

Remembering When ...

Our History

THE PUMP HOUSE

As the saying goes, the pump house has had a “good run” in local history. First designed and built just after the turn of the century, it helped bring running water and fire hydrants to the village. The water delivery system was designed by local engineer Harry Bird. On the north shoulder of Mt. Baldhead, 190 feet above the village level, a 100,000 gallon brick and concrete reservoir was constructed. In the shadow of the big dune, pumps in the building lifted water from wells to the reservoir where gravity took over and enabled the pressurization of the village system. What a day that must have been—real indoor running water and no more fire-fighting barrels of water on mill roof tops!

The pump house was designed by John Alvord a summer resident of Douglas, who also just happened to be a primary designer of nothing less than the city of Chicago water system. In addition, Mr. Alvord was one of the movers and shakers who created the Shorewood lakeshore community. Just south of Shorewood, the Alvord cottage is an admired piece of architecture. The pump house design is of the “prairie craftsman” school – it has an wide-eaved roof, walls of red brick and tall narrow windows looking out to the river.

By 1910, the village populace - thrilled with running water- now eyed the benefits of electricity. The pump house size was doubled and generators installed to bring to Saugatuck its first (and last) power generation station. Within ten years more efficient power plants took over and the water pumps were moved to the other side of the river. Decades passed, the pump house became a storage shed for the public works department, then fell into disrepair and was scheduled for the bulldozer.

No way. That is a “diamond in the rough” thought Dr. William Shorey and his wife Sally. The Shorey family of Chicago, knew the building well from summers in Saugatuck at Oxbow. Lucky for all of us they had a bright and history saving idea. Would the village lease the building for a summer cottage in return for its restoration? A deal was struck with the Village and the Shorey family launched their personal pump house restoration effort.

Some twenty years later – when the Shorey lease ended – the building was again leased, this time to the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society. The Society and many generous donors have since invested copious amounts of sweat equity and nearly \$150,000 in turning the 103 year old building and grounds into a proud and award-winning museum facility. Come over and take a look!

By Jack Sheridan



Dr. Shorey



Sally Shorey rallies the troops summer of 1974

Top - As seen from the corner of Water and Lucy - the original pump house ca 1905.

Middle - Proud workers pose after doubling the building size in 1910.

Left - The front entrance 1974

The Remembering When feature is the creation of Jack Sheridan and Jim Schmiechen of the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society. We remind our readers that this year's SDHS Pumhouse Museum exhibit titled “Lincoln's Ready-Made Soldiers: Saugatuck Area Men in the Civil War” is now open. The historic museum is located on the west side of the Kalamazoo River at the foot of Mt. Baldhead. It is open daily, noon to 4 p.m. until Labor Day, and then on fall weekends. There is no admission charge.

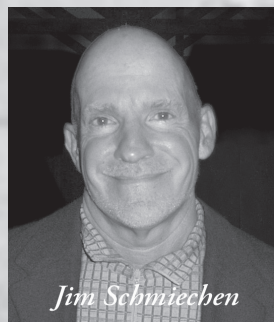
In addition, special presentations featuring various historical topics will be presented at the museum on Tuesdays and Saturdays, 11 a.m. to noon, beginning June 21.

We welcome your comments on Remembering When. Call 269 857-7901, email us at sdhistory@accn.org or write to Box 617 Douglas, MI 49406. SDHS historical images can be seen on the SDHS web site at www.sdhistory.com and all historical photos are available for purchase in print sizes up to 12x17.

Our historical image database is growing through your contributions. We scan your old photos—you keep the originals—and we then provide you with a CD of your digitized images.



Jack Sheridan



Jim Schmiechen