SAUGATUCK WOMAN'S CLUB (SWC) 1904–

The SWC is looking good for being 85 years old. The SWC members and community are smiling.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, women's clubs became a powerful social space for women to come together, develop their talents, and influence the world. Clubs were created to give women a space to share ideas among equals. The first women's clubs were established in the 1860s and by 1910, 800,000 women belonged to women's clubs nationwide. The Michigan State Federation of Woman's Club was organized in 1895 and Saugatuck's club began soon after that.

In 1904, Mrs. Hattie (C.S.) Bird, who lived at Allegan Street in a white Italianate home, invited her affluent women neighbors from the "Hill" to a meeting to discuss forming a Woman's Club. Ten women attended and these women became charter members of the Saugatuck Woman's Club.

Within two months these women chose the name Saugatuck Woman's Club, elected officers, chose the organization's colors of green and white, adopted a constitution and bylaws, and established a motto. They also promoted inclusiveness, inviting women from the working areas of Saugatuck—the Flats— and the countryside to join the SWC. They offered courses of study about "Our Country and Current Events" and established Saugatuck's first library.

Soon the SWC's popularity and increasing membership outgrew available meeting spaces in homes, the Congregation Church room, and Koning Hall. They set a goal to find a home of their own, launching a fundraising campaign for a building in 1915.

Unbeknownst to anyone, in 1934, Minnie Brueckman, a SWC member, willed her family's home at 303 Butler Street to the Club along with land and \$5,000. She wanted a home for the SWC and for the library. Within a year the women incorporated the club and began planning. Every year, SWC members take flowers to the cemetery to honor her.

The SWC building and auditorium was built from 1935-1938 by renowned Chicago School and Colonial Revival architect Thomas Tallmadge. He first visited Ox-Bow in 1915; he was impressed by the environment and atmosphere of Saugatuck & Ox-Bow. Tallmadge was well acquainted with Saugatuck and generously agreed to draw all the sketches for the proposed building free of charge and took great personal interest in the project.

The Cornerstone laying ceremony was held in September 1935. The Superintendent and all of the workers were in attendance as well as their SWC wives. On September 30, 1938, over one hundred witnessed the mortgage note burned by President Daily, celebrating that the SWC had paid the off cost of its new home. It had taken 24 years to truly be out of debt.

After a Club discussion in 1921, the SWC Club sent a letter to President Harding urging him to support world disarmament. Before WWII, the women again wrote their congressmen that as members of the Club they did not favor war unless in the case of invasion. At the same time, the library book collection kept expanding.

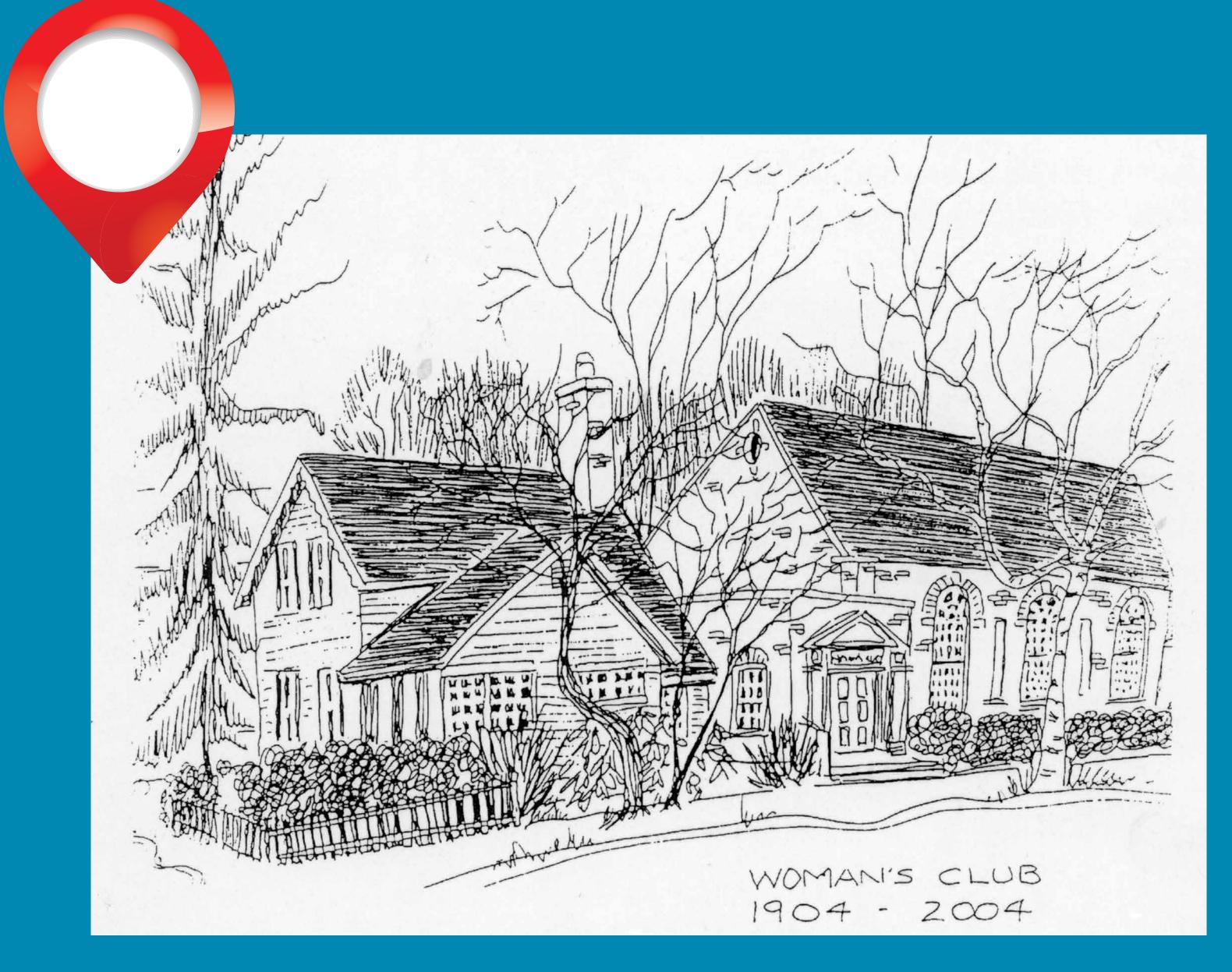
The SWC members established the first historical museum in the Brueckman house when the library moved across Butler Street in 1969. In celebration, the SWC published Our 1st 100 Years in 2004 and then a play was written and performed by the members.

The SWC is proud of their building and their service to the community.

Saugatuck Women's Club researched by fellow Team HerStorian, Peg Sanford.







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