

SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORY CENTER

Information Contacts:

Geoffrey Reynolds
616.403.0210
reynoldsg@hope.edu

John Peters
269.857.2967
jppubrel@gmail.com

HISTORY OF HOLLAND-AREA BOATBUILDING HIGHLIGHTS SDHC'S JULY 16 "TUESDAY TALK"

JULY 5, 2019 -- The nearly 200-year tradition of boatbuilding in the Holland area will be recalled at Saugatuck-Douglas History Center's "Tuesday Talk" on July 16, 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.

Presenter Geoffrey D. Reynolds will tell of this area's rich and long history of companies that produced sailing ships, pleasure boats, working boats, military craft and more, along with the men and women who built the industry with creativity, skillful hands, financial ingenuity, and by working together.

Looking back to the 1830s, Reynolds explains, the need for a "Great Lakes ship" to move locally made products from here to customer communities around Lake Michigan gave local craftsman an incentive to build sailing vessels hewn from locally grown timber. Then, builders of small pleasure craft began to market their products to local resort owners so that their guests could enjoy the nearby lakes. At the beginning of the 20th century, local craftsman combined pleasure craft with marine engines to give passengers a less strenuous day on the lake. Many local craftsmen, eager to become successful entrepreneurs, explored innovative designs in wood, steel, aluminum, fiberglass, even concrete.

Much like other local industries around the nation, he notes, boat craftsmen in small shops competing with larger firms either lost market share or failed for other reasons, eventually reducing hundreds of small companies to just a few conglomerates today. Their personal stories demonstrate how difficult it was to be successful for long periods of time, especially when faced with fluctuating economic cycles. Still, the history of their struggles and achievements gives context to understanding of one our state's earliest industries, and a sense of the tireless spirit that helped create this West Michigan community.

Reynolds has been The Mary Riepma Ross Director of The Joint Archives of Holland, Hope College since July 2001. Previously he was collections archivist there from January 1997 to July 2001, having graduated from Wayne State University with a Masters in Library and Information Science (MLIS) and an Archival Administration Certificate in 1995. He currently serves as a board member of the Holland Historical Trust, the treasurer of the Dutch-American Historical Commission, membership chairperson for the Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies, and Executive Director of the Holland Area Historical Society. His research into the American pleasure-boat industry and vintage boat racing history led to his first book, *Boats Made in Holland: A Michigan Tradition*, which was published in May 2018 by The History Press.

A summer tradition since 1996, SDHC's 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 Renee Zita and Bill Underdown.

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 the months ahead, visit www.MySDHistory.org.

PHOTO ATTACHED SEPARATELY (see jpeg "Jenison 1911")

Caption: 1911 photo showing the new motor launch "Jenison", built by Jesiek Bros. Livery along Lake Macatawa near Jenison Park, helps visualize local boatbuilding history at SDHC's July 16 "Tuesday Talk".