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

Summertime arrives in Saugatuck-Douglas

Since the last newsletter, spring rolled right into summertime in the blink of an eye. Plans for summer programming and the reopening of the History Museum as well as the dedication of the new Demerest Historic Shanty brought us into the month of June.

Late March had seen renewed concerns about COVID-19 spread in Michigan. It feels like a distant memory now as the CDC has affirmed the effectiveness of vaccines and moved us away from capacity restrictions and even mask requirements. By July 1st, Michigan will no longer ask individuals to wear masks indoors or outdoors.

This rapid change in guidelines meant another series of adjustments across the state, our region, and at the History Center. We are looking forward to gathering soon at outdoor events and programs as well as in our exhibit spaces as soon as we can manage.

These last several weeks have seen volunteer projects in our gardens, caring for our buildings, exhibit preparations, and collections care, too. Read more about our work in this newsletter.

We can’t wait to share all of this with you in person soon!

Eric Gollannek
Executive Director

Read more about these programs in this newsletter and in the months ahead!

May blooms in the Back-in-Time Garden. Always a seat waiting for you to rest and reflect at the History Center.

Announcing SDHC Summer 2021 Programs

The History Center’s regular programming returns starting July 1st.

A full range of Tuesday Talks and Meetings launch in July and August. These include a blend of in-person programs as well as virtual presentations. Saugatuck-Douglas history presented by experts from across our community and the nation!

July 6, 11am Tuesday Talk
Saugatuck
Shanty Updates
Read more about the
Historic Demerest
Shanty and its
dedication last month.

In Memoriam
Recognizing the passing of SDHC members
including those recently shared during the
2021 membership outreach:
- Rabbi Robert Marx, March 28, 2021
- Dr. Joseph Cerny February 15, 2021
- Diane Durian September 9, 2020
- Sheldon Wetack February 25, 2021
- Richard Simmons June 15, 2019

Family History Group
Want to learn more about your family tree?
We’re here to help! Also check out the
feature from Chris Yoder on a memorial from
50 years ago this month.

Root Camp is Back
There’s still time to register
for the SDHC’s youth camp, June
21-24. This year’s theme is the
barrel!

2021 Membership
Thank you to all who renewed memberships
already. We have had a successful campaign
already and we hope this inspires you to
renew if you haven’t yet. Read more about it
here!

Become a sponsor! Would you or your
organization like to sponsor a Tuesday Talk? This
directly supports the cost of SDHC programs and
you get acknowledged in all program publicity for
the event. We also encourage multiple sponsors!
Please contact us at info@sdhistoricalsociety.org

Did you know you can revisit past
programs on the SDHC’s YouTube
channel?

Visit our YouTube page for
history on-demand!

New Exhibit Announced!
Art of the People: Anishinaabe
Contemporary Artists
opening July 1st!

The SDHC has partnered with the SDF Arts
Initiative to connect past and present
through the visual arts. Seven artists from
the Anishinaabe culture who live in our
region will fill the gallery at the Saugatuck
Douglas History Center with sculpture,
paintings, beadwork and mixed media.

The men and women who bring their work
to our communities combine their respect
of cultural traditions and images with
contemporary sensitivities and themes.

By celebrating their past, these artists
define who they are today.

Prepare to discover a dynamic and evolving culture where history, identity, social justice and environmental issues are brought up in the works presented. The visual messages are strong and clear. It takes time to look and listen to the voice that created the work.

Saugatuck Douglas History Center
Old School House Gallery
July 1 - October 1

Sponsorship opportunities available.
Please contact us at info@sdhistoricalsociety.org

Visit the SDHC Facebook page for updates as well as the SDF Arts Initiative website for more information.

What are some ways you can get involved at the History Center?

Volunteers are a part of everything the History Center does from caring for our sites to planning and hosting member events.

(Photos, left) A couple of super volunteers (Vic Bella and Bill Kelleher) painted the garage at the History Center-School House campus in mid-May.

