

SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS  
**HISTORY**  
CENTER

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SDHC'S MARCH 11 PUBLIC PROGRAM TELLS STORY  
OF HOW A "LOST" LOCAL ARTIST WAS REDISCOVERED

FEB. 28, 2020 -- The story behind Saugatuck-Douglas History Center's newest art exhibit showcasing nearly forgotten Saugatuck artist Robert Fort will be aired in an informal "gallery talk" at SDHC's next free public monthly program on Wednesday, March 11, starting at 7pm in the Old School House, 130 Center Street, Douglas.

In the midst of fifteen Fort paintings combining new SDHC acquisitions with several pieces on loan from other collections, Exhibit Curator Ken Kutzel will spin the tale of how the exhibit originated and came together, while showing images of additional Fort paintings not included in the display. To "set the stage", SDHC Executive Director Eric Gollanek will comment on the organization's mission and exhibits, both current and upcoming, and light refreshments will be served.

Says Kutzel, "we're really excited to share what we've learned about Robert Fort during the last several months, and we're eager to hear guest feedback regarding the pieces in our exhibit, other Fort artwork they may know about, and any personal information they might have about the artist."

Robert Harry Fort (1875-1954), born in Bloomington, IL, moved to Chicago in 1890 where he became a commercial artist and architect. A recreational sailor known to friends as Harry, he visited Saugatuck in 1904, loved the village and surrounding area, and convinced his family to relocate here in 1905.

When eye problems prompted Fort to abandon his profession, he turned to boat building and is perhaps best remembered for creating a 16-ft sailboat prototype called *Papoose*, which was used in competitions at the Saugatuck Yacht Club beginning in 1934.

Fort lived a quiet life on Griffith Street in Saugatuck, with his sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Newnham. A self-taught painter, he mastered the oil-on-canvas medium to create visual memories of his community, many of which reflect his mid-century view from the Newnham House front porch. During the 66 years since his death at age 78, Fort has faded into the mist of Michigan's Art History.

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 SDHC President Steve Hutchins, and boardmember Bill Underdown.

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

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PHOTO ATTACHED SEPARATELY (see jpeg "FortArt")

Caption: Curator Ken Kutzel (L) and SDHC Director Eric Gollanek review details on Fort exhibit introductory panel preparing for March 11 gallery talk.