B&C Directory

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Membership Reminder

Membership mailings went out through the US Postal Service on April 16. Thank you for the many responses already received at the SDHC! Please contact us if you did not receive your letter.

History Center News

This month marks the second full month of Michigan's Stay Home, Stay Safe order. While the History Center's buildings may be temporarily closed, the board and volunteers continue to meet virtually and work from home to keep the SDHC vital and engaged during these extraordinary times.

- The SDHC hosted its first ever virtual Monthly Meeting last week. The May program looked back on Saugatuck's Big Pavilion through art on occasion of the 60th anniversary of the fire. Delivered by board member Ken Kutzel, the program was a reprise of

Douglas Post Office with handwashing station on Center Street.

You can also renew or upgrade your membership online today by visiting our
the 2017-18 art exhibit at the History Center School House. You can view the presentation online on our YouTube page. Based on the success of this program, we are planning many additional Zoom programs online starting this month. Please watch your email and our sites for the latest offerings.

- Public in-person programs and buildings will remain closed to the public through June. A planning team will guide recommendations for reopening following state and local guidelines as well as best practices from Michigan museums.

- The Family History Group with Chris Yoder and Jack Sheridan has met online through Zoom and will host meetings on their "regular" schedule starting Thursday, May 21 at 3:30 PM. (Read more in this newsletter here!)

- The SDHC #3CShutdown project continues and we invite you to help document life in the Saugatuck-Douglas area. The Saugatuck-Douglas District Library has also partnered with us to spread the word. (Read more here.) You can participate and see the results on Facebook and Instagram.

Stay tuned for more online events and programs in the weeks ahead. As always, please reach out to share how you're doing.

Eric Gollannek
Executive Director

webpage here:
http://sdhistoricalsociety.org/membership/onlineapp.php

Have you filled out your U.S. Census form yet? Click here to be counted!
It helps guide everything from support for your local library to Congressional representation.

Some historical facts about the Federal Census:

- Thomas Jefferson directed the first decennial census in 1790. As required by the U.S. Constitution, a census has been taken every 10 years thereafter. In 1840, the Census Act authorized the establishment of a centralized Census Office.

- Have you found yourself or a family member in Census records? The 1940 Census is most recent released; returns are restricted for 72 years for privacy, meaning that April 2022 will see release of 1950 census! Reach out to the SDHC Family History group to learn more about how to access Census returns online!
SDHC receives vital operational support grants

In the last month, the History Center received welcome news of grant awards from the Allegan County Community Foundation and Michigan Humanities.

The Allegan County Community Foundation is a longtime supporter of the SDHC. This year, in light of the challenges in coping with Covid-19, the ACCF moved to accelerate their grant payments as well as unrestricting their support to bring relief to community organizations with maximum flexibility. The SDHC received an ACCF Legacy Grant of $4,200 to support operations and new programming options for this summer.

The SDHC also received a $5,000 grant from Michigan Humanities for operational support over the next six months. Funding for the the Michigan Humanities Organizations Pandemic Emergency (H.O.P.E.) grant is provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act economic stabilization plan.

Big Pavilion Revisited by Jack Sheridan

Just is time for this month, the phone rang. It was Jane Underwood telling me that the Big Pavilion burned sixty years ago this May.
Jane's family lost their cottage - the only other structure to burn - when Pavilion fire embers floated across the river and set five to the roof of their place. It was located near the corner of the road to the Oval and Park St. Jane was in high school in Chicago at the time.

Jane's question: "Who set fire to the Pavilion?"

Jane and I had discussed this matter in the past. That does not stop me from answering the question in my usual fashion. I know Jane has her opinion [also know that Jane's opinions are not up for change] and she was just reminding me of the upcoming anniversary.

My answer: In my opinion it was caused by an electrical short. The structure was built fifty some years previous when electricians were a rare breed and electrical systems were bare wires - well almost. The only real question ... why had it not burned earlier!

The building had a gazillion lights over the ball room floor and in addition miles of wiring for many and varied reasons. That week the building was being opened for the season and mice had all winter to chew on electrical wire insulation. With the juice on, a short might heat and smolder for awhile before...FIRE!

