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**HISTORICAL SOCIETY EXTENDS MUSEUM EXHIBIT  
EXAMINING AREA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH WATER**

MAY 20, 2016 -- This year's exhibition at the Saugatuck-Douglas History Museum, opening for the season on Memorial Day weekend, Saturday, May 28, Noon to 4 p.m., revisits multiple stories of how the Kalamazoo River and Lake Michigan have shaped and reshaped our area's way of living, working, relaxing and thinking since the mid-1800s, enhanced with new highlights.

The Museum occupies the historic Saugatuck Pump House at 735 Park Street, in a scenic garden setting along the west shore of the Kalamazoo River at Mt. Baldhead Park, a short walk north from the Saugatuck Chain Ferry's west-bank landing. Open daily through Labor Day, Noon to 4 p.m. -- then with same hours every Saturday and Sunday through the last Sunday in October -- its admission and nearby parking are free.

This year's added features include a special exhibit about the Pump House -- originally Saugatuck's first municipal water pumping station -- commemorating its recent placement on both the National and State Registers of Historic Places. The display includes a slide show that recalls the process of building the water system, and the near-destruction and subsequent restoration of the building with an adjacent garden.

A new Big Pavilion display shows a rarely seen 1909 aerial view of "America's second-largest dance hall" during its construction and a scale-model version of that famous building in an early stage, by local model-builder Arnie Schafer. Also new is the "Red Letter Photo Challenge", a photo-identification game inviting visitors to match red-letter-marked exhibit images with a sheet of site or event descriptions.

The main exhibit, "*Water...A River, A Lake, A Place Called Saugatuck-Douglas*", engages visitors' imaginations to accompany five travelers, each at different points in time, sharing the experience, discovery and sometimes danger of their adventures along our waterways. Their trips unfold in maps, pictures, narratives and artifacts, plus "side stories" that add interesting cultural perspectives, all set before a vast composite mural of more than 200 historical archive photos that help visualize those earlier times.

In Trip #1, the viewer assumes the role of reporter for an eastern newspaper traveling downriver by dugout canoe in the mid-1800s with Ottawa trader "Flying Cloud Woman", seeking the village of Singapore and its fabled "Astor Hotel". The "Astor" turns out to be a humorously named simple boarding house for arriving settlers instead of the imagined grandeur conjured up by naming it after wealthy fur-trading magnate John Jacob Astor.

Trip #2 casts the viewer as a mid-1800s logger hired by Saugatuck timber entrepreneur Frank Geer in winter to cut and haul logs over the frozen river to a riverbank "rollway". With the spring thaw comes the dangerous job of rafting a log flotilla downriver, thwarting log "rustlers", and distributing the timber among five lumber mills in Douglas, Saugatuck and Singapore...a process that cost the life of one of Saugatuck's prominent early citizens.

With Trip #3, the viewer becomes a crew member on the steamer *McVea*, one of more than 200 ships built in Saugatuck, making an overnight “fruit run” taking peaches and passengers to Chicago in 1893. The *McVea* stops at Pier Cove and picks up a musician and a famous architect who become interesting travel companions.

Trip #4 brings the viewer to Saugatuck from Chicago by tourist excursion ship in 1919 as a teenage girl accompanying school children to summer camp as one of their camp counselors. Among the campers she encounters a youngster destined to become one of America’s most famous aviators.

On Trip #5, the viewer is a photographer riding along on a local commercial fishing run pursuing sturgeon and whitefish, reflecting on that industry’s 1890-1950 boom and bust. The trip highlights a key Great Lakes innovation of that era, the enclosed “fishing tug” designed to handle rough weather and allow pre-processing the catch for faster, fresher delivery upon returning to port.

After the final trip station, visitors will find a “sticky-note feedback wall” presenting a series of questions related to contemporary concerns about water, and inviting expression of personal viewpoints or suggestions by posting sticky-note responses. Nearby, three display stations feature a review of water quality comparing lake, river, rain and tap water; a collection of rare antique fishing lures; and for visitors of all ages, a fish-identification game.

Floating above it all is a fanciful “school” of fish, created by local artists Ted Reyda and Sally Winthers, representing the species currently inhabiting our area’s lakes and rivers.



SDHS volunteer Sally Winthers sticks red letters onto a large photo montage to prepare the “Red Letter Photo Challenge” game for the 2016 History Museum exhibition set to open May 28.

--- Historical Book, Interactive Map Featured ---

Continuing the Society's tradition of offering locally authored books created to accompany exhibits past and present, the Museum's south gallery gift shop highlights the popular Big Pavilion book by Saugatuck author-historian Kit Lane, telling the story of the town's grandest attraction from its construction to the day it burned down in May of 1960.

A new attraction there for young visitors is a "Catch-And-Release" game where children use bamboo poles to fish for stuffed cloth models of most species featured in the main exhibit's overhead "school". For those keeping score, each pillow-like model is labeled to confirm what type of fish was caught.

In addition, the shop offers new designs of T-Shirts for women, men and kids, celebrating completion of the famously difficult Mt. Baldhead climb.

The south gallery also features the Society's popular "SuperMap" -- a 6-foot high, 12-foot wide illustrated color wall map of the Saugatuck-Douglas area with an interactive computer display to provide a virtual tour through these historic villages, highlighting significant people, places and events of both past and present. Map artwork, created by Holland artist-cartographer Mark Cook based on Historical Society research, recalls the entertaining illustration/poster maps of the 1940-50 era, combining street layouts with stylized sketches and notes.

The map offers Museum visitors an engaging way to soak up the story of the Saugatuck-Douglas area. As many as 70 map-highlighted references are keyed by number to let visitors select and learn about sites of interest by calling up information, narratives and images using a video/interactive touch-screen terminal near the map. The screen also offers topical "interactive programs" such as *History of Hotels/Boarding Houses*; *History of Boatbuilding and Boat Builders*; *Buildings and Architecture*; *Artists and Painting*; *Local Biographies*; *History of Saugatuck-Douglas Schools*; *13 Tales of the Villages* and *A Video History of Saugatuck and Douglas*.

In addition, the terminal allows public access to the Historical Society's digitized archives of historical photos, pages of *The Commercial Record* dating back to 1868, the Saugatuck-Douglas Building Survey and more.

Founded in 1992 by the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society, the History Museum is open daily Noon to 4pm from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day, then Saturdays/Sundays through September and October. Admission and parking are free. Tel: (269) 857-7900. See more information about the Historical Society, its History Museum in Saugatuck and its Old School House History Center in Douglas, at [www.sdhistoricalociety.org](http://www.sdhistoricalociety.org).