The Saugatuck-Douglas History Center preserves local history and inspires learning to inform and improve our community.

August 2018
THE PUBLICATION OF THE
SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORY CENTER
PO BOX 617 | DOUGLAS, MICHIGAN | 49406-0617
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Membership Picnic
Tuesday, August 14, 6:00pm
We happily invite you to join your fellow SDHC members for good food and good conversation at our annual Summertime Membership Potluck Picnic. As always, please bring a dish to pass.

People lined up on the Barrel's opening day on Aug 1, 2018

B&C Directory
Click each title to jump to the article!

- Historic Barrel Opening
- Stories of Summer
- "New art exhibit: "Michigan Dunes"
- Upcoming Events
- Garden Happenings
- Collections Updates
- Saugatuck featured by London Sun Times
- Green Parrot Cafe and the Damoth Family
- Family Tree Tales
- Ask Jack

"Meet Me at the Barrel": Historic landmark open for business

Katelyn Bosch VerMerris

On Wednesday, August 1 the Old Root Beer Barrel opened for business to serve old-time favorites like root beer and hot dogs. The Barrel ran out of food as a line persisted all day on the opening.

The Barrel will be open from Noon to Sunset through Labor Day and on weekends during September and October as weather allows.

Thank you to the Friends of the Barrel and all who gave time and money to save this nostalgic Saugatuck-Douglas landmark and experience.
Stories of Summer Project, History Harvest, and going forward

Katelyn Bosch VerMerris

On Saturday, July 21 we held our second History Harvest event for the Stories of Summer project. What a delightful turnout! Thank you to everyone who brought their stories and their items to be digitized.

We listened to and collected stories from people who went to school in the schoolhouse, people who spent their whole lives in Douglas, and summer stories of camping at the church camp and dancing at the Pavilion. Some of our favorite stories were of everyday experiences in Saugatuck and Douglas.

A photograph digitized during the history harvest that depicts friends having fun on Memorial Day 1966.

Some items we digitized include slides of the Mackinac Bridge, Old Barn programs, and fun fourth of July photos. If you want your items digitized, our scanner is up to the task! Please continue bring your slides, photographs, and ephemera for preservation.

We are excited that WGVU featured Stories of Summer during their Morning Show with Shelley Irwin on July 31. You can listen to this excellent feature here.

Thank you to the Grand Valley Kutsche Office for being excellent partners and providing your

The Barrel in History: 50 years ago this month

Chris Yoder

The Barrel was a Douglas staple from the 1950s-1970s and a popular place for people to meet on their way to Mt. Baldhead or Oval Beach. It was at risk of destruction in 2011 until the Friends of the Barrel formed to save it.

A photograph of The Barrel.

August 5, 1968

50 years ago this August the Commercial Record printed this from The Barrel. The Barrel saluted Saugatuck on its Centennial Anniversary! Now almost another 50 years later we are delighted to see The Barrel revived.

Watch for the special 150th anniversary edition of the Commercial Record to be published later this month.

The Barrel was a staple of summer in Saugatuck and Douglas for 30 years.
expertise throughout every stage of this project!

Did you miss our History Harvests this summer? We still want your oral history! While we are wrapping up this partnership for Stories of Summer, we are buying our own recorders and have trained volunteers to continue collecting oral histories. We hope to make oral history an important part of our collection efforts in the future.

In early June, a new interpretive sign was installed at the corner of West Center and Ferry Streets beside the beloved Douglas Root Beer Barrel. This sign describes the history of the Barrel, the process of its restoration, and thanks the over 100 community members and organizations who were "Stave Sponsors" and gave funding to restore this visible piece of highway roadside architecture.

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London Sun Times Glowing Review of Saugatuck

London's *The Sunday Times* writer, Francesca Angelini, recently embarked on a two-week Lake Michigan road trip which included Saugatuck. She had nothing but glowing things to say. Read the full article!

"Michigan Dunes: Experience the Dunes through Local Art" Now Open at Old School House

A new art exhibit titled "Michigan Dunes", highlighting landscapes of the Lake Michigan shoreline from Harbor Springs, MI to Gary, IN, is now open on the Upstairs Gallery at the Old School House!

Read the excerpt about Saugatuck:

"On our first stop, I made a significant geological discovery. The owner of Judson Heath Colonial Inn, our B&B in Saugatuck (from £136 a night; judsonheath.com), recommended that we hit the beach, apparently voted one of the best in America on several occasions. Naturally, I scoffed: lakes don't have proper beaches. But it was sweltering, so we picked up a picnic, dumped the car at the bottom of a dune and found Oval Beach - where I ate my words. Here was a long stretch of ochre sand, backed by shimmering meadows of a matching yellow and spotted with gaudy, rainbow-hued umbrellas. Huge long-haired dogs lolloped in the shade. Children built sandcastles. The water was as calm, clear and fresh as you'll find. The burrata and barley salad with sprouted seeds from the organic deli, Grow, was as on trend a lunch as I could imagine."
Artworks comprise a selection from the nearly 250 pieces in the History Center's permanent collection, augmented with pieces on loan from important private collections.

