New Exhibit Opens at the Old School House

On Friday, August 26, Lifetime Members and Exhibit Sponsors were treated to a special preview of the new exhibition at the Old School House, focusing on the past 150 years of OSH history. The exhibition opened to the public the next day marking the first time in at least a few years that the Old School House is open to the public with new exhibits to see.

Titled "The Happy Story Of A Douglas Landmark", the exhibition will remain open Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 11am-3pm through October. Admission is free, with donations gratefully accepted to help support the Society's volunteer-based programs and exhibits.

Sorry for the Delay!
It's been a busy summer! Enjoy this robust copy of the August newsletter!

Hook to Table Fish Feast!
A delicious twist on farm-to-table dining hosted by Dave and Liz Engel
Sunday, September 25 from 3:30-6:30pm

Tickets now available! Just REPLY to this email and we will be in touch.
Savor the flavor of Lake Michigan's finest fish, caught and prepared by renowned local fisherman Dave Engel, and served with fish-fry traditional sides.

Engel is famous throughout the Midwest for his competitive fishing expertise. Additionally, he conducts guided tours during the summer months out...
The original school, which opened just after the American Civil War in 1866, marked a revolution in progressive public education in Michigan. The largest and most expensive building in Douglas at that time, it was called a "union" (or "consolidated") school because it brought the area's small, one-room schoolhouses together, and taught children by grade level, in a "modern" school environment, under specially trained teachers. It also offered an optional "high school" (grades 10-12) which allowed graduates to attend Michigan's public universities without entrance examinations. Although not the first union school in the state, it brought a bold new concept here and was soon followed by union schools in Saugatuck and Ganges.

Today, Douglas has the only remaining 19th century union school in Michigan, with its architecture and construction faithfully preserved as the Old School House. Its historical significance has won official recognition through listing on the State and National Register of Historic Places.

This special School House exhibition was written, designed and installed by the Society's volunteer design team comprising Judy Hillman, Sally Winthers, Vic Bella, Kayla Britten, Kay Reckley and Steve Teich, with research completed by historians Jim Schmiechen, Marsha Kontio and Jack Sheridan. It also introduces new moveable exhibition display panels designed by the team and constructed by local building firm 42North Custom Homes of Holland and Saugatuck.

The octagonal clubhouse features wonderful space for dining and socializing, including a welcoming bar and fireplace, walls of windows, a tall illuminated cupola and an expansive outdoor patio overlooking Lake Kalamazoo. Come join us to raise your glass and bid farewell to summer! Tickets are $50 per person.

See the 2016 Dine Around schedule HERE.

Mark Your Calendar: Upcoming Programs

TUESDAY TALKS
Beginning at 11AM at the Old School House, 130 Center Street, Douglas

August 30 - Invasive Species in West Michigan
Sponsored by Sunny Hill and Maury Decoster

A NOTE ABOUT TUESDAY TALKS
New for 2016: Attendance is free at all Tuesday Talk programs for current SDHS members. Non-members and guests of members are encouraged to attend by making a suggested donation of $5. New memberships may be obtained with dues payment at any Tuesday Talk. Seating is first-come, first-served.
Curator Jim Schmiechen takes sponsors and Lifetime members behind the scenes as he describes what he learned in researching the exhibit.

"The Happy Story of a Douglas Landmark" exhibit joins other new History Center exhibits featuring local area maps and the history of the Chain Ferry and Ferry Store as represented in paintings and photographs. Today, with the former schoolyard now blossomed into more than a half-acre garden and display area, including the home of America's oldest official lifesaving "surf boat" housed within a specially sheltered shipwreck exhibit, the Old School House History Center is one of the area's top tourist attractions. Thanks to John Peters for the photos.

MONTHLY MEETINGS
All upcoming Monthly Meeting presentations begin at 7:00PM at the specific sites indicated below.

September 14: Field Trip to the Douglas Root Beer Barrel for a project update, corner of Center and Ferry Streets
Sponsored by Harbor Duck Adventures

October 12: Founding of the SDHS: Looking back at 30 Years of Growing and Learning
Sponsored by Howard and Paula Schultz

Thank you to those who have sponsored one of our programs! Multiple sponsors for each program are welcome and encouraged. If you would like to sponsor one of the 2016 programs, please REPLY to this email and we'll be in touch. Sponsorships are $150 and help ensure we can continue our tradition of varied and interesting programming throughout the year!

We need Old School House hosts! We're looking for a couple folks to welcome visitors and answer questions. Training and instructions will be provided! Contact Steve Hutchins if you are interested to learn more about volunteering at the Old School House: admin@sdhistoricalsociety.org.