My brother's house caught fire from a very similar circumstance. He returned from a winter in Florida, turned on the porch light, in a few hours, a smoldering short turned to a fire in the wall. It was a sad end to that house.

Jane opinion is: It was arson to collect the insurance. Plausible motive perhaps,
however the only support available to back the theory is the claim that strange people had been seen around town that week.

Enough for the question. In order to put some meat on the bones of the subject, here is a description of that fateful fire, that fateful day, written by yours truly some time in the distant past:

**THE BIG PAVILION - DEATH BY FIRE**

Friday morning, May 6, 1960, a persistent breeze waltzed briskly from the west, then turned around slowly to the southeast.

The Big Pavilion's fifty-first season opening loomed three weeks away. Manager Jack Repp told village maintenance boss Newnham to turn on the water and then went to negotiate summer advertising rates with the Commercial Record. In his Chicago office, owner Herb Shutter ordered the red paint for the up coming summer paint job.

On the corner of Mason and Water Streets, somewhere among the thousands of light sockets and miles of 1909 wiring, a cancerous short was smoldering.... maybe.

The Big Pavilion was about to walk the last mile. In the Hotel Saugatuck next door, Viola Fox tallying last nights receipts answered the phone. From across the river, the caller could see smoke coming from the building. Vi punched the in-house direct-line alarm button to the Village fire hall.

But it was too late. When fire chief Bill Wilson smashed through the Dock Bar door, flames were churning skyward and inky smoke boiled over the eaves of the towering dock-side wall.

The beloved barn was already a funeral pyre. The only doubt was how much of Saugatuck would survive. Luck of the draw southeast wind swept blast furnace heat and burning embers westward, out over the river, allowing ten fire departments, hoses streaming river water, to contain the conflagration.

So in mere hours, a Saugatuck legend, "the brightest spot on the great lakes" was distilled to blackened rubble. Symbolically, like her birth, death of the red dance hall was bigger than life, a brilliant burst of light and excitement, followed by the wonder of it all.
SDHC Tri-Community Shutdown Project Ongoing

The SDHC's project to document our community's experience in the Covid-19 era continues as we head into summer.

With the support of the Saugatuck-Douglas District Library, the SDHC is also collecting written accounts from across the community. You can share your reflections and thoughts online here: https://tinyurl.com/3cshutdown

The #3CShutdown project began in April and seeks to create a photographic documentary of the many ways life in our tri-community area of Saugatuck, Douglas, and Saugatuck Township is changing under Michigan's Shelter-in-Place directive for slowing the viral spread of COVID-19. The History Center project, "Tri-Community Shutdown - A small community's response to a global pandemic" invites community members to document the history that's unfolding in real time all around us, changing our lives in ways great and small.

Imagination and creativity are encouraged, but no one should consider this as cause to overlook or ignore the very important guidelines for Shelter-in-Place and social distancing. Public health and safety are paramount.

Images may be posted to Instagram where you can tag @sd_historycenter or on Facebook using @sdhistorycenter. Please use hashtags #3CShutdown and #MySDHistory with your posts.

Submission on the SDHC Facebook page from Easter weekend in Douglas.
As noted in the *Ask Jack* feature, this month marks the 60th anniversary of one of Saugatuck's greatest disasters in living memory: the burning of the Big Pavilion dance hall. The loss of the building, consumed by fire in less than an hour, represented a transition in the history of the community just as its construction in 1909 marked the end of an earlier era of fruit growing and lumbering. (The big freeze of 1906 had devastated the peach fruit industry that brought stability and prosperity to the region after the decline of the timber era in the late 1800s.) What can we learn from the loss of the Big Pavilion? In what ways might memories of the pavilion reveal a story about change over time and the resilience of the community?

The Saugatuck Pavilion exists today as a powerful memory. Legendary SDHC historian and professor James Schmiechen identified the Big Pavilion as Saugatuck's most important building in his definitive architectural history of the area, *Raising the Roof* (published 2006). He described it as embodying the community's 20th century spirit: "It was a mirror of much of the history of popular culture in America over the half century of its life."

