Seasons of Change

Viewing life through the historian's lens makes one think a lot about change over time. Few moments in history could prepare us for the rate of change and rapid developments of the last couple of weeks.

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed our lives, practically overnight. The History Center's first Monthly Meeting of the year on March 11 came on the cusp of urgent social distancing across the state and the nation. In less than a week, the state ordered the closure of schools, bars and restaurants, as well as the closure of museums and libraries through the end of the month.

While we have all used the common language of "social distancing" some have pointed out an
important distinction: we humans must maintain physical distance to reduce or slow the spread of disease, but we must also find ways to maintain social connectedness especially in times of stress and isolation.

The History Center’s buildings may be temporarily closed but there are many opportunities to stay connected even when we’re safely at home.

- Watch your mailbox for updates on Saugatuck-Douglas history and projects at the SDHC.
- Follow us on Facebook and Instagram for timely news and features.
- And please reach out to us at the Center. We would love to hear from you about how you’re doing during this unprecedented time in our history.

Sending you warm thoughts from West Michigan to wherever you find yourself at home this month.

Eric Gollannek
Executive Director

**SDHC Events**

The SDHC remains optimistic that much of our summer program will continue as scheduled. Spring programming, however, has been cancelled in light of the risks of assembling together at this time.

**Rescheduled Events**
The SCA Real to Reel Filmfest 2020 -- Mountainfilm Festival at the SDHC School House has been rescheduled for May 8-9. See the SCA website for more information: [https://www.realtoreel.sc4a.org/](https://www.realtoreel.sc4a.org/)

Our monthly meetings for April and May are currently postponed. We continue to assess the status of our Members season opening party and exhibit openings in June.

View the full list of updated events for the year at our website and note these are subject to change in the weeks ahead:


**Root Camp Updates**

The Root Camp team continues to watch what's happening in the world, keeping the health of our campers and staff first and foremost. If Root Camp 2020 must be postponed for any reason, the SDHC will offer families a full refund.

For the moment we ask you to be patient and stay tuned for updates in the next month as we continue to assess conditions in our community.
Community outreach at the School House

With Saugatuck Public Schools closed as of March 13, the community has come together to support students and families in many ways. Saugatuck Public School Superintendent Tim Travis reached out to the SDHC about hosting food distribution for breakfast and lunch supplies during the shutdown. We were very happy to oblige and the School House campus in Douglas is now a site for food pickup on Tuesday and Friday from 9-11 AM. The Saugatuck Center for the Arts parking lot is another distribution site. Thank you to Saugatuck Public Schools for all you do in and out of the classroom to make our community thrive.

Interurban Memories
by Guest Contributor Grace Bouwman

"I hear that train a coming - a coming round the track." As a child I could almost imagine this happening. I lived on a road where the old Interurban train ran their route 25 years before I was born. I would hear the stories and find evidence of the track when old medal spokes from the train tracks would emerge from our dirt road. It also became alive for me as a child as my Grandparents had an old Interurban station in front of their home named the Belvedere. I lived next door to the station which had an enclosed waiting area and an open porch in front. Let me share with you a little history of the train.

The Interurban was an electric train which ran from Grand Rapids to Saugatuck between the years of about 1900 to 1926. It carried passengers from Grand Rapids through several smaller communities like Grandville. The tracks ran through Holland on 8th Street, turned on River Ave. and then headed toward Macatawa Park. At the water's edge there were tracks on a pier over Lake Macatawa where the train would pick up passengers and freight from ships which came into the channel. The train also traveled to Jenison Park which was an amusement park with a wooden roller coaster and other rides and games. The Interurban then traveled south to Saugatuck were it ended at the Big Pavilion, a dance hall, where the train would go around the Pavilion and traveled back toward Holland.
The Interurban Train came at a time when the roads to places like Lake Michigan were not highly developed. It was an easy way for a family to travel from Grand Rapids or surrounding communities to the lake shore or Saugatuck. Around 1926 the train stopped running, but some of the stations survived. For me, the Interurban Train Station at the Belvedere was a solid place of history in my own neighborhood. Unfortunately, the train station was torn down when I was in my teens by the owners who bought the Belvedere from my Grandparents. I can remember feeling very sad over what the new owner did to the old station. As a teen, it was more of a memory of my favorite play area, but as an adult I have become saddened by the historical loss. Jackie Kennedy once said, "We are the only country in the world that trashes its old buildings. Too late we realize how much we need them." The Belvedere Interurban Station was a monument to a time long ago and now it is only a memory and a picture in an old photo album.