Your cap collection is incomplete without the new
Welcome New Members!

We would like to welcome the following members who have joined the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society since the last newsletter!

- Tom and Liana Allison - Arlington Hts., IL and Douglas, MI
- Nancy Crean - Orland Park, IL
- Christine Currie - Fennville, MI
- Dr. Timothy Farmer - Muskegon, MI
- Donna Fishman - West Bloomfield, MI
- Marilyn Justus - Saugatuck, MI
- Leslie Pollack - Douglas, MI
- Barbara Steen - Douglas, MI
- Gail Wiswedel - Saugatuck, MI

Back in the March 2016 edition of e-News, we featured an article and photos about the partnership between the Friends of the Barrel and Saugatuck Public Schools and the ongoing progress of the Barrel project. Last month we provided another update. Now we fill in some more of the story!

Going up: The Douglas Root Beer Barrel Rises!

Back in the March 2016 edition of e-News, we featured an article and photos about the partnership between the Friends of the Barrel and Saugatuck Public Schools and the ongoing progress of the Barrel project. Last month we provided another update. Now we fill in some more of the story!

After the Barrel base steel was fabricated and assembled, it was time for a coat of paint. A nice spring day finds SPS students at work on several segments of the circular base frame. (click for full size)

Where Did Our Stamina Go?

By Chris Yoder

When the first local CROP Walk was held on Sunday, October 23, 1977, one hundred and fourteen intrepid individuals set out to raise funds to help feed people in 50 countries. Rev. Tom Mason coordinated the event, heading out from the Saugatuck Christian Reformed Church and proceeding along rural roads nearly to New Richmond, and then back to the church. Walkers, aged from six or seven up to their seventies, signed up supporters who pledged so much per mile that they walked. Almost $3,800 was raised. Reports were that 96 of 114 walkers completed the full 10 miles (including some 60 year olds!), and the remainder ranged from two to nine miles in distance.

Present day walkers are only asked to travel 5 kilometers (3.1 miles). What would Charles Darwin have said about that? This year, the local area CROP HUNGER WALK will be held Sunday, September 25 at 2pm. Start and finish is at the Community Church in Douglas, visit https://www.crophungerwalk.org/douglasmi/ or call

Mt. Baldhead cap!

This cool, khaki cap is 100% cotton, bio-washed for softness, and embroidered with a custom Mt. Baldhead logo. It's the perfect headgear for a day in the woods, on the water, or on the town. This cap is only available at the museum and makes a great Saugatuck gift or souvenir.

Don't forget, current SDHS members get a 10% discount on museum store purchases!
Days later, the base pieces were transported to the circular concrete pad at Center and Ferry Streets for test fitting.

Earlier in the summer, three vertical steel posts and the circular roof piece were installed. In early August, a professional contractor joined the work to get the redwood staves positioned correctly and safely re-installed. Staves have been laid out in the order they are to be installed in the foreground.

This is the eleventh month of the History by Camera feature - the BILL SIMMONS SCRAPBOOK. Bill was a semi-professional photographer, originally from Chicago, who moved to Saugatuck about 1940. He had a couple of stints as the editor of the Commercial Record. Over the next twenty two years he took numerous black and white photos.

He died in 1962 and these photos went unnoticed until 1998 when some 3,000 negatives were given to the SDHS. What a record of the middle of the twentieth century!

The photos this month were taken around 1950 - give or take a few years. Life was simpler then and the photos bring a sense of that to me. Bill did a great job of capturing the scene. This is what I remember - hard to believe it was sixty six years ago!

Thanks to the Commercial Record for the use of the old photo from their paper.

By Jack Sheridan

By Jack Sheridan

HISTORY by CAMERA

The Bill Simmons Scrapbook

Bill Simmons

the church office at 269-857-1492 to arrange a registration packet.
Meanwhile, during the second week of August, the SCA was holding a day camp for children ages 8-12 on the topic of "novelty architecture," giving a building an unusual and often recognizable shape to help advertise its product or service...of course inspired by our own root beer barrel! The kids came to the Old School House for a morning to talk about how shapes are used in architecture - not just in exterior design, but in making sure the building is strong enough to stand up!

After the Old School House, the campers went over to the Barrel site, where they were able to sketch its internal design while the staves were actually being assembled around it.

I appreciate your feedback on my captions, and the selection of these images. Please point out my good choices and my goofs by sending an email to jack.sheridan@gmail.com. I'd love to hear some feedback on my choices - how about some discussion? **Subject suggestions encouraged!**

Any reader comments will not be published without reader permission.

**Out with the old, in with the...artifact?!!**
Vic Bella explains how tongue-and-groove construction works and lets the kids get some hands-on experience with the staves themselves.