Construction on the Saugatuck pavilion began in April of 1909 and reached completion just in time for Independence Day. The wooden dance hall sat at the southern end of Water Street where it beckoned locals and visitors alike as an entertainment palace for a half century. The building type emerged alongside the technological sublime of electric lighting, giving the building the title as the "Brightest Spot on the Lake." Some 5,000 exterior lights outlined the frame of the building's frame while an elaborate system of multicolored lights lined the barrel-vaulted ceiling, illuminating the pavilion like a shimmering jewel box. Generators powered the luminaries when it opened, so ahead of its time it predated electrical service. The pavilion also came from an age before electrical amplification and recorded music. The all-wood construction gave the building splendid acoustics like the resonant body of a dreadnought acoustic guitar.
The building stood eight stories tall and its 6,600 square foot dance floor held crowds of more than 1,000 dancers. That dance hall witnessed the history of popular music and dance from Sousa marches and orchestral waltzes, the Charleston craze of the 1920s, Jitterbug big band swing, and Dixieland and cool jazz of the 1950s. Saugatuck's first Jazz Festival took place there in 1959 with Dizzy Gillespie and his quintet playing along with the Barbara Carroll Trio and Kai Winding's sextet. The 1960 show would have brought Duke Ellington and Della Reese to the pavilion as well as the Dave Brubeck Quartet in 1961 had the fire not ruined those plans.

Not just for dancers and music lovers, the pavilion had a soda shop for ice cream treats, a coffee shop, and snack bar along with Saugatuck's only motion picture show. In 1941 the winter months saw conversion of the dance floor to a roller skating rink with 20,000 feet of hard maple laid over the well-trodden floor.

The pavilion bore witness to dramatic social changes from 1909 to 1960. The temperance movement had outlawed the sale of alcohol in Saugatuck by 1907, two years prior to the pavilion's construction. The Big Pavilion was a dry night spot at its founding, though stories of bootlegged liquor and close ties to Chicago-based organized crime were widely acknowledged. By 1938 the "The Dock" bar opened on the water side of the pavilion and operated as a popular boating destination and notorious nightspot known for its jazz and swing music for the next twenty years.

The Big Pavilion caught fire on a Friday morning, May 6, 1960. Within an hour, the building was a total loss. At just 51 years of age, the building had lived fast and met an untimely end, like many of its kind. South Haven at one time had two pavilions, the North Shore Pavilion (built 1904) and the Avery Beach Casino (1912) both of which were lost to fire. In fact, the North Shore Pavilion burned down in 1914, was rebuilt, and then burned again in 1967.

Unlike today when the Saugatuck Township Fire District would have its firefighting boat the Morgan J to direct water on the northwest corner of the building where the fire began, the 1960 fire department had limited tools to control the fire from Water Street before it rapidly spread through the building. Firefighters from a dozen departments in sixteen trucks came to assist and spent more than...
twenty hours before the fire was fully extinguished. It is hard to imagine what could have slowed the fire or saved the fifty-year old building, all 330,000 board feet of dry timber once the fire spread.

Fortunately for Saugatuck, the winds from the fire came out of the east, carrying flames and embers across Lake Kalamazoo and away from Saugatuck village center. One account from the 2018 Stories of Summer interviews describes Saugatuck high school students sent to Mount Baldhead to put out any embers blowing over from the burning pavilion site. Though one house was lost on the west side of the water, many buildings would have burned in the village had the heat from the fire spread across Water Street. The heat from the fire was hot enough to blister the paint on one fire truck, broke windows, and melted candles sitting on the tables of restaurants like the Hollyhock.

The front page of the *Commercial Record* on May 13, 1960 described the fire as well as the immediate plans to rebuild:

The ruins of the Big Pavilion were still smoldering when [building owners] Herbert E. Shutter and John Constantine were starting plans for a new building, with an opening date set for July 4th (not 1961, but 1960).

In a large room in the Hotel Saugatuck [the modern day Coral Gables], overlooking the debris of the onetime vacation center, they worked with Takeo Ito, of Peoria, Ill., a keen sharp-thinking architect who is a recent graduate of the University of Oklahoma.

