

# SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORY CENTER

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## HISTORY OF THE COMMERCIAL RECORD RECALLED AT SDHC JULY 31 "TUESDAY TALK"

JULY 20, 2018 -- A look back at the history of Saugatuck weekly newspaper *The Commercial Record* on its 150th anniversary highlights Saugatuck-Douglas History Center's next "Tuesday Talk" on July 31, in the Old School House, 130 Center Street, Douglas. The one-hour program begins when the school bell rings at 11 a.m. Public attendance is invited and audience participation is welcomed to enrich the discussion.

Sharing the role of presenters, former owner/editor of the newspaper Art Lane and current editor Scott Sullivan will reminisce about the evolution of Allegan County's "oldest newspaper in continuous publication" (not counting two weeks off in 1886), through five different names and 20 different owners. Together they also give interesting witness to how the newspaper business has changed dramatically on their watch.

Lane and his wife Kit, who also has become known as the author of many historical books about Saugatuck and West Michigan, were the paper's 19th owner. Though both originally from Detroit, they first met working for *The Southern Illinoisan*, in Carbondale, IL, she as reporter and he as copy editor. Both longed to return to Michigan, and the 18th owner gave them their chance to do so in 1967. They ran *The Commercial Record* for 21 years, establishing a new record as local owners. Along the way, they also owned *The Fennville Herald*, which Kit edited from 1978 to 1988, giving them claim to have the only "his and hers" newspapers in the state. Both papers were sold in 1988 to Kaechle Publications, the 20th and present owners.

Sullivan, born in Lansing and raised in West Lafayette, IN, with an English-teacher Mom who cultivated his writing interests, enjoyed frequent childhood visits to grandparents in Michigan. He found his first post-college job editing a start-up North Muskegon weekly *The Lakeshore Times* in 1979 "telling longtime residents all about a town I never before had set foot in". Despite his best efforts, LST folded in 1992, but his writing as a "stringer" for a Fruitport bi-weekly gained the attention of *The Penasee Globe* in Wayland. Working there until 2006, with the last three years under new ownership having a corporate culture that rubbed him the wrong way, he says "I finally succeeded in getting fired, and one week later started in Saugatuck...and what a blessing it's been."

Among SDHC's archive treasures is a digitized library of *The Commercial Record* issues dating back to 1868. Soon, thanks to a 2018 Michigan Digital Newspaper Grant offered by the Clarke Historical Library at Central Michigan University, about 9,000 pages from the newspaper's 1959-69 issues will be digitized in high-resolution at the Clarke facility and placed online. Each page will be indexed and word-searchable, allowing for efficient searches over the internet from anywhere in the world as part of the Clarke Library's Michigan Digital Newspaper database.

The CMU/Clarke grant, sought jointly by SDHC and Saugatuck-Douglas District Library, was funded with a 2012 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities' National Digital Newspaper Program to digitize culturally significant Michigan newspapers.

A summer tradition since 1996, weekly Tuesday Talks present entertaining and informative insights into

local community life throughout July and August. This week's Talk is sponsored by SDHC members Fran & Bill Myers and Howard & Paula Shultz.

Tuesday Talks' increasing popularity puts limited seating on "first-come, first-served" basis. While admission is free for current SDHC members, non-member guests are encouraged to attend with a donation of five dollars, or to become new members at the Talk.

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).

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1981 painting among Art Lane's memorabilia depicts *The Commercial Record* office at the Lake Street-Culver bend in Saugatuck, when it shared the building with Kit's "Historical Museum" (Saugatuck's first)...and the big double doors recall its earlier life as a gas station.