By mid-August, the staves are mostly complete, and the glossy redwood barrel is a new landmark on the corner of Center and Ferry! Additional work will be required to weatherize the building before the coming winter.

September’s SDHS Monthly Meeting is a field trip to the Barrel site for a discussion of its history and details of the restoration and reconstruction process - please join us at the Barrel at 7pm on Wednesday, September 14! Thanks to Vince Heyser, Vic Bella, Mary Voss and the SCA for providing these photos!

The History Museum’s venerable donation jar, a large glass fishbowl, recently had an experience with gravity which lasted just long enough to render it useless. Not to fear! A substitute was immediately procured from the Society’s own collections - this vintage Village of Saugatuck ballot box. New interpretive signage is now being planned for this piece of living history, to educate generous museum visitors! Stop by the museum yourself to check it out!

What you missed

We’ve continued our trend of beautiful weather for outdoor SDHS events! In July, Janice and Tom Krakowski hosted a Dine Around titled "Hooray for Clay!" at their home and studio in Douglas:

Garden Happenings

"Someone's sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago."

~Warren Buffet
During these "Dog Days of Summer" it is nice to have large, old, shade trees to sit under. Our beautiful maples at the School House provide some much needed shade, but are also in need of a little trimming. Hopefully we can get them cleaned up this fall. Because of the newly constructed condos, the garden committee decided to rearrange our "Back-In-Time" pathway a little, relocating our children's garden to the location of the Mt Baldhead overlook. With the rearranging, our Camp Gray sign finally has a home.....thanks to John Migas and Dick Bont. These two masterminds put in a lot of blood, sweat, and tears into repairing and installing our sign. It acts as an amazing transition into the new Children's Garden space. But when one project is finished, others are screaming for help. The Mt. Baldhead Station, our hornbooks and the glass signs all need to be rearranged, but first we need to devise a plan. We can do that during the cold days of winter. One thing the committee has figured out, is that the former Children's area will hold our sensory garden and our demonstration bee hive, while providing open space for future events.

Thanks to Maryrita and John Peters for their landscape design help. We will use some of their ideas to address the Old School House lawn in front, next to the garage. We really appreciate all the help we can get! We are still hoping for some cool old garden/farming stuff from all of you to start working on the Rhododendron Station. If you have anything you may want to share, please contact Ruth Johnson at ruthannj@frontier.com. Please continue to send visitors toward the museum and its garden......it truly is so beautiful.

We all saw a need for young people to learn and get involved in the Historical Society, and thus Root Camp was born! Now a committee is being formed to create more programs for young people. If you are interested in volunteering or just brainstorming, please contact Christina Lewis at 76clewis@gmail.com.

This was followed by a beautiful but warm night in early August for the annual membership picnic at the Old School House, and then the August Dine Around "Defeating the Demolition Teams!" later in the month. Guests to this strolling Dine Around event were treated to beautiful architecture and stunning home interiors thanks to hosts Mark Randall, Chris Saldivar, Mark Neidlinger, Steve Merouse, and John Regas at Douglas' Gerber House, Wade Cottage and House of Seven Gables.
The Camp Gray sign, near the entrance to the old Presbyterian Camp, before it was removed and given to SDHS. (click each to enlarge)

John Migas stands still long enough for this photo, shortly after the two arch halves were placed on their new foundations in the Old School House Garden.

With support timber and new anchors in place, this artifact is now on display, a perfect entry to the children's garden area. A little more landscaping work will complete the project!

Spirited conversation at the registration table.

The beautiful view across the lawn of the Gerber House.

Host John Regas shares a moment with guests.
Until next month,

The Garden and Root Camp Committees

Thank you, Brandon and Kayla!

It is amazing how quick the summer flies by. Back in May, we announced the arrival of college interns Brandon Merritt and Kayla Britten from Central Michigan University to help us for the summer. Thanks to the generosity of Lifetime members Bill Underdown and Jim Schmiechen, they were both able to stay at the Retreat House in Douglas, just a block from the Old School House. Now they are both heading back to class for their senior years. Here are their reflections on the summer and their experiences with SDHS:

"My internship was a creative experience that allowed for other outlets to help build my quiver of skills. I was able to work on my weakest strength, writing, by researching and writing the Tuesday Talk press releases every week throughout the summer. We were shown how an exhibit comes together and what it's like to gather information for one.

The most fun was meeting all the wonderful people that have such an enormous amount of experience. I learned a great deal from so many people.

