

SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORY CENTER

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HISTORY OF PRESBYTERIAN CAMP RECALLED AT JULY 9 "TUESDAY TALK"

JUNE 28, 2019 -- The 118-year life of Saugatuck's former Presbyterian Camps -- earlier known as The Forward Movement Park and Camp Gray -- will live again at Saugatuck-Douglas History Center's "Tuesday Talk" on July 9, 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.

Presenting "The History and Personal Stories of The Presbyterian Camp Property From 1896-2014", SDHC volunteer Larry LaBine will draw upon more than four decades of his own camp-life experience there, as well as archived documents from SDHC and the Chicago Presbytery, plus photos and stories from others who visited or worked there. From these sources he conjures a nostalgic look at how this 125-acre, lakefront-duneland respite originated and evolved as society changed, before finally yielding to residential development in 2014.

Conceived in 1896 and initiated soon after by Methodist minister Reverend George W. Gray, as an outreach of his Forward Movement Settlement House in Chicago, the camp was intended as a sanctuary where the residents of that city's industrial slums could experience the beauty of a natural environment. In the 1950s, the property was split into several smaller campgrounds under the umbrella name Presbyterian Camps.

"Now that Presbyterian Camps has vanished into time", LaBine says, "it's important that we preserve its rich history so future generations will know what a magical place this was, and how it enhanced the lives of so many people by connecting family and friends with nature and spirituality."

Labine, former Chicagoan working in facility/project management with California-based commercial real estate services firm CBRE Group, from his home in Douglas, was part of the SDHC team that created the Camp Gray display station in the "Back-In-Time Garden" behind the Old School House. The display tells visitors about the Camps' history in three informative panels of text and period photos.

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 board member Leslie Thompson.

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.

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PHOTO ATTACHED SEPARATELY (see jpeg "Campers_ca_1910")

Caption: Archive photo views camp life in The Forward Movement Park ca.1910, at SDHC "Tuesday Talk" July 9.