Board of Directors Announce New Executive Director

The Board of Directors of the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center are pleased to announce the hiring of our new Executive Director, Eric Gollannek, PhD. Eric has been working at the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center since May as the Collections Specialist and the board is excited to continue to work with Eric as the Executive Director. We invite you to join us in welcoming Eric to this new role and read his bio further down the newsletter.

B&C Directory

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Wednesday, December 5
6:00-8:00pm
$25 a person

Join us for our annual member's Holiday Party at the Saugatuck Yacht Club (15 Park St., Saugatuck) on December 5. To RSVP, please email Janet Schmidt at jbschmidt@wmol.com or click here for our form to print out and mail.

Please RSVP by November 30.
Welcome New Members!

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

-Marta Petter
-Anita Halcyon & Dave Karpowicz
-Paola Doyle
-Scott Gilmore

Help With the Historical Chronicle

We are starting to plan next year's Historical Chronicle and we could use your help! Are you interested in researching, writing, or copy-editing for this annual publication? We are forming a Historical Chronicle Committee and need people skilled in these areas. If you are looking for a way to be involved in the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center that isn't a year-round commitment, this would be an excellent way to taste some of the activities that happen here. If interested, please contact Katelyn VerMerris via email at katelyn.vermerris@gmail.com or (616) 340-2919.

Upcoming Events

Wednesday, November 14:
November Monthly Meeting. "A Peek into the SDHC Attic: Fascinating Objects in Our Collections" with former Collections Specialist and new director, Eric Gollannek.

Wednesday, December 5:
Annual Christmas Party.

For more information on events, visit our website.

Monthly Meetings

Thank you to all who attended our October Monthly Meeting "Local Author's Take on the Town." We had a lively discussion on how Saugatuck Authors have been influenced by Saugatuck.

Thank you to SDHC member and avid reader Fran Van Howe who served as the discussion moderator, and to novelists Jacqueline Carey and Joan Donaldson, poet Jack Ridl and short-fiction & essay writer Lisa Lenzo who created an excellent panel.

Next Monthly Meeting
November 14

Come to the Old School House for "A Peek into the SDHC Attic: Fascinating Objects in Our Collections," with Eric Gollannek. With our devoted attentention to archives over the past few months, we have uncovered many treasures including this Singapore currency pictured below:
Meet SDHC's New Executive Director:
Eric Gollannek

As a historian with a deep love of all things Michigan, I am excited to start this new position as Executive Director of the SDHC.

I am a historian by training who cares deeply about helping others understand the role of place and context in our lives. Born and raised in Detroit and later living in the suburbs of Oakland County (Walled Lake), Michigan is a place I've always called home, even during long periods when I lived away from it while in school at the University of Delaware (Fighting Blue Hens!) and Marshall University (Go Herd!) and living abroad in France and England. Circling back to West Michigan almost ten years ago, I immediately felt reconnected to 'the land shaped like a hand.'

I earned my PhD in American art history and material culture studies from the University of Delaware where I also studied early American decorative arts at Winterthur Museum and Library and worked at the Center for Historic Architecture and Design in historic preservation survey work and planning.

After graduate school on the east coast, I 'came home' to Michigan, landing in East Grand Rapids, drawn by a desire to be closer to family and the Great Lakes. Since that time, I have taught art history and the humanities at Kendall College of Art and Design as well as with Grand Valley State University as a visiting professor and instructor in the Honors College and Liberal Studies program. My work this summer at the SDHC as the collection specialist continued previous work I had done with the Michigan State University Museum.

I am especially excited to build on the traditions of excellence in the SDHC's volunteer and member-led exhibitions and active community engagement. I thoroughly enjoyed helping with the Stories of Summer oral history projects this summer and I look forward to helping this community share and preserve its own stories in future programs. As an art historian, I am also fascinated by the richness of the arts community in Saugatuck-Douglas and I see such great potential to show this off through our exhibitions and active engagement with contemporary artists and galleries in the region.

I'm also excited to share the wonders of Saugatuck-Douglas with my family. My partner, Capalene Howse and I have three boys (Kai 12, Willem 13, and Odin 15). In my free time, I love cooking for my family, especially on the grill, and getting outside as much as possible, especially when there's time to enjoy a great Michigan local beer like Short's or Saugatuck Brewing Company with friends. I also enjoy running and am proud of my accomplishments this year training for and finishing the beautiful Bayshore Marathon in Traverse City and the Mt. Baldhead Challenge. I am excited to explore even more of the beaches, dunes, and trails along the Lakeshore this year and through all four seasons!
Thank you Meghann Stevens: Archival Assistant

Thank you to Archival Assistant, Meghann Stevens as she moves on from her work at the SDHC. Meghann has been with us since June and will now be moving back to Washington, where she is originally from.