To learn more about the the History Center and what you can do to be a part of the action, note that we are resuming History Center tours and activity overviews. These individual or small group tours are a great way to engage or re-engage with the SDHC whether you're a new member or a longtime supporter. Email Randy DiRosa to schedule a session: rdirosa428@gmail.com and 312-213-6064.

Greeting visitors more your style?

The SDHC History Museum reopened last weekend in time for the unofficial start of summer: Memorial Day Weekend. For the month of June we will open the Museum from Friday through Sunday with plans to expand days of
operation pending volunteer availability. We are in need of museum docents to open and close the museum as well as greeting visitors.

No previous experience is required! Shifts are available from noon to 2 PM and 2 PM until 4 PM. Please contact volunteer coordinator Bill Hess at wwh71@comcast.net for more information and to sign up for a shift!

Historic Saugatuck Demerest Fishing Shanty Dedicated in May

The Saugatuck-Douglas History Center celebrated the opening of its permanent exhibit on commercial fishing in a restored waterfront fishing shanty on May 26.

The dedication and ribbon cutting event was attended by nearly 100 History Center representatives, donors, and members as well as descendants of area commercial fishing families. (Photo, left) Included among those families were the children of Marvin “Demmy” Demerest, David Demerest and Marilyn Hebert (center) descendants of the last commercial fisherman to own the shanty. Demmy passed away in April of 2020. Also shown are Director Eric Gollanek (left) and Lauren Stanton and John Sharar
Rentals and key partners in the restoration project.

According to the Executive Director, Eric Gollannek, the event commemorated the realization of a year-long project to save one of the last commercial fishing shanties in Saugatuck and repurpose it to tell the story of the rise and fall of commercial fishing in Saugatuck-Douglas. “Today we come together to dedicate the Historic Demerest Fishing Shanty. It’s survival and preservation stands as a tribute to the countless men and women and families who gave life to Saugatuck’s working waterfront and risked their lives every day,” said Gollannek.

(Left) Some of the Saugatuck fishing families gathered at the May dedication.

Under a partnership brokered by the History Center, Retro Boat Rentals and the Harrington family--owners of the boat rental site--restored the shanty and placed it on the site adjacent to the existing Old Boat House at 730 Water Street. The History Center then developed and installed an exhibit of interpretive story panels, photographs, fishing artifacts, and a video montage. The exhibit materials are placed inside and around the exterior of the shanty, now called Saugatuck’s Historic Demerest Shanty. Inside the shanty, the exhibit will share space with a fresh and smoked fish market to be run by Fish Lads Saugatuck. Exterior story panels will be open for public viewing 24/7, while the interior exhibit will be accessible from 10 am to 8 pm starting in early June.

The story of commercial fishing in Saugatuck-Douglas interpreted at the Shanty extended over 100 years. From the 1860s through the 1960s and into the early 1970s, commercial fishing operators employed hundreds of people and produced tons of fish for local and regional markets. This came to an end when invasive species, pollution, overfishing, and state regulations favoring recreational fishing all took their toll here and throughout the Great Lakes.

Where to learn more: The story is told by the Demerest Shanty exhibit, and in more detail in a book published by the History Center to coincide with the exhibit. The book, *Bounty & Bust: Commercial Fishing in Saugatuck-Douglas, 1860-1970*, is available for purchase at the Retro Boat Rentals boathouse as well as at the History Center’s two locations at 735 Park Street in Saugatuck and 130 Center Street in Douglas. You may also order it direct from Amazon publishing here.

You can follow along on Facebook for regular updates on the history of the waterfront and fishing on Lake Michigan at our page: https://www.facebook.com/SaugatuckShanty

Thank you Team Shanty!

It was around this time one year ago that SDHC members Julie Bizzis, Vic Bella, and John Kerr had a wild idea
to save a waterlogged fishing shanty in Saugatuck.

