man, had a gorgeous tan and accentuated his beach attire with a gold chain and stylish sunglasses. A great beach companion, he loved children and in return they adored him.

Burr's puppet mastery lent itself to the Saugatuck folk viewing and participating in free puppet shows sometimes in the summer months. Note the pictures of one such puppet show in the early 1960's, where Mr. Tillstrom stationed himself and his puppets outside on the grounds of the old Red Barn Theatre. The audience flocked to see Kukla and Ollie perform their skits. He would randomly pick viewers to participate in some of the scenes, too. Obviously a genius and pioneer in the field, his stage shows were memorable 50 years later. In the 1980's, Burr wrote and published a wonderful children's book 'The Dragon Who Lived downstairs', featuring his zany puppet characters. The book, like Burr, was kind and sensitive, leading the way to teaching life lessons. I cherish my copy and his personalized remarks inside the cover.

My parents grew close to him especially during his last five years of life. They entertained at each other's homes and in Burr's last year of life he bought a winter home in Palm Springs, a few miles from my mom and dad's place. This all lent itself to year round dinners and conversations. In December 1985 my family was scheduled to dine with Burr in Palm Springs at Lord Fletchers Inn. We never made that date, as Mr. Tillstrom passed away from a heart attack while lounging at his pool that morning.

Saugatuck values his contributions and talent and honored him with a statue in the Village park and with occasional lectures and displays of his work. Burr Tillstrom was a man who devoted his entire life to art and puppetry, making countless children fall in love with his storytelling.
As the saying goes, the 1904 pump house has had a "good run" in local history. In the July and August ASK JACK features I have recounted the early history. First designed and built in 1904, it was the keystone to running water and fire hydrants in the village. What a deal that was - indoor running water and no more fighting fires with buckets hand pumps!

By 1910, the village populace - thrilled with village supplied running water - desired the benefits of village supplied electricity. The pump house size was doubled and generators installed to bring light fixtures to Saugatuck.

I have not found the history of the village electrical generation operation but common sense tells me that it was relatively short lived, perhaps five years. The city of Holland first built a municipal plant in 1893 and capacity was greatly increased by 1915. That could have been a new source for this area. Would love to hear from anyone knowing more!

Eventually more efficient power generating plants took over. Municipal wells were moved to the other side of the river, decades passed, the pump house became a storage shed for the public works department, then fell into disrepair and by 1970 the building was bulldozer qualified.

No way. That is a "diamond in the rough" thought Dr. Shorey and his wife Sally. The Shorey family of Chicago, knew the building well from summers spent here and visits to Oxbow. What a great location for a summer cottage. The river view was to die for!

Lucky for all of us ... this wonderful and history saving idea. Perhaps the village would give them a twenty year lease on the building in exchange for its restoration? A deal was struck with the Village and the Storey family launched their personal pump house restoration project.

Some twenty years later - when the Shorey lease ended - the building was again leased, this time to the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society for a dollar a year, plus upkeep. You know the rest of the story ...the SDHC and many generous donors have since invested copious amounts of sweat equity and some $200,000+ in turning the 115 year old building and grounds into a proud and award-winning museum facility.
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

In Memoriam

We take this time to remember our members who gave so much to the community and to the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society. Please click on the photographs for links to full obituaries.

Rob Carey, age 91, long-time History Center member, passed away Aug. 23rd at Golden Orchards in Fennville. He was a WWII veteran of the Merchant Marines and at one time a major contributor of articles to the S-D History Center. Rob joined Jack Sheridan and Jim Schmiechen in preparing the "Remembering When" full page feature which appeared weekly in the Local Observer for several years starting in about 2004.

Among his writings is the 112 page paperback Historic Saugatuck (still available for order on-line at lulu.com). Rob was also instrumental in the re-issue by the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center in 2011 of May Francis Heath's classic book Early Memories of Saugatuck, Michigan: 1830-1930 (also available online through Lulu publishing). Rob is survived by wife Marty, and children Jacqueline, Christine, Michael and Kevin.
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](http://www.MySDHistory.org) for a printable Membership Application.

Newsletter submissions: Eric Gollannek, PO Box 617, Douglas MI 49406 or [info@sdhistoricalsociety.org](mailto: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 open Saturday and Sunday from 12-4 through October.

The History Center -- Old School House and Francis Surfboat Exhibit are located at 130 Center Street in Douglas. Volunteers open the History Center from noon-4 PM on Saturdays in the fall. 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 are 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