"I want to thank everyone at SDHC for being so welcoming and for giving me the opportunity to work with all of you. I'm also very grateful for everyone's patience in teaching me what it means when people say 'look at your mitt' when talking about the state of Michigan. It's been an incredible experience and I'm sad that it's come to an end. But, I hope to come back soon!" Meghann said.

While here, Meghann loved to see how dedicated and involved the membership and the board of SDHC are in the organization. "It was clear how much everyone loves history and that they want to preserve it for the future. I haven't seen that sort of dedication from, essentially, an entire town before and I will miss it."

Meghann processed the entire Charles Lorenz collection while here, including combing through each item, categorizing it and adding keywords, and adding the item to Past Perfect. This provided a valuable contribution that greatly enhanced the accessibility of our archives. Meghann also worked on the new staircase exhibit at the Old School House, participated in the exhibits and collections committees, and volunteered at the Museum.

Thank you, Meghann! You will be missed!

New Garden Exhibit on the Presbyterian Camp

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Come enjoy the Fall colors in the Back in Time Garden and the new exhibit installed in the garden's northwest corner. The exhibit, titled "The Forward Movement Park: Camping to Nourish the Body and Soul," details the history of the camping experience that was the Forward Movement Park, then Camp Gray, then the Presbyterian Camps.

As you approach the exhibit, you will walk through the original Camp Gray archway sign. The exhibit contains a timeline of the camp's development, background information on what movements influenced the camp, and exclusive photographs from attendees.

This exhibit was designed by Sally Winthers with research by Larry LaBine, a regular attendee of the Presbyterian Camps for 43 years.

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**Green Thumb Anyone?**

**Volunteers needed to plant Daffodils**

For many years, volunteers from the History Center have been planting daffodil bulbs beside the grave stones of several dozen "orphans" in our local cemeteries (no descendants or none still living in the area). We then run an item in the History Center newsletter with some biographical data on the folks selected. Earlier this year, Saugatuck Township officials decided the result looks so nice that they would help fund the bulbs to be planted. We now will have many more bulbs to plant.

D-Day (Daffodil Day) has been scheduled for Saturday Nov. 10th! We will be digging 450 holes to plant 1350 daffodils in the Riverside and Douglas Cemeteries. In addition to a number of adult volunteers, including members of the garden club and the past planting group, this year we'll be joined by the Saugatuck Boy Scout Troop and the Saugatuck High School Interact (Jr Rotary) Club. Details on exact meeting time and place will be posted later. If you would like to join in this effort, contact Chris Yoder at cyoder@tds.net or phone 616-212-3443 to get on the email list for notifications.


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Daffodil Bulbs ready to plant
"Stories of Summer" at the museum: wrapped up for winter!

By: Eric Gollannek, Executive Director

The changing of the leaves outside marks the true end of the summer season and with that our team of staff and volunteers have wrapped up the collecting phase of this year's "Stories of Summer" project. Hearty thanks to all who volunteered conducting interviews, bringing in artifacts to share, and those sitting down with us to share your stories!

Those of you who attended our Community Engagement meeting in on October 3rd know we made a huge push to finish strong and thanks to you we surpassed our goals! The full results of our efforts: we reached 34 individuals, recorded nearly 40 hours of oral history interviews and scanned more than 2,000 historic photographs and documents from the 1930s-1980s.

At the end of October, I'm sharing what we've learned at the annual meeting of the Michigan Museum Association in Dearborn, Michigan at a poster session titled "Stories of Summer at the Museum: New Ways of Approaching Community Engagement."

The team from the Kutsche Office at Grand Valley State University (including director Kim McKee along with manager Courtney Sherwood, and graduate assistant Mollie VanOrsdol) now has much work ahead of them. Together they will spend the winter processing images, completing transcripts for each interview, and designing an exhibit featuring the project and our Saugatuck-Douglas history. This exhibit will first go on display at the Mary Idema Pew Library at GVSU in Allendale in February before opening at the Old School House in Douglas in June of 2019.

Finally, extra special thanks to three volunteers for their time and dedication in this effort, Ken Kutzel, Jane Osman, and Ted Reyda who went above and beyond in their oral history work through the final weeks of the project.

Garden Happenings

By the pricking of my thumb, something wicked this way comes.

~ William Shakespeare

With the dropping of the leaves and the howling of the wind, it's time for our gardens to be put to bed. Thanks to John, Lee, Steve and Mike for taking such great care of them this year. Also to the Garden Club for contributing their time, talent, and plants. They say "it takes a village" to raise a child, it takes that and more to care for a garden. You are all the best and we really appreciate you.

