Plan to join SDHC members and friends at the Old School House 150th Anniversary Celebration benefit gala on September 23. Invitations went out in early July and tickets are selling quickly.

You won't want to miss it!

**Celebrate 150 Years with us!**

This year the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center is celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the Douglas Old School House, opened to students in 1867 and listed on both the Michigan and National Registers of Historic Places.

The year-long sesquicentennial celebration will culminate in just over a month with our gala event on September 23. We invite members, friends, and all who are passionate about Saugatuck-Douglas and its history to join us.

The evening includes stations with delicious food provided by The Kirby, a full bar, and live musical entertainment amid the beautiful floral gardens on the Old School House property. We invite the public to join our members at the gala as we serve our mission to preserve local history and inspire learning in our community.

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**B&C Directory**

...In this edition, enjoy

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**Mark your Calendar!**

**TUESDAY TALKS**

Attendance is free at all Tuesday Talk programs for current SDHC members. Non-members and guests of members are encouraged to attend by making a suggested donation of $5. New
We are excited and pleased to thank Liz Engel and Century 21 Affiliated as the premier sponsor of this gala evening.

Invitations were mailed to members and friends in early July and tickets are selling quickly. Reservations may be made by calling 269-857-5751 or sending an email to director@sdhistoricalsociety.org. You may also print off a reply card here to mail in. A limited number of tickets are available. You won't want to miss this signature event in downtown Douglas!

Welcome New Members!

We would like to welcome the following new members who have joined the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center since the last newsletter!

- Ronald Clark, Fennville, MI
- Dorothy and Arthur Hofstetter, Saugatuck, MI
- Jackie Ladwein, Fennville, MI
- Phillip Morici and Joe Nieradka, Grosse Pointe, MI
- Julie Sowa, Saugatuck, MI and Poway, CA
- Jerry Walsh, Douglas, MI

New Exhibit Blasts Off

We would like to extend a special thank you to the Felt Mansion and their executive director Patty Meyer for the wonderful behind-the-scenes tour for our July Monthly Program/Field Trip. Our guests were able to

What You Missed

The History Center would like to extend a special thank you to the Felt Mansion and their executive director Patty Meyer for the wonderful behind-the-scenes tour for our July Monthly Program/Field Trip. Our guests were able to
This year's new Museum exhibit, *Cold War | Hot Towns*, has made quite a splash in its first two months this summer. Through the end of July, visitation is ahead 12.5% over last year (3,820 vs. 3,375), and, thanks to a new donation container with some more convincing signage, visitor donations are up 74% ($1,530 vs. $882). Visitation and donations are also up at the Old School House this year vs. last. We continue to be one of the only museum facilities open with regular hours in West Michigan which charges no admission fee - meeting our goal to make history and learning accessible to all!

A big THANK YOU to our museum hosts for welcoming these individuals to our facilities, answering a wide variety of questions and making our guests feel at home.

**Visit the Felt Mansion Carriage House**, presently undergoing renovation, to explore the adaptively-reused Carriage House which is presently undergoing renovation, learn the history of the historic Gibson Church which has been relocated to the property, and view wonderful Felt family home video footage showing Dorr and his family at the site in the 1920s. If you missed out, you can learn more about our historical neighbor just to the north at [http://www.feltmansion.org/](http://www.feltmansion.org/)

**Riots in Saugatuck?? Read all about it in this year’s Historical Chronicle newspaper, available for free at fine tourist newsstands in Saugatuck & Douglas!** >>>>>>

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**Roadside Parks on the Blue Star Highway**

*by Chris Yoder*

The July 18th Tuesday talk on the "West Michigan Pike" by John Geisler surprised many with photos of a historic roadside rest stop just one mile north of town which was part of a series of them up and down the "West Michigan Pike" (part of US-31, the "Dixie Highway").
The Michigan State Highway Department announced in the Aug. 27, 1937 Commercial Record that 21 roadside picnic tables had been placed along state highways in Allegan County during the summer. These were part of 1,500 then available throughout the state, and increase of 600 over the previous year. "The tables are located at convenient points along the trunk lines where outstanding views or a particularly shady spot are available. At many of these spots, stoves and wells or springs are also provided."