They sketched out a floor plan of approximately 125 by 260 feet, with the length paralleling Kalamazoo Lake. In the northeast corner of the site they located a new movie theater which will seat 500 people.
Little else is known about the plans for the new building, but the choice of architect offers some insights. Takeo Ito was a young Japanese-American, born in 1925 and raised in Hawaii, who found his place among a circle of students later known as the "American School" studying around the revolutionary architect Bruce Goff at the University of Oklahoma. Goff caught the attention of Chicago architects Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright as a young man and absorbed many of Wright's principles of organic design fused with contemporary industrial construction methods. The program at the University of Oklahoma promoted functional modernist approaches to space and structure brought together with a flamboyant expressive take on American western vernacular sources.

Takeo Ito's Saugatuck design would have raised a visionary and futuristic monument to replace the wooden pavilion. How different the last six decades might have looked on the waterfront! The year 1960 saw many changes in Saugatuck and the nation expressed through Modern design. In September of 1959, fire consumed the old wooden Singapore warehouse building that served as the nineteenth-century Tourists' Home / Mt. Baldhead Hotel on Water Street. In the aftermath, the Chicago couple Walter and Betty Coburn purchased the site and built the Ship and Shore 'boatel' in the spring of 1960. Opening for the Fourth of July holiday, guests could arrive by automobile or stay on their boats while having use of a series of Hawaiian-inspired waterside lanai units. The long sweeping lines of the motel evoked the Populuxe form of the ranch house and the Boeing 707 jetliner of the era.

To borrow from Bob Dylan, *the times they were a-changin'* in Saugatuck in the early 1960s. Social and cultural revolution appeared set to transform the nineteenth century village. But it wasn't meant to be for the old pavilion site. The ambitious timetable proved too much for the new pavilion project. Confronting daunting project costs and the end of the summer season, John Constantine and Herbert Shutter sold the empty pavilion site to Robert Sargent, owner of the Butler Hotel. Today the footprint of the Big Pavilion remains legible as the parking lot for the Singapore Yacht Club that opened in 1960.

The loss of the Pavilion marked the end of an era in Saugatuck. Had the building survived another decade, it may have thrived as a popular jazz and rock music venue. If Takeo Ito's visionary design had been realized, would that have fueled a modern building boom throughout the village? How would the rebuilding have obscured the memories of an earlier Saugatuck, for better or for worse?

The memory of the fire lives on among everyone who was here in May of 1960. Much like the death of President Kennedy, 9/11, and the Challenger Space Shuttle disaster, longtime residents are quick to tell you how clearly they remember that windy day in May of 1960. The Pavilion fire is a powerful testament to the importance of history to provide perspective across time. It is also a reminder of the resilience of the community that has thrived through the half century in spite of its painful losses. In
this moment of crisis, let us all find strength in the lessons of perseverance from Saugatuck's history.

What other architectural changes transformed Saugatuck in the last half century? Do you have stories about other grand projects (built or unbuilt) in the community? Please share them at info@sdhistoricalsociety.org.

Local Connections to the Influenza Pandemic of 1918
Some Member Updates

Last month's newsletter included an essay on the 1918 Influenza Pandemic in Saugatuck. We asked for stories from the community about that historical moment and here are some of the responses.

Contributed by Donna St. Andre:
I looked up the information about Christine Lovejoy, my grandmother on my mother's side that died on Nov. 2, 1918. Her death certificate says she died of pneumonia in Three Rivers, Michigan. The obituary says she died Saturday afternoon after an illness of one week of influenza which developed into pneumonia. She was almost 30 years old with a birthdate of Dec. 20, 1888.

Also please notice that my Great-grandfather was seen by the Dr. on Nov. 9th, the day after my Grandmother died, Nov. 8th. The obituary says he was ill about two weeks before dying. (There was no mention of being exposed to flu, compared to today's reporting of being counted for flu.) I also have a copy of the card of thanks for my Grandmother which lists William Lovejoy and the Ash family that my Great-grandfather was living with at the time, and others.
**Contributed by Chris Yoder:**
My mother, Phyllis Pamperien, had been born in 1913 and therefore was 5-6 years old during the peak years of the Spanish flu. The family lived in La Grange, IL and some of her childhood friends had lost their mothers to the epidemic. In 1918 the flu killed over 50 million people worldwide, including 8,500 Chicagoans. (Chicago population in 1920 was 2,701,705.) To the end of her life at age 91, Mom remembered being fearful every time her mother would leave the house that her mother would die before she returned home. A report on the epidemic in Chicago can be seen in a *Chicago Magazine* article at [http://www.chicagomag.com/city-life/March-2020/How-Chicago-Dealt-With-the-1918-Spanish-Flu/](http://www.chicagomag.com/city-life/March-2020/How-Chicago-Dealt-With-the-1918-Spanish-Flu/)