Continued on next page
Please take the time to visit the Camp Gray area of our Back-In-Time Garden. The Exhibit Committee did an outstanding job on the graphics and text. Our local history comes alive to our visitors, with such amazing work like this. Because our gardens and Root Camp are finished for the year, Garden Happenings will resume in January to start planning for the 2019 season. In the meantime, the committees wish all of you a wonderful rest of the year.

Until next year,
The Landscape and Root Camp committees

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**History Corner**

**Randolph Densmore:**
**The Man Who Built the Bridge**

*By: Chris Yoder*

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In 1869, Randolph Densmore constructed the bridge between Saugatuck and Douglas, being awarded the contract for $5,700, which was reportedly nearly half the amount bid by others. According to James Sheridan in his book *Saugatuck Through the years 1830-1980* ".. The contractor laid down a mat of slabs and covered them with sawdust topping. Short bridges to the shore at either ends completed the crossing. These structures were wooden, built upon pilings. Since the main channel of the river flowed along the south bank past Mill Point the south bridge had to be made capable of opening for the passage of the large river traffic which was considerable at that date. This was accomplished by the installation of a drawbridge. The north bridge was stationary, but high enough to allow passage of small boats."

Only a handful of 1869 Commercial Records are available, but the ones that are show the following progression of events:

16 January 1869- The paper discussed a bonding proposal to pay for the bridge and warned against the "cock and bull stories" by those who oppose it. It claims the current distance between Douglas and Saugatuck post offices by way of the ferry was "one mile and 22 rods" farther than the distance would be if a bridge was in place.

23 January- a public vote is held for "Free Bridge vs No Bridge" which goes 180 to 85 in favor of the bridge.

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30 January 1869- a committee of nine was appointed to confer with the Highway Commissioners on the construction of a bridge (Densmore was one of the committee members)

6 March 1869- Densmore is awarded the contract on his low bid of $5,700. He says he'll begin as soon as possible. The paper reports that he has significant bridge building experience.

17 July 1869 - The spile work (pilings or foundations) is completed.

21 August 1869- Bridge work "still goes on lively."

25 Sep 1869- Building of the swing is all that is remaining to finish the bridge

13 Nov. 1869- The bridge is so near completion that a number of teams and footmen cross it. The swing bridge "works like a charm."

20 Nov 1869- "The completion of the new bridge brings more teams to town every day."

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Randolph Densmore was born 30 Dec 1812 in Hopewell, NY. In 1840 he removed to Michigan where he engaged in lumber and manufacturing, initially residing in Hillsdale County, serving in 1848 as a Justice of the Peace in the town of Reading. Around 1852 he moved to South Haven where he managed the second saw mill in town, and about that time he plotted peach orchards north of the river in partnership with S. B. Morehouse. In 1857 he build a tannery in South Haven with Barringer and Dyckman. The 1860 census shows his occupation as "machinist".

In 1860, he sold out in South Haven and came to Saugatuck. Here he owned much of Lake Street, laying out plots for development of what is still known as "Morrison and Densmore Addition". In 1867 he purchased the Twin Gables structure at the end of Lake Street which had been used as an ice house for the Samuel Clipson Brewery, and used it as the heading for his barrel stave mill. It was sold in 1869 and used as a tannery, but soon thereafter was repurchased by Densmore. Also in 1869, Densmore built a structure on the creek which runs through current Clearbrook Country Club to manufacture agricultural implements. After Densmore's death the widow sold the Clipson property in 1880 to Charles and Henry Bird who manufactured row and motor boats in the building.

Continued on next page
In 1867 Densmore served as Allegan County coroner, and in 1872 he succeeded his friend S.A. Morrison as the fourth president of Saugatuck Village. The 1870 census shows him as a "lumberman". Kit Lane writes in her book Heroes and Rogues "probably troubled by the economic panic of 1873, he sold his interest in Saugatuck businesses and moved to Minnesota and later to Big Rapids."

A creative man, in 1840, while still in New York, he patented a furnace for heating bath water. Years later, in July of 1875, he patented a "Saw Gumming Machine." Densmore married Priscilla Minerva Ranney (born 19 Jan 1822 in Ashfield, MA) and they had one daughter, Mary, born in St. Ignace in Nov. 1849. Mary died in Aug. 1852. While living in Saugatuck, his wife Priscilla is known to have given music lessons.

His connection with Stephen A. Morrison (historian May Heath's grandfather) was more than just a joint venture in real estate. May's father, John Francis, was orphaned at nine years of age, and lived for several years with the Densmore family. At fourteen (about 1863) he was taken in by Stephen Morrison and wife, eventually marrying their daughter Julia. The never before published photos of Randolph and Priscilla Densmore were handed down in the Heath family, and appear in the May Heath Digital Collection, shared by great grandson Bill Bleeker (copy on-file in the History Center digital archives).