By the Fourth of July, this idea had inspired them to take action. Organized through the SDHC, this team received support from additional members Robin Bauer, Sally Winthers, and Randy DiRosa as well as the SDHC board.

Fast forward to May of 2021 and this team had not only ‘saved the shanty’ but found it a new waterfront home, researched and designed an exhibit, raised funding for the whole project, written and published a book on the history of commercial fishing, installed the exhibits, and dedicated the shanty. (All during the Coronavirus pandemic, mind you!)

Looking out from behind the scenes, I am so proud of this team and every member was indispensable in what we achieved. That means you Sally Winthers, Randy DiRosa, Vic Bella, Julie Bizzis, and yes Erik Kirchert (see photo above!) When you see these everyday folks around town, give them a fist bump, a round of applause, or a thank you for tireless dedication and excellence delivered every day months on end. Go Team Shanty! -- Eric Gollanek

Family History Group Updates

Welcome from John Mayer and Judi Thomas, co-leaders of the SDHC's Family History Group.

Thank you to Jack Sheridan and Chris Yoder for their dedication to this group over many years. Judi and John will continue their vision for the Family History Group.

This is a reminder that our Family History Group meeting date has changed for the year of 2021. We will meet on the third Tuesday of each month at 3:30pm.

Stay tuned for updates on virtual and in-person meeting options coming soon. An email will be sent to the members of the group 5 days prior to the meeting with details.

Contact us for more information here:
SDHS Family History
Box 617
Douglas, 49406,

sdhsfamilyhistory@gmail.com
269.857.5751

Chris Yoder remembers local links landmark "Point Barron" upon its 50th Anniversary this month
In his “Shorelines” column of Jun 10, 1971, “Star of Saugatuck” Captain and Commercial Record advertising salesman Don Huegan wrote of a new memorial on the approach to the 8th hole at Clearbrook.

“Good golfers .. try to place their tee shot on Number 8 on a promontory which is about halfway to the green. From there you have a good shot to the pin. But if you didn’t land there and stay there, your second shot is blind or from the hillside or out of the creek. John Barron was real good at it. Four out of five times his ball would land just right and he knew he was going to card a three on Number 8. He wouldn’t say much but that slow grin of his let you know he was mighty pleased... Well John’s gone now, but Charlie Feeley has seen to it that he will be remembered for long, long time. Right where John used to like to put his tee shot on Number 8, there is now a bronze plaque. Maybe someday a newcomer will look at it and wonder, but old timers and regulars will see it and smile and remember. In eloquent simplicity is inscribed “POINT BARRON” (Feeley was a club pro at the time).

Thanks to Clearbrook owner Candy Jeltema and Eric Campbell, Director of Golf, we have these photos which show that today, 50 years after that article, that memorial is still calling out to golfers.

Amateur golfer John Taylor Barron Jr. was four time club champion at Clearbrook Country Club, and club president in 1969. He also held championships at West Shore in Douglas. He was tragically killed in a multi-vehicle crash on M-89 near Peachbelt school Aug. 24, 1970.

Barron, co-owner of West Michigan Oil, was the grandson of an immigrant from Scotland, and on his mother’s side great-grandson of a salt-water sailor from Belfast who served in the Navy during the Civil War. Four generations of his family rest in the Douglas and Saugatuck Riverside cemeteries.

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Root Camp Returns for 2021

SDHC youth camp back for June
During the four days of Root Camp, June 21-24th, young campers will learn about the history of the forests and lumber industry at the Lakeshore, see historic tools used in woodworking, learn how artists create wooden sculpture, experience animal power demonstrations, and experience the fizzy science behind natural root beer soft drinks. Campers will also visit the Root Beer Barrel for a celebratory treat!

Registration remains open—click here!

When registering please note that space is limited in the AM session, with greater availability in the afternoon group at this time.

2021 Membership Campaign Continues

The Board of Directors approved a simplified membership structure at its March 17th board meeting. The new structure took effect for the 2021 membership year beginning in April.