**Contributed by Merijean and David Alan Webb:**
The Covid-19 pandemic has pretty much saturated Michigan, and the stay-at-home mandates recently provided time for me to reread a family history booklet prepared by my brother in 1994. I stumbled on a short story that my Grandfather William Webb and my Uncle Arthur Webb of Midland, Michigan contracted influenza during the 1918-1920 Pandemic. My brother recorded specifically in 1919 that whole families died in Midland; and it was very serious in the Webb family, but both recovered. My father Donald Willard Webb was born in 1922. Without their survival there would have been no Donald, David or our family.

**Contributed by Ted Reyda:**
The Reyda family had a tragic connection to the so called SPANISH INFLUENZA PANDEMIC of 1918. Five Reyda brothers were homesteading in NORTHERN ALBERA CANADA and the area needed a doctor to serve the area. They collected just enough money to send brother Walter Reyda to pharmacy school in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania thinking he would at least have some medical knowledge to meet their need. He contracted the flu there and died in three days and was buried in a common area with all the other victims. The family still doesn't know exactly where.

*Have you heard family stories about the 1918 influenza? We would like to collect them. Please reach out to us at the History Center and we'll include updates in future newsletters.*

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?

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.

Your family history does not have to have any connection to the Saugatuck-Douglas area!!!
The only requirement is membership in the SDHS.
Join the group and find the answers.

Update on virtual meetings this spring:
Meetings are 3:30 on the first and third Thursday of the month.
Currently due to the Corona Virus regimen, meetings are held only on line utilizing ZOOM.
Upcoming meetings: May 22, June 6, June 20

Please email or call Chris or Jack for login information for the online meetings.
We look forward to "seeing you" there!

The snail mail address is SDHS Family History Box 617 Douglas, 49406, or email to jack.sheridan@gmail.com 269 857-7144 or cyoder@tds.net 616 212-3443

New Project Launch:
Trace Your Family History the Easy Way!
Do Surprises Await in Your Family Tree?

Not every one of has a Mayflower ancestor, but an estimated 35 million Americans living today do have one. Perhaps you have a Civil War or Revolutionary War soldier in your tree, or a butcher, a baker, candlestick maker, or an Indian chief?

Did you ever want to explore your ancestry but did not know how to start?

Well, volunteers from the History Center Family History group stand ready to get you started in this adventure. If you want to test the ancestral waters, all you have to do is print off and fill out as much of the tree chart below as you are able, with names, places, dates (if possible) and send it in to Jack Sheridan at either snail mail: P.O. Box 731, Douglas, MI 49406 or scan and email it to him at: jack.sheridan@gmail.com

He will assign it to one of our team members. They will NOT do a full family tree for you, but they will find, sample and share information about your ancestry which should be of interest...perhaps taking one line all the way back to immigrant, or finding a photo of a long lost ancestor. Who knows what treasures exist in the history of your family, just waiting to be revealed to you?? Give it a try!!!
In Memoriam: Billy Johnston

Saugatuck-Douglas History Center Lifetime Member Billy Johnston passed away on March 27, 2020 at age 84. Please visit the Chicago Tribune for an obituary celebrating his life or click the photo.

SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORY CENTER FACILITIES

The SDHC facilities remain closed through the month of May. Please check our social media and website for updates about summer programming availability.

The Saugatuck-Douglas History Museum is located at 735 Park Street in Saugatuck, in the historic Saugatuck Pump House building.

The History Center -- Old School House and Francis Surfboat Exhibit are located at 130 Center Street in Douglas.

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, e-mail the archives directly at 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!