Randolph Densmore died 9 Sep 1877 at Point St. Ignace, after suffering for two weeks from dysentery. The notice appearing in The Commercial reported "He engaged in quite a number of enterprises since his residence here, and has handled a large amount of property; but, like most honest sanguine men, his losses usually exceeded his profits" and "He was a man of rare ingenuity and great inventive powers, possessed of a strong and well informed mind, and was a ready speaker for an amateur. He bore an enviable reputation for integrity, honesty, and purity of life and habits, and went down to his grave beloved and mourned by all who knew him." He is buried in the Protestant Cemetery on Mackinac Island. His widow Priscilla survived him by more than 20 years, died 16 Nov 1908 in Allen, Hillsdale Co, MI and is buried in the South Allen Cemetery in a plot with her brother Lucius Ranney and wife.

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**ASK JACK**

By: Jack Sheridan

**PARK AND PERRYMAN**

After the Mt Baldhead Challenge race last month I was bragging about local history to a middle-aged runner from Chicago. She wanted to know, "Where is the most historic spot from here?"

We were standing next to the Gazebo in Wicks Park. Hmmm, I gave the question a quick ponder and looked across the river to the west side ferry landing. The query was a slow hanging curve ball and I hit it out of the park.

Right over there I said pointing to the west side chain ferry landing.

Right over there is the intersection of Park and Perryman Streets. The area has a list of superlatives: The most photographed intersection in Saugatuck; one of the oldest and one of the most important; busiest; first crossed point of the river; site of the ferry landing and store; a prime spot for early tent campers and resorters renting a room. And now on September 8, 2018 the starting point for the Baldhead Challenge six mile course.

Early it was called Lincoln Road, now Perryman Street, named for Edward Perryman who built a luxury hotel there at the turn of the last century. Permian heads to the Oval - between the high
dunes which range to the west and the north. That first block is a steep climb. Reminds me, when I was a kid we crossed the river on the ferry for a dime and then thumbed a ride to the Oval beach from the bottom of that hill.

The road was a rutted sandy track when cut in the 1890s to reach the Forward Movement Camp. Later, there were other names: Camp Gray, the Presbyterian Camp and now Dunegrass, the location of a second home for Kirk Cousins, Viking Quarterback.

Look back a hundred years or so by clicking here for the montage.

Enjoy!

-Jack Sheridan
Welcome from Jack Sheridan and Chris Yoder, leaders of the Society Family History Group.

Please visit a regular Family History Group meeting to see what we are all about and join the group. We share "lessons learned" about the many tools available for family history research.

Questions/comments/advice/needs:

Mayflower ancestor, Revolutionary War vet, famous cousins, great grand parents, ...
Where did you come from?
Thinking about a DNA test?
Answering questions is what we are best at ...

Call or email us, meetings are normally the first and third Thursday every month at 3:30 at the Old School House.
Upcoming meetings : Thursday November 1; Thursday November 15; Thursday December 6

Your family history does not have to have any connection to the Saugatuck-Douglas area !!!

Not sure how to get going? Let us provide a helpful jump start by recording what you know about your parents, grandparents, and great grandparents and send it along for a review by Chris Yoder or myself.

The snail mail address is SDHS Family History Box 617 Douglas, 49406, or email to either cyoder@tds.net or jack.sheridan@gmail.com

We will soon be back to you with readily found data and with suggestions on the next steps to take. Further help is always available from Chris and myself by phone and email.

The only requirement is membership in the SDHS.
Join the group and find the answers.

Contact: jack.sheridan@gmail.com, 269 857-7144 or cyoder@tds.net, 616 212-3443

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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Join as a 2019 member today! Send check payable to the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center to: PO Box 617, Douglas, Michigan 49406. Click HERE for a printable Membership Application.

Send items for the newsletter to: SDHC Attn: Newsletter, 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 closed for the season. It will open next Spring with a brand new exhibit!

The Old School House and Francis Surfboat Exhibit is located at 130 Center Street in Douglas. For group tours of the Old School House, please contact facility manager Steve Hutchins at 269-857-5751 or by email at admin@sdhistoricalsociety.org.

The Back-in-Time Garden and Surfboat Exhibit are open daily. Admission is free but donations gratefully accepted.

The History Center Archives office is on the move! In our period of transition, we ask everyone to make a research appointment in advance while we relocate our collections to new storage. To reach the archives, call 269-857-7901 or 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

www.MySDHistory.org
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.