Featured artists include: Frederick Fursman, Elsa Ulbricht, Carl Tolpo, Sylvia Randolph, Charles Vickery, Tunis Ponsen, William Greason, and Minnie Harms Neebe, to name just a few.

The exhibit has been curated by Ken Kutzel, SDHC's volunteer Art Collection Manager and Katelyn Bosch, Research and Programs Assistant, with support from SDHC member and graphic designer Sally Winthers.

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**Welcome New Members!**

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

- Hugh Don Callahan
- Mark Bartell & Darlene Walker
- Anne Mathieu

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Later that day, on a steamboat trip around the inlet (which offered some first-class, up-close lakeside property porn) and out into the lake, we were told there are 325 miles of these beaches here: it is, in effect, America's third coast. There were plenty more facts from the guide as he pointed out a hefty cluster of dunes. Buried beneath these is Singapore, a former mill city. Its inhabitants made the mistake of cutting down the surrounding trees for timber to rebuild Chicago after it burnt down in 1871. Without the buffer, Singapore was soon encased in sand.

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**Upcoming Events**

- **Tuesday, Aug 14 (11:00 am, Old School House)**
  Tuesday Talk, Birds of Prey

- **Tuesday, Aug 14 (6:30 pm, Old School House)**
  Annual Membership Picnic

- **Tuesday, Aug 21 (11:00 am, Old School House)**
  Tuesday Talk, Mystery of Walker's Landing

- **Thursday, Aug 23 (5:30, pm, Old School House)**
  Douglas Social

- **Tuesday, Aug 28 (11:00 am, Old School House)**
  Tuesday Talk, Kirby House Stories

- **Wednesday, Sept 12 (7 pm, All Saints Church)**
  Monthly Meeting field Trip, All Saints Church in Saugatuck celebrating its 150th Anniversary.

For more information on events, visit our [website](https://ui.constantcontact.com/visualeditor/visual_editor_preview.jsp?agent.uid=1131061979350&format=html&print=true).
In the absence of an Executive Director, we are looking for volunteers to help us with various tasks, at least on an interim basis. We are presently looking for assistance with membership management, and for more docents for the Old School House (open Weds-Sat 11am-3pm in 2 hour shifts). Contact board president Steve Hutchins at admin@sdhistoricalsociety.org if you are interested. If you have financial experience, we are looking for someone to assist with financial data entry in our Quickbooks system. Contact treasurer Leslie Thompson at caismom90@aol.com if you are interested to help out.

**We can't do it without you!**

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**Garden Happenings**

"*In every gardener there is a child who believes in the Seed Fairy.*" ~Robert Brault

If you walk around our "Back In Time" garden you will notice the sensory gardens that Lee has been installing. Very soon they will have names of plants he used, so we all know what is in them and possibly sample a plant or two. One of Lee's creations is a miniature garden that may someday be the home to our own special garden fairies. Lee will be encompassing the large tree area and filling it with his own little gardens for our small friends. It will be amazing for our visitors who are young and young at heart.

We are expecting the camp section's graphics to be installed sometime this fall and are so excited to view them. Thanks to all who are making this happen. Remember the committee is still looking for some old garden tools to display in the garden. If you have any you want to share with us, please contact Ruth Johnson atruthannj@frontier.com.

**Root Camp 2018** was a complete success!!!! Both sessions were sold out and all the kids went home with crafts, a special gift and stories to tell their families. The campers also gave their annual gift to our garden. Each child created a path light that represents their own version of a light house. Please stop in around twilight and enjoy! There are so many people that made Root Camp possible and we couldn't be more grateful. Thanks to our sponsors: the Holland Horticulture Club, Gary Medler, Coral Gables, BASF Corporation, the Fitz, Fran and Zelda Foundation, Natalie Lowery and Joy Muehlenbeck. We are also very grateful to our teachers Katelyn Bosch, Michael Pcolinsky, Sarrett Nature Preserve, and Jill Wood. Our wonderful and, extremely necessary, counselors deserve a huge applause. We "old" camp directors really couldn't have done it without them. Our thanks to Natalie and Adam Martinson, Olivia and Ainsley Lowery, Thea and Jillian
Johnson, Chloe Cassidy and Iliana Kupres. They say "It take a village" we are blessed to have a very generous one. Thank you!

