

# SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORY CENTER

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SD HISTORY CENTER & SD DISTRICT LIBRARY  
WIN CMU GRANT COMPETITION, THANK COMMUNITY

FEB. 5, 2018 -- The Saugatuck-Douglas History Center and Saugatuck-Douglas District Library have won the 2018 Michigan Digital Newspaper Grant offered by the Clarke Historical Library at Central Michigan University. Their project, to digitize The Commercial Record newspaper from 1959-1969 will begin as soon as the microfilms can be shipped to Clarke's facility in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. The project was identified by the moniker #DigSaugatuck, which is the hashtag used for community voting by postcard mailings and twitter messages during two specific weeks in January.

Wide community support and the "Chicago Style" of voting contributed to #DigSaugatuck's success, as Saugatuck's application amassed a total of 38,595 votes from the Saugatuck, Douglas and Holland area, plus "snowbird" voting from residents wintering out of town. This included 13,665 Tweets via Twitter and 2,493 mailed postcards, which were each worth 10 votes apiece. The next closest of Michigan's four other finalist communities – Utica – brought a total of 24,011 votes for their project.

"We are so pleased to see our regional community contribute so strongly to help us preserve and share this local history," said Saugatuck-Douglas History Center executive director Nathan Nietering. "Our partners at the Library really helped get the public involved. Participation extended far beyond our institutions' own walls."

The History Center worked directly with three classes at Saugatuck Middle-High School to teach kids about the history of The Commercial Record and help them research and create their own postcard art to mail in. As the postcard artwork had to depict a Michigan scene or theme, many students took the chance to look up famous sites beyond Saugatuck's own borders, choosing to sketch locations like the Mackinac Bridge, Pictured Rocks or state symbols such as lighthouses, rainbow trout, and apple blossoms. As expected, there were plenty of Oval Beach, Chain Ferry and Mt. Baldhead images as well.

"The students really enjoyed looking through some actual copies of the Commercial Record from the early 1960s and talking about how the news was reported at that time," Nietering continued. "They also clearly understood that old newsprint becomes very fragile after 50+ years. Students quickly pointed out why having copies of the paper available on a searchable platform online will be beneficial."



The Library set up a Do-It-Yourself postcard station in the children's room where both youngsters and adults were seen sketching out their own designs for inclusion in the voting process. Others could simply pick up pre-made postcards of local Saugatuck-Douglas landmarks, inscribe "DigSaugatuck" as appropriate and mail them in.

The Douglas post office, which ordered an additional 1,500 postcard stamps in addition to whatever they already had on-hand, was down to just 37 such stamps remaining as the voting week drew near its end. Fifteen SDHC members currently out-of-state requested local Michigan postcards so they could participate.

All of the individually crafted postcards will be added to the permanent collection of the Clarke Historical Library. In the case of duplicate manufactured postcard images, the Clarke will keep one of each new design in their collection, thus adding to the visual legacy of Michigan's history and documenting this community-participation election story for generations to come.

The microfilmed Commercial Record issues designated for the contest, about 9,000 pages worth, will be digitized in high-resolution at the Clarke facility and placed online. The latest technology will enable each page to be indexed and word-searchable, allowing for efficient searches over the internet from anywhere in the world as part of the Clarke's Michigan Digital Newspaper database. The database aims to preserve and share Michigan's history through its collection of newspapers from across the state.

The CMU/Clarke grant was initiated with a 2012 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities' National Digital Newspaper Program to digitize culturally significant Michigan newspapers.

"Winning this competition is especially significant now," Nietering continues, "as this year marks Saugatuck's 150th anniversary as well as the second year of our two-year Museum exhibit titled Cold War / Hot Towns -- opening Memorial Day weekend -- which visually explores that same era's collision of fun and fear in our beach town setting. With the 1960 fire loss of Saugatuck's Big Pavilion dance hall, an earlier, simpler recreational era gave way to a turbulent decade marked by major music festivals, invasions of motorcycle gangs and partying college students, all mixed with cold-war tensions and documented in weekly newspaper coverage. Online access to contemporaneous local reporting will make these stories readily available to History Center and Library visitors as well as serious researchers everywhere."

For more information about the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center, its Museum in Saugatuck and Old School House in Douglas, volunteer opportunities or activities planned for 2018, visit [www.MySDHistory.org](http://www.MySDHistory.org).



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