Best, Brandon"

"As an intern this summer with the SDHS I had the opportunity to work closely with several individuals working on events at the Old School House, including Root Camp, and upcoming weddings. I have also researched and developed an event guide for the Old School House in hopes of bringing in more events to this space. Throughout the summer, I helped with the upstairs art gallery exhibit and was able to gain experience in archiving with Ken Kutzel. Recently I have been working with Jim Schmiechen creating a presentation to be displayed in the Old School House exhibit as well as a presentation for an August Tuesday Talk.

I will be returning to the SDHS full time in January for my required 30-week capstone internship, so over the past couple of weeks, I have been meeting with the 150th Celebration of the Old School House committee to get a head start on the planning of events for next summer's celebration and to get real

New Local Obituaries Posted To On-line Research Center

By Chris Yoder

Around 1,200 obituaries or death notices have been cropped from the most recent batch of digital Commercial Records now available on-line. These have been added to the obituary file of the SDHS On-line Research Center, and are presented in both date and name sequence. This newest batch of Commercial Records covers the full years from 1971 to 1977, and continues an invaluable resource of local history, stretching back to the first year of the paper in 1868.

Access the SDHS On-Line Research Center here: http://sdhistoricalsociety.net/research/index.php

By Jack Sheridan

Interested in learning more about your family history? Many times, folks who "aren't into history" find the research and learning in tracing their ancestors back to be a truly exciting experience - especially with more resources than ever available at one's fingertips. Join the group and get some answers!

The Family History Group can help you in your quest, whether you are new to family history research or just want to learn more about sources and records. Got questions on how to get going? That is what we are for! Call or email us or take note of these upcoming regular meetings of the SDHS Family History Group:
Thursday September 8
Thursday September 22
Thursday October 6

These upcoming meetings are in the Old School House in the downstairs tech room, and begin at 3:30pm. Note that your family history does not have
world experience in my chosen field before I graduate from CMU next August. Working for the SDHS this summer has helped me get a better understanding of how a non-profit operates and has prepared me for my upcoming 30 week internship.

-Kayla"

SDHS can't thank Brandon and Kayla enough for their hard work and enthusiasm this summer! We look forward to continuing the intern program in the future!

Questions/comments/advice/needs - contact
Jack Sheridan: 269 857-7144  
jack.sheridan@gmail.com
Chris Yoder: 269 857-4327  
cyoder@tds.net

Caption This!

From the archive: Sometimes we know a lot about an image in our collection, other times we know almost nothing. This photo depicts three ladies at what is simply labeled "Gordon Spencer store, Peach Belt." The sign on the clapboard building says "American Express Fruit Train leaves sharp at 6PM." The barren surroundings make it almost look more like the wild west than agricultural west Michigan! Who are these women, and what are they doing? It's what "Caption This" is all about! Click image for full size.

ABOUT THE SOCIETY

Members are the lifeblood of the Society. To join as a member, select from the following categories:

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Premium $300
Corporate $500
Lifetime $1,000
Senior (65+) $30
Senior Household $45

Send check payable to the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society to: PO Box 617, Douglas, Michigan 49406. Click HERE for a Society Membership Application.

Send in your dues payment today or click HERE to renew online.

Send items for the newsletter to: Nathan Nietering, PO Box 617, Douglas, MI 49406 or email info@sdhistoricalsociety.org

SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY FACILITIES

The Saugatuck-Douglas History Museum is located at 735 Park Street in Saugatuck, in the historic Saugatuck Pump House building. The History Museum and WATER, our feature exhibit, is open daily from 12noon-4pm through Labor Day, then Saturdays and Sundays through the end of October. Always free to the public but donations gratefully accepted.

Click HERE to learn more about the Museum and recent past exhibits.

The Old School House History Center and Francis Surfboat Exhibit is located at 130 Center Street in Douglas. For group tours of the School House, please contact Nathan Nietering at 269-857-5751 or by email at director@sdhistoricalsociety.org. The Surfboat Exhibit and Back-in-Time Garden are open to the public daily throughout the summer and autumn. The Old School House exhibits are open Thursday-Saturday, 11am-3pm. Admission is free to the public but donations gratefully accepted.

The Society's Technology Center is located in the lower level of the Old School House History Center at 130 Center Street in downtown Douglas. Open by appointment.

The Society's Archives office is located in the lower level of the Old School House and is open for research on Monday afternoons 1-4pm. Use the back stairway for easy access.
E-mail the archives directly: archives@sdhistoricalsociety.org

Society Main Phone: 269-857-5751
Museum Phone: 269-857-7900
Tech Center/Archives Phone: 269-857-7901
www.sdhistoricalsociety.org

Follow us on Facebook! Click the logo below.

Again this year, the Society's Newsletter is being underwritten by a generous donation from the late Life Member, Frances Vorys.