State Highway Commissioner Murray D. Van Wagoner went on to say "Counts taken at typical roadside picnic parks and letters we have received from tourists from all parts of the nation indicate that these services are deeply appreciated. Registrations also show that hundreds of Michigan motorists are using these picnic facilities as well as tourists from outside the state."

Five of these Allegan County rest stops announced in 1937 were on US-31:

- Our Saugatuck Township one - "1 mile north of Saugatuck, roadside park, 3 tables, well house, stove."
- One 6 miles north of Saugatuck, 1 table.
- One .5 miles south of the junction of M-89 and US-31, 1 table.
- One 5 miles north of Van Buren county line, 1 table.
- One 6 miles north of Van Buren line, 1 table.

*How many of these are still around?*

1936-1937 were important years in our area. The road to the Oval Beach had been opened, L.W. Lamb had finished the "new bridge" across the Kalamazoo, and Lyons Construction had a dredge and suction working to pump the island out of the river to create the raised roadbed on either side of the bridge. Reith-Riley had the contract to haul the sand and construct the new road from the bridge up to around where the interstate is today. This US-31 bypass replaced the main route which had gone right down town from the bridge end and out of town on Holland Street.

"Gold Star Mothers" had come into being after WWI, signifying that a son had been lost in the service. At the beginning of WWII a "Blue Star" came to represent a family that had a living child in service. In 1945 The National Council of State Garden Clubs, now known as National Garden Clubs, Inc., started a program to mark "Blue Star Memorial Highways" in honor of our service members. Our Allegan County stretch of US-31 is one of those designated a "Blue Star Highway".
The township rest stop, located just south of Spectators Restaurant on the east side of the road was sponsored by the "Junior Daisyfield Garden Club of Mason", Michigan (a small town in Ingham County south of Lansing).

It is referred to as the "Blue Star Memorial Park" and is now under the care of the Township Parks Commission. It is no longer dependent on a well, as a public water line runs through with a hydrant on site. The park was last upgraded in the 1990s and a new park sign was added in 2002. In April of this year, the members of Saugatuck Douglas Boy Scout Troop 29, led by David Ihle, used fifty 10 ft cedar rails, 26 double-hole posts, and a box of 3” screws to replace the wooden fence around the park as an act to honor our service men and women past and present. Township Manager Aaron Sheridan writes "The township paid for the materials and the Scouts provided the elbow grease."

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**Farewell to our intern Kayla**

*By Kayla Britten*

You may have noticed that the Old School House has been a busy place for the last couple of months. In June, the SDHC hosted the third graders from South Haven and the first graders from Douglas Elementary for school field trips. Root Camp held its fourth successful year with a full camp of kids and exciting camp days with new themes.

Thank you to all of those who attended the first Douglas Social at the Old School House, we were very pleased with the outcome and hope to host more socials on the grounds in the future! The Social was one of many events to help celebrate 150 year anniversary of the Old School House. We also hosted American Roots musician Chris Vallillo at the end of July who performed his "Roots in Rural Music" program giving audience members a taste of what lives were like in 1866-67 when the school house first opened. We are also hosting the 150th Celebration Gala and Family Fun Day in September.

The first week of August will be my last week with SDHC, as I complete my Events Management degree from Central Michigan University. It was been a wonderful experience working here and meeting with so many members and volunteers. Over the past 30 weeks as an intern I have learned so much that will allow me to excel in my field. While my internship may be over, I'm not quite gone for good. I look forward to seeing you at the 150th Gala and Family Fun Day in September!

[Editor's Note: Kayla has undertaken behind-the-scenes work on many events and programs at the History Center since the very beginning of this year, helping to demonstrate exactly what we may be capable of with expended programs and activities. We will miss her as an outstanding "get-it-done" resource and are certain she will do well in her future employment!]
**Book of the Month - Raising the Roof**

This summer we are featuring a different "book of the month" from our wide list of award-winning publications. The book of the month will be highlighted online, in this newsletter and in our Museum Shop at the History Museum. Each month's book can be purchased at the Museum Shop for an additional 10% off each month!