The Landscape and Root Camp committees would like to say a special thank you to Nathan Nietering. Nathan was instrumental in making everything happen in the garden and at camp. We thank him from the bottom of our hearts and wish him and his family the very best. We will miss him.

Until next month,

the Landscape and Root Camp Committees

Stories from the collections: caring for our treasures

Eric Gollannek. Collections Specialist

You've undoubtedly marveled at the richness of our historic photographs collection that brings the past to life right before our eyes. Yet it is through the power of physical artifacts that we experience the past first hand.

Maybe you've seen some of the History Center's many shipwreck artifacts from along the shoreline such as this tray from the steamer Pewabic that sank in 1865. But did you know that our History Center also has currency from the Bank of Singapore engraved in New York City in the 1830s? Or that we have keys from the old Hotel Butler?

As archivists and curators we look after this community's treasures. The title of curator has spiritual overtones, derived from the Latin curatus, "a person charged with the care of souls" such as a curé or parish priest. Simply put, we care for the objects valued by this community and we work to make sure these relics will live on for future generations to experience.

These values guide our work. Our collections team (Meghann Stevens, Mary Voss, Cynthia Sorenson, Ken Kutzel, and Katelyn Bosch) continues to make progress in setting up our new facilities in the
Keys from the old Hotel Butler

Archives Research Center (ARC) on the upper level of the Old School House. It's a beautiful space that's ideal for caring for our objects with professional grade storage and regulated climate. Our staff is working to complete a thorough inventory of every box and folder in our collection to update records and provide accurate locations for every shelf, box, and file to quickly search out and locate items of interest. Stay tuned for updates next month on similar work with the art collections.

Finally, please feel welcome to visit us in the Old School House at the ARC. Also know that if you have interesting objects that you would like to learn more about or would be willing to share with us at the History Center, we are always interested seeing them (and you!)

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The Green Parrot Café and the Damoth Family

The Green Parrot Café and the Damoth Family

Chris Yoder

In the May Newsletter, Jack Sheridan featured a photo of a restaurant known as the Green Parrot Cafe, which he believed was located at what is now 142 Butler- the Art Glass Alcove. Several years ago, I found a menu from the Green Parrot on ebay:

Although undated, it mentions that the establishment was owned and operated by Mrs. D. E. Damoth, and I thought it might be interesting to learn more about the family. The Damoths appear in the 1930 Saugatuck Federal Census, with husband Dennis age 41, wife Agnes age 36, and daughters Audrey-14, and Muriel-12, all residing at what was then numbered "168 Butler"- perhaps above the cafe. Mr. Damoth is shown as a manager of "Ind. Oil Co". From research on ancestry.com and other internet sources, we see that Dennis Elbridge Damoth was born Jul. 19, 1888 in Middleville, MI to Frank Damoth and Victoria Benjamin and married Jun 5, 1913 in Muskegon, MI to Agnes Lynch who had been born Oct. 9, 1893 in that town to Barney and Susan Lynch.

In 1920, the family had lived in Thornapple, Barry County, MI and came to Saugatuck in Feb. 1921, originally living in the Schuman cottage and later on Butler Street. A terrible tragedy visited the family when oldest daughter Audrey was killed in an automobile accident on the Richmond Road four miles east of town on Sept. 5, 1930. She was riding in the rumble seat of a car driven by Dick O'Connor, and
accompanied by her sister Muriel and Eleanor Koning (daughter of the Koning hardware family) when the car flipped over and she was crushed. Audrey, almost 15, had attended Saugatuck schools from the 1st thru 10th grades and was a sophomore at Saugatuck High School. She was laid to rest in Riverside Cemetery after a ceremony at St. Peter's Catholic Church attended by many of her classmates. Among the pall bearers were classmates Bud Edgcomb and John Barron.

I do not know exactly when the family left Saugatuck, but by 1939 Agnes was operating "Damoth's Restaurant" in Kenosha, Wisconsin. At some point she and her husband divorced (he is shown in the 1943 city directory at a separate Kenosha address). Muriel (called "Dolly") was born Sep. 11, 1917 and married on Oct. 5, 1940 to Clifford J. Tappa in Dubuque, Iowa. Tappa had been divorced from his first wife and had served in the Marine Corps in California, Hawaii, and the Pacific theater during the 1920s. He was a noted marksman, and in 1932 was honored as the "outstanding civilian marksman" at a National Rifle Association sponsored match at Camp Perry, Ohio. He returned to military service during WWII as well as Korea, and is pictured in uniform wearing what I assume are his many marksmanship medals.

