

# SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORY CENTER

## Information Contacts:

Dr. Kimberly McKee  
616.331.8196  
mckeeki@gvsu.edu

Nathan Nietering  
269.857.5751  
director@sdhistoricalsociety.org

John Peters  
269.857.2967  
jppubrel@gmail.com

## APRIL 11 SDHC PUBLIC PROGRAM TO SET PLANS FOR GRANT-FUNDED ORAL HISTORY GATHERING

MARCH 30, 2018 -- Details explaining the coming summer's drive to harvest oral histories and visual materials documenting our area's summers of the 1950-1970s will be unveiled at Saugatuck-Douglas History Center's next free monthly program on Wednesday, April 11, starting at 7:00 p.m. in the Old School House, 130 Center Street, Douglas. Public attendance is invited and audience participation is welcomed to help enlist volunteer assistance for the effort.

Dubbed "Summers in Saugatuck", this campaign reflects the History Center's collaboration with the Kutsche Office of Local History at Grand Valley State University, supported by a \$12,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities through its *Common Heritage* program. Announced in January, the grant shares \$250,000 funding for 23 similar projects nationwide, all aimed at capturing America's cultural heritage "hidden" in personal life stories, family histories, photo albums, newspaper clippings and other home memorabilia.

Dr. Kimberly McKee, Director of the Kutsche Office of Local History at Grand Valley State University will join SDHC Executive Director Nathan Nietering in explaining what the History Center will focus on collecting, why it's important, how the Kutsche Office will assist in that effort, and how the community can help. SDHC volunteer archivists will show examples of previously collected items.

The presenters will highlight opportunities for volunteers interested in helping with essential activities such as greeting and orienting "History Harvest" participants, conducting recorded interviews, scanning historical materials into digital archives or transcribing recorded interviews into reports for future study.

No prior experience is necessary, as training for all roles will be provided in May, led by GVSU and/or History Center staffers, primarily at the Old School House.

As described by Nietering, the project was designed in partnership with GVSU and the Kutsche Office to chronicle our area's sometimes-turbulent evolution through its post-war growth of tourism, the development of its various art colonies, and its concurrent rise as a lakeshore destination for the LGBT community. "There's a lot of interesting stories in community memory," he says, "and want as many as possible to be included in our permanent record of this period", he says.

"It's especially timely now," he points out, "as this period shares the focus of S-DHC's current two-year exhibition at the Saugatuck-Douglas History Museum at Mt. Baldhead." Titled *Cold War | Hot Towns*, the exhibition comprises first-hand accounts of wild music festivals, motorcycle gangs on the backstreets of Douglas, college parties in downtown Saugatuck and more. These are presented around a structure recalling the Mt. Baldhead radar tower and its more-sobering mission to constantly search the skies for Soviet bombers at the height of the Cold War scare.

The Kutsche Office of Local History was founded in 2008 with the mission to give voice to the experiences of diverse communities in West Michigan through history. “Our partnership with SDHC reflects the Office’s interest in capturing what life was like along the lakeshore in the mid-twentieth century and remember it today,” McKee explains.

Enabled by the gift of the late Paul Kutsche, a Grand Rapids native and retired professor emeritus of anthropology from Colorado College, the Office provides expertise and assistance with identifying and utilizing best practices for gathering, interpreting, preserving and sharing these stories.

The Saugatuck-Douglas History Center’s free monthly program series presents entertaining and informative insights into local history and community life. This month’s program is sponsored by Cottage Home.

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

# # #



*Unedited scan of a recently-donated photo print depicting Saugatuck’s Oval Beach, probably in the 1970s – representative of the kinds of “hidden” community history we hope to harvest this summer!*