The August book is *Raising the Roof, the Revised Edition*, by Jim Schmiechen. Replete with stunning photographs and interesting architectural description, it is both a beautiful addition to a bookshelf or coffee table and also a useful research resource for delving into the history of local buildings.

Through August 31, buy your copy of *Raising the Roof* at the History Museum Shop and take 10% off the sticker price. SDHC members will get this discount on top of the 10% discount they already enjoy on all store merchandise (just one benefit of SDHC membership - show your membership card to get this discount!)

If you can't get to the History Museum this month, you can still get a copy of *Raising the Roof* (or any of our other wonderful books) sent directly to your door by purchasing online - all taxes and shipping by USPS Priority Mail included in your price! Visit the SDHC online bookstore to see the full selection and start shopping today!

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**Garden Happenings**

"Where flowers bloom so does hope." ~ Lady Bird Johnson

If Lady Bird is right, and I believe she is, hope is alive and well in our gardens. Take the time to enjoy the colors, textures and smells of the gardens as it changes every few weeks with new flowers and plants blooming everyday.

Pay attention to the beautiful garden along the picket fence at the east entrance to the Old School House, designed and installed by the Saugatuck/Douglas Garden Club. Many thanks to all of you who helped with this amazing addition and for growing this partnership. The landscape committee is discussing new ideas for ways to develop our two learning stations that were put on hold due to the construction of the neighboring condominiums. We are really excited to start brainstorming and get both projects started.

Now that Root Camp is completed for the summer the Root Camp Committee would like to thank...
everyone who helped with our wonderful camp! Thanks to Kayla Britten for her talk on the Big Pavilion, Deb McCarthy for teaching science, the Critter Barn for their farm animals, Nathan Nietering for talking about shipwrecks and to Jefferson Ballew and the Pokagon Tribe for teaching our campers about their native culture. Also, thank to our sponsors: the Holland Horticulture Club, Coral Gables and Gary Medler. Thanks to Ainsley Lowery, Adam and Natalie Martinson, Sydney Kierzek, Jillian and Thea Johnson and Chloe Cassidy for their patience and constant energy being junior camp counselors. Thanks to Kayla and Nathan for help in helping Root Camp run smoothly. Thanks to Ruth Johnson, Kim Martinson and Natalie Lowery for EVERYTHING! The committee is already looking forward to Root Camp 2018!

Until Next Month,
-The Landscape and Root Camp Committees

Jefferson Ballew of the Pokagon Tribe discusses and demonstrates objects of tribal history during Root Camp this summer at the Old School House. (Click for full-size)

Root Beer Barrel Revisited

Work continues to progress on the details of the restored Douglas Root Beer Barrel, reconstructed at the corner of Ferry and West Center Streets late last year. With electrical service installed, six custom-made light fixtures were fabricated of the same style that once graced its rounded rooftop, aiming down and giving the barrel a pleasant glow after dark. Duane Brown and Brent Birkholz have begun to install and wire the fixtures. A drainage issue beneath the concrete slab foundation was addressed and so far has corrected the water drainage problem.

The City of Douglas is next planning to pour a large
concrete pad around the barrel to provide a safe and ADA-compliant place for visitors to get up close. Additional site landscaping and parking work is planned. The History Center has finalized the design of the interpretive and donor acknowledgement sign panels and will soon have these fabricated.

Only a few staves remain to be sponsored - *don't miss your chance!* For the price of just $150, you can sponsor a stave and support this significant preservation project. Checks must be sent to the City and are to be made payable to the City of Douglas with "barrel account" indicated on the memo line.

**History Center awarded Archives Grant**

The Saugatuck-Douglas History Center was recently notified that it has been selected as one of just three recipients for 2017 grant funding from the Michigan State Historical Records Advisory Board "Save Michigan History" grant program. The program is aimed at enabling smaller history institutions in the state to have a capacity to best care for their paper and photographic archives, and increase the accessibility of these archive collections.