Cottage Histories -- Tonawanda Cottage: Swift Water

The Cottage History feature continues in this issue of the Ball and Chain as Chris Yoder collects some of the history behind Saugatuck area cottages and their names. SDHC member Sam Cummings shared this remarkable story behind Saugatuck's Tonawanda Cottage.

High on a wooded dune overlooking the Kalamazoo River in an area known as Riverside Heights, sits a rather unusual and incredibly authentic example of the Saugatuck "summer culture" of the 1920s. Built as a summer retreat in 1927, the Scott Jordan Family of Chicago named the site and building "Tonawanda" (after the Iroquois word meaning "swift water"). The building's design and materials are both departures from
what might have been considered typical "cottage vernacular" of the day. This is perhaps to be expected as the designer of the building was not only a talented and sought-after practitioner of her time, she was also a pioneer in the profession. In the 1920s, it was extremely rare for women to practice building design beyond the scope of a structure's interior, even more uncommon in Chicago or the West coast of Michigan.

Florence "Danny" Hunn was, therefore, primarily an interior designer and a very successful one. She was born in Chicago in 1887 and it was there that she practiced most of her craft. She was a graduate of the University of Chicago and studied at both the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts and the Art Institute of Chicago. Although most records of her work have been lost, it is known that most of her interior design was for wealthy clients in Chicago and New York. (This portrait by Chicago artist J. Wellington Reynolds of Hunn is part of the SDHC art collection.)

Architect Danny Hunn was a lifelong summer resident of Pier Cove. She was both admired and criticized in Pier Cove and Saugatuck for her somewhat non-conformist and bohemian behavior but there was no denying her artistic talent. While she performed several remodeling and interior commissions in the area, she was only commissioned to design four houses there.

Providing more conservative interiors based on 18th century revival styles was the primary source of her income but her natural instinct led her to begin experimenting with modernism in the 1920s. Tonawanda Cottage is an extraordinary example of this experimentation—and a truly singular design and execution. It remains a wonderful collision of Arts and Crafts and early Modernism with a dash of Tudor Revival fenestration. The building's distinctive characteristics must have been incredibly contentious as it rose amongst the more traditional beach front cottages in Riverside Heights in the early part of the 20th century. The Jordans had to have been interesting clients.

Even the primary building material was unconventional—but extremely practical. The entire building is made of glazed, extruded terra cotta "bricks" sourced from the now-defunct Kalamazoo Brick Company. Not only are they structural but their thickness and hollow design provide a technologically-advanced thermal barrier beyond what was likely typical in an uninsulated summer cottage of the era. We know that Ms. Hunn enjoyed experimenting with
geometric shapes in alternating colors and her primary medium for much of this experimentation was tilework. This penchant (and certainly a willing client) undoubtedly influenced her selection of this material; there is what appears to be a calculated randomness to the subtle color variation of these Kalamazoo Bricks. This element carries through inside as there is no plaster or interior wall finishing on the exterior and load-bearing walls—so in true Modernist style—the form follows the function, in warm and pleasing earth tones complimentary to the building's surroundings.

The primary facades on the east and west (river) sides are dominated by symmetrical 20 foot, 116-light windows reminiscent of a modern church—paying quiet homage to not only the spectacular west view across the Kalamazoo River to Talmadge Woods and Lake Michigan but in the era of Tonawanda's construction, what would have been largely pristine dune forest to the east.

Inside, the building has recently been updated with the help of Cornerstone Architects, Cannarsa Design and Olsen Builders. While making contemporary adjustments to the kitchen and living spaces, period authenticity and restoration were the primary motivations—it is extremely rare to find a historic building in such a state of preservation and its few owners and sympathetic use over the past 90 years is no doubt the fortunate cause.

*Sam Cummings is looking for historic photographs or drawings of the exterior and landscaping around Tonawanda Cottage. Please contact the SDHC at info@sdhistoricalsociety.org if you have information to share.*

-----

Just a few of the many other local home nicknames include: Idylease, Green Gables, Bonnie Meadows, Stonegate, The Flower Basket, The Shades, Porches, Council Oaks, Cozy Cottage, Allake Cottage, Willowood, Driftwood, Rose Cottage and Kemah. How many of these do you recognize? Does your own place have a nickname and, if so, would you share its story for a future newsletter? Email Chris Yoder at cyoder@tds.net or call 616-212-3443.
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 have been suspended due to Covid-19 problem - stay tuned.

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
This question came from my brother Phil, who while lamenting the recent market crash wondered, "Do you know, historically, who was Saugatuck's richest man?"

That was a low hanging curve that even I could hit over the center field fence of Beery Field!

Here is the story.

In 1976 after the death of Howard Hughes and J Paul Getty, Daniel Keith Ludwig was proclaimed by the New York Times to be the world's richest man and there is no doubt that this certain Mr. Ludwig of Saugatuck heritage, was a world class mega billionaire.