Agnes continued to operate the Kenosha restaurant as late as 1952, with the assistance of daughter Muriel, later moving with her to Long Beach, IN, where she lived at the time of her death on Jan 7, 1958 at the Doctor's Hospital in LaPorte, IN. She was buried in Saugatuck's Riverside Cemetery next to daughter Audrey. Ex-husband Dennis was living in Arizona at the time of his death in Jan. 1966. His place of burial is not known.

It does not appear that the Tappas had any children. Both of them are buried in All Saints Cemetery, Pleasant Prairie, WI.

Thanks to Cynthia Sorensen of the History Center archives for finding the recipe for Mrs. Damoth's cupcakes!

Mrs. Damoth's cupcakes

1 cup sugar
1 ½ flour
2 egg yokes & fill cup with milk
1 tsp baking powder heaping
Stir together
Lastly- 4 melted tblsp butter
& flavoring & a pinch of salt

(The menu has been donated to the History Center for its archives, along with a copy of this article).
Welcome from Jack Sheridan and Chris Yoder, leaders of the Society Family History Group.

Please visit a regular 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.

**Got questions?**

Questions/comments/advice/needs: Mayflower ancestor, Revolutionary War vet, famous cousins, great grandparents, ...

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.

**PLEASE NOTE: This July is an exception as only one meeting is scheduled for the month.**

**Upcoming meetings:**
- Thursday August 2
- Thursday August 2
- Thursday September 6
- Thursday September 20

Remember, 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, Michigan 49406, or email a copy 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. Again, the only requirement is membership in the SDHS.

Join the group and find the answers.

jack.sheridan@gmail.com 269 857-7144 or cyoder@tds.net 616 212-3443
This month’s question comes from my friend Jim W. from Detroit whose family has had a place here for some fifty years. Jim asked, does anybody know the actual size of Lost Rock at the Douglas Beach? And does it move or is the seemed movement just an illusion due to the water level in Lake Michigan?

Being interested in geological processes, and knowledgeable of local historical photos, I long ago researched the topic. To start things off here is a great historical photo including names of the folks who are gathered on and about Lost Rock ca 1895:

Lost or Lone Rock, take your choice of name, is the notable rock which rests at the Douglas Public Beach. I prefer to call it Lost Rock because it best describes how the rock got here. About 10,000 years ago at the end of the most recent ice age, the ice sheet that covered the Midwest down to the middle of Illinois began to recede and during that melt down, left boulders behind that were originally imbedded in the ice sheet. So Lost Rock was kidnapped, so to say, brought here from somewhere beyond Douglas Beach and hence might be called a "Lost Rock".

Lost Rock is of historical interest because it was a curiosity and a popular photographers prop, being right there at the beach. Today we enjoy the actual rock plus historic Lost Rock snapshots - there are dozens to choose from - some are serious, others romantic and even whimsical, such as this group celebrating a flag-waving holiday.

The rocks size is unknown - how much is buried in the sand? Photos reveal that the shape seems to have changed - of course an impossibility. My personal theory is that wave action and water level changes have shifted its position. If true, this then provides a clue as to its probable size. Has it shifted position on the beach, in or out, north or south? We don't have evidence of that, but it is certainly possible that it has
moved slightly. Today being a high-water period, it is in the water, projecting from the water, the top portion which is about two feet high and seven feet long.

I remember, as a youngster, climbing on it then sliding off into the water. Next time you are nearby, walk down to the Beach and take a look at this solid piece of local history.

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:

- **Individual** $50
- **Household** $70
- **Premium** $300
- **Corporate** $500
- **Lifetime** $1,000
- **Senior (65+)** $30
- **Senior Household** $45

**Join as a 2018 member today!** Send check payable to the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center to: PO Box 617, Douglas, Michigan 49406. Click [HERE](mailto:info@sdhistoricalsociety.org) 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 open 7 days a week through Sept. 3 from 12noon-4pm daily, featuring signature exhibit Cold War | Hot Towns. Admission is free but donations are gratefully accepted. If you can't travel to Saugatuck or want to revisit this landmark exhibit from home, view the virtual Cold War | Hot Towns exhibit on the SDHC mobile app!

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 facility manager Steve Hutchins at 269-857-5751 or by email at admin@sdhistoricalsociety.org. The Old School House exhibits are open for summer hours Wednesdays-Saturdays from 11am-3pm. The adjoining Back-in-Time Garden and Surfboat Exhibit are open daily.

Admission is free but donations gratefully accepted. Visit the newly opened art exhibition Keeping an Eye on History, showcasing 31 unique artworks of local scenes recently given to the History Center by members Kenneth Carls and James Schmiechen.

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.

Saugatuck-Douglas History Center, P.O. Box 617, Douglas, MI 49406