SDHC’s grant funds will be applied specifically to the recently-received Charles Lorenz collection, which was donated to us by the Lorenz family last fall (see the November 2016 e-News). Funds will help purchase archival-appropriate boxes, folders and sleeves, and begin to digitize some parts of the collections for easier public access and research. Read the full press release about the grant award [here](#). Thank you, MSHRAB, for this important grant award!

**History Mystery**

Recently donated to our archive was this image simply labeled "Douglas." The individual who
donated it thought it might be the Douglas Dutchers band. Did the Dutchers even have a band? If you know (even if you can just provide a helpful clue), please contact the Archives at archives@sdhistoricalsociety.org or by phone 269-857-7901. Thank you!

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The Bill Simmons Scrapbook

By Jack Sheridan

In the second year of the History by Camera feature - the BILL SIMMONS SCRAPBOOK - the format has been changed to fewer photos and more historical commentary and analysis.

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 SDHC. What a wonderful record of the middle of the twentieth century!
some thirty years. Today that location is Wicks Park on Water Street in Saugatuck. This month's
feature is about Hoffman's first tour boat. It was named the La Carousel, and it was launched in
1953.

I wrote this story in 2006 as one of a series entitled REMEMBERING WHEN. It is one of my
favorites and worthwhile republishing for my Simmons Scrapbook readers!

I appreciate your feedback on my captions and selection of the images. Please point out my good
choices and my goofs by sending me an email at jack.sheridan@gmail.com. Any reader comments
will not be published without reader permission.

________________________________________

From the Archives

Recently donated to our collections is this small envelope of miniature picture-postcards
titled "Greetings from Saugatuck." These mid-century scenes capture the relaxed vacation
lifestyle that the Saugatuck area offered visitors from near and far. The twelve
miniature cards were contained in an outer envelope with an ellipse cut into the front,
revealing the first image (above). Click images to enlarge.

________________________________________

By Jack Sheridan

Are you interested in your family history but you are not sure where to start? Learning about family
history is a personal connection to the past and you can find who your ancestors are and what they
did. The SDHC Family History Group can help you get started!

Jack Sheridan and Chris Yoder have finished reviewing family histories of volunteers for our
October "Who Do You Think You Are?" presentation. We have selected Judy Anthrop and Win
Ryder - very interesting family histories! Now Chris and I are busy researching the rest of the story.
Plan to attend the show - Wednesday October 11 members meeting - this will be fun!

Not sure where to begin with your family history research? That is what we are here for! Call or
email Chris Yoder or Jack Sheridan for information, and note the Family History Group's meeting schedule below:

**Thursday, August 17**

These upcoming meetings are in the Old School House (use the back door) and begin at 3:30pm. Note that your family history does not have to have any connection to the Saugatuck-Douglas area! If you can't attend a meeting, we can still provide assistance. The only requirement to participate is a current membership in the SDHC.

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

**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 organization with nearly 700 members residing in nearby communities, around Lake Michigan, and across the country.

Members are the lifeblood our largely volunteer organization. To join as a member, select from the following categories:

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<td>Individual</td>
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<td>Senior Household</td>
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Send check payable to the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center to: PO Box 617, Douglas, Michigan 49406. Click [HERE](#) for a printable Membership Application.

**Send in your 2017 membership with 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 HISTORY CENTER FACILITIES**

The Saugatuck-Douglas **History Museum** is located at 735 Park Street in Saugatuck, in the historic Saugatuck Pump House building. The History Museum is open daily through Labor Day, 12noon-4pm, and weekends thereafter. 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** 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 Old School House is open to the public from 11am-3pm.
Thursday-Saturday. The adjoining **Back-in-Time Garden** and Surfboat Exhibit are open seven days a week throughout the summer. Admission is free but donations gratefully accepted.

The History Center'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 History Center **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

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!** Click the logos below.

Again this year, the SDHC newsletter is being underwritten by a generous donation from the late Life Member, Frances Vorys.