Keith Ludwig was born in 1897 in South Haven. He was the son of Florabelle and Daniel "Lud" Ludwig. Coming from a sailing family, many of the Ludwig clan were Great Lakes ship captains. The father, Lud was part sailor, real estate dealer and all around entrepreneur. He was one of the original partners in the Big Pavilion.

When young Daniel was seven years old, when the Big Pavilion was started, the family moved north from South Haven and settled in Saugatuck. Their home was on the southwest corner of Hoffman and St Joseph St and yes, the house is still there.

Young Keith got his start in the business world selling popcorn in the Big Pavilion. Thanks to a
1978 Commercial Record article by Kit Lane [who wrote a book titled *The Popcorn Millionaire and Other Tales of Saugatuck*] we know he exhibited entrepreneurial talents at a young age - besides selling popcorn, he managed finances for the baseball team, in partnership with Ky Walz her rebuilt and sold for a good profit an old row boat. He was remembered as likeable but disinterested student in the class of Mrs. Carl Bird. Elita Bird, a classmate remembered that Keith was interested in candy sales at the Bird Drugstore.

His parents separated when he was in the eighth grade and soon after he quit school and went to Port Arthur, Texas with his father. At age 19, he left Texas to return north, where he bought a dilapidated Lake Michigan cruise vessel for $5000 and converted it to a barge bulk carrier to haul molasses.

In the next twenty years he proceeded to make a fortune - first by buying and leasing tanker ships, then building ships during WWII. Ultimately, Mr. Ludwig established a diversified world-wide empire that included major interests in oil refining, coal mining, salt water conversion, agriculture, real estate, finance and banking.

He was always somewhat of a loner and shunned publicity. In his most publicized venture, he invested billions in an unsuccessful timber farming - paper making venture [Jari Project] in the Amazon.

When he died at the age of ninety five in 1992 most of his vast fortune was left to his Cancer research foundation. For more details on his life, check Wikipedia.

After running the Keith Ludwig story in the 1976 *Commercial Record*, Kit received this interesting letter that adds a smile to the story:

---

**Dec. 2, 1976**

Dear Mrs. Lane,

I enjoyed your article about Daniel K. Ludwig. Despite his billions he hasn’t fully paid for his first boat according to the story told me by his partner and my old friend Francis (Ky) Wals.

Ky is a well known retired barber from Saugatuck and Douglas now living in Florida. As I remember it, Ky was learning the barbering trade and as an apprentice working for tips only. One day Ludwig came in the shop and said he’d found an old boat they could buy for $35, fix up and use for their own pleasure and rent out and would he help him and go half the cost. Ky agreed and came up with his half.

In the fall or the following year Ludwig sold the boat, left town and never repaid his $17.50.

Because of it’s confidential nature do not publish this letter or use my name. But if you want to follow it further Carl Wicks can give you Ky’s address.

I wonder what $17.50 at say 7% compound interest for all these years would amount to. Do you think Ludwig could afford it?

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

---
S.S. Keewatin Book Now Available

The S.S. Keewatin Museum visited Saugatuck to spread the good news of their restoration of 'The Kee' in October. Both Eric Conroy and Corey Keeble, Emeritus Curator at the Royal Ontario Museum gave a riveting hour-long program at the Saugatuck Center for the Arts supported by the SDHC and generously underwritten by R.J. Peterson.

Copies of both the standard and deluxe editions of the new book from the Ontario museum are now available to purchase at the SDHC School House.

We are pleased to have copies of both the Deluxe and Standard editions in stock. These sell for $104.95 for the special edition and $69.95 for the standard edition and can also be shipped direct to you. Stop by the School House to have a look or pick up a copy!

Return of the Barrel Ornament

If you missed picking up one of the hottest items of the holiday season, good news, history lovers! The SDHC commemorative Root Beer Barrel ornament is back in stock and available for purchase at the History Center in Douglas. Ornaments sell for $40 and can be shipped to you for an additional charge. Contact John Kerr at johndkerr55@gmail.com for more information.

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 and across the country.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household</td>
<td>$70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premium</td>
<td>$300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifetime</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior (65+)</td>
<td>$30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Household</td>
<td>$45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Send check payable to the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center to: PO Box 617, Douglas, Michigan 49406 or visit our website at [http://sdhistoricalsociety.org/membership/membership.php](http://sdhistoricalsociety.org/membership/membership.php)

**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 from June through October.

The History Center -- Old School House and Francis Surfboat Exhibit are 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.

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

**Follow us and learn more history on Social Media! Click the logos below.**