- Individual $40
- Household $60
- Business Partner $250
- Lifetime Member $1,000

Business members will be included in the SDHC newsletter and offered special advertising opportunities and gift memberships.

Become a lifetime member! No annual renewals and special invites to Lifetime member only events!

Click here to renew or make a donation with PayPal today!

Gardens in Bloom

Scottie Jacobs of Specialty Gardens and his colleague Eric after volunteering their time and flowers at the History Museum-Pump House garden. As a member of the garden committee, Scottie along with John Migas and a couple volunteers helped bring the garden back to life just in time for the Memorial Day reopening.

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 non-profit 501(c)3 history organization with nearly 700 members residing in nearby communities and across the country.

Members are the lifeblood our volunteer organization.

To renew or join as a member, visit our website for more information.

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
Archives direct phone: 269-857-7901

The SDHC is supported with a grant from Michigan Humanities and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act economic stabilization plan.

The SDHC also receives operational support from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs (MCACA) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).
Your History Center 2021 Summer Programming

All summer
*Then and Now* exhibit, a juxtaposition of historic and contemporary photographs at the Saugatuck-Douglas History Museum at Mount Baldhead opens for the season. Friday through Sunday, noon to 4:00 p.m. 735 Park Street, Saugatuck.

June 5, morning
*S-D Garden Club plant sale* at the History Center’s Old School House, 130 W. Center Street, Douglas.

POSTPONED June 8, 7pm – NEW DATE TBA SOON!
*Shanty open house* for all SDHC members here at Saugatuck’s Historic Demerest Shanty. 730 Water Street, Saugatuck.

June 15, evening, details TBA!
Special program on upcoming *Century of Progress* exhibit on area LBGTQ history. Hosted by the Tri-Cities History Museum in Grand Haven. Virtual.

July 1
Opening of the *Art of the People: Contemporary Anishinaabe Artists* exhibit. History Center’s Old School House galleries, 130 W. Center Street, Douglas.

July 6, 11am Tuesday Talk
*Voyageurs and the Fur Trade* with Joy Funk of the Outdoor Discovery Center. History Center’s Old School House, 130 W. Center Street, Douglas.
July 13, 11am Tuesday Talk
*Great Lakes Fisheries Heritage* with Brandon Schroeder of the MSU Sea Grant Program. Virtual.

July 14, 7 pm, SDHC Monthly Member Meeting: *Mapping the Gay Guides* digital history project with Eric Gonzaba, CMU Fullerton. Virtual.

July 20, 11am Tuesday Talk
*Michigan State Parks at 100 Years* with Chris Byron, independent historian. Location TBA.

July 27, 11am Tuesday Talk

August 3 11am Tuesday Talk
Tuesday Talk: Native American History and Culture, host and location TBA.

August 10, 11am Tuesday Talk
The Architecture and Material Culture of Great Lakes Fishtowns, with Michael Chiarrappa, Quinnipiac University. Location TBA.

August 11, 7 PM, Monthly member meeting: New Perspectives on Early History of Michigan and Saugatuck/Douglas, by Anna-Lisa Cox, independent historian. Location TBA.

August 14, 11 am to 4 pm
Creative Spark Native American program, outdoors at the History Center’s Old School House Back in Time Gardens, 130 W. Center Street, Douglas.

August 17, 11am Tuesday Talk

August 24, 11am Tuesday Talk
Tuesday Talk: Why the Great Lakes are so Great, Great Lakes history by Ashley Demming of the Michigan Maritime Museum. Virtual.
August 31, 11am Tuesday Talk
Tuesday Talk: John Polka. Art history by Ken Kutzel, art curator for the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center. History Center’s Old School House, 130 W. Center Street, Douglas.

September 4
Opening of the Century of Progress exhibit, 100 years of GLBTQ history. David Cisco, artist exhibit in the upstairs gallery. History Center’s Old School House, 130 W. Center Street, Douglas.