



Renovation Diary photos by John Peters

THE STORY CONTINUES

LIFE AFTER SCHOOL

The Douglas Union School was replaced by the modern and larger Douglas Elementary school in 1957. From 1963 until 2005, the old building found new life as the Old School House apartments.

The building is a remarkable survivor as the only remaining Union School building in Michigan. The building has been placed on the State Register (1990) and National Register of Historic Places (1995). Unfortunately, this recognition is no guarantee of preservation or protection from demolition. As the City of Douglas became an increasingly popular residential community in the 2000s, the value of the land exceeded the value of the apartments. Property-owner Nancy Johnson Budd, a preservationist and member of the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society, was concerned about the building's future.

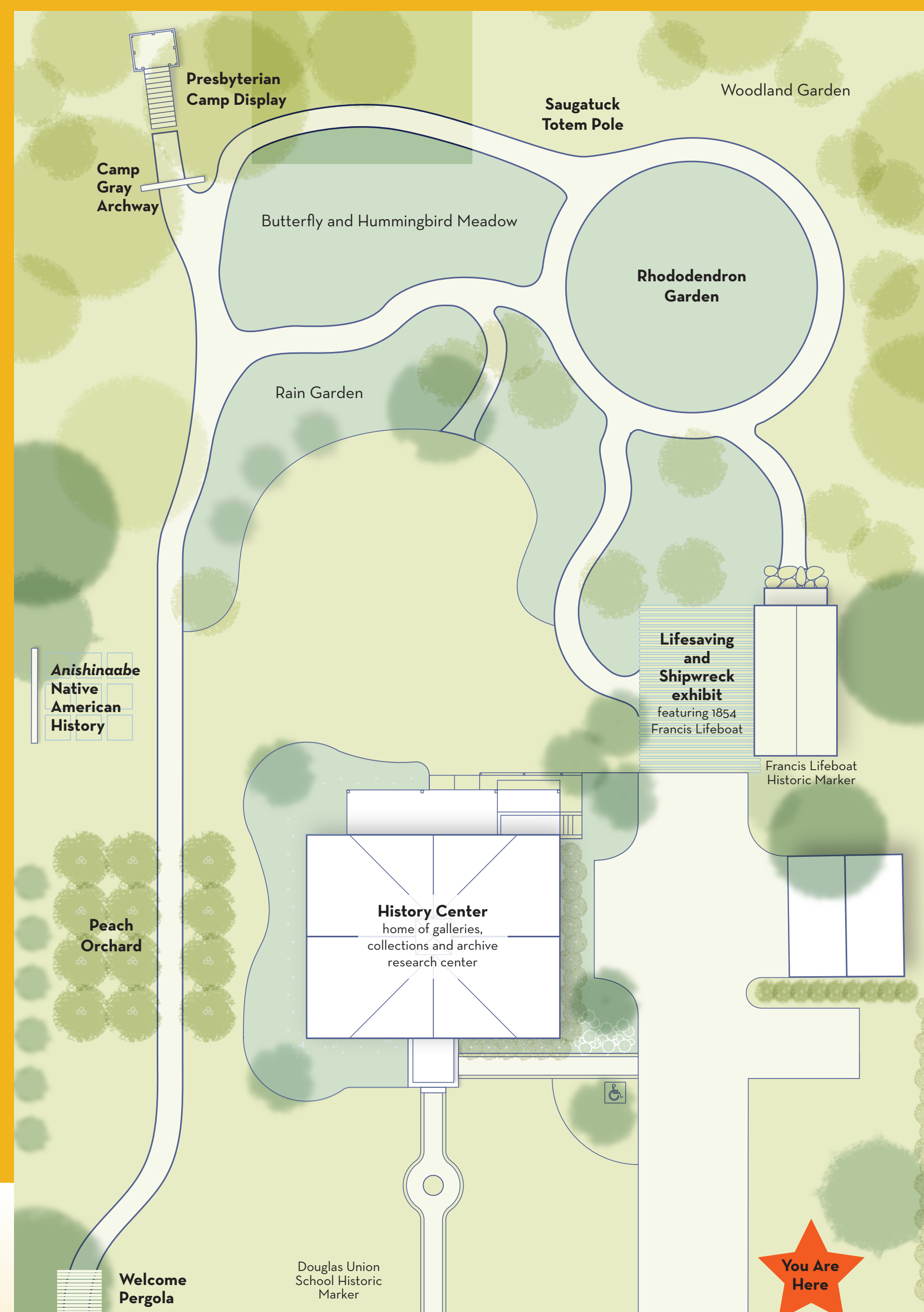
Under threat of sale and demolition, the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society reached an agreement to purchase the building, restore it, and use it for the Society's expanding community heritage programs and archives. The \$1.4 million restoration project was completed in 2012 thanks to hundreds of donors and volunteers.



In 2008, the original 1892 bell was returned as a gift from the children of the Douglas Elementary School.



The bell was hoisted to the restored schoolhouse belfry and today it is rung to mark special events.



Today the buildings and grounds include space for learning and relaxation open to the public year-round. Come explore the azalea and rhododendron gardens, the peach orchard, and exhibits on Camp Gray, Saugatuck Totem Pole, and Anishinaabe Native American history of the region. The boat barn features a rare 1854 "Francis Metallic" U.S. lifesaving boat used in Saugatuck and an exhibit on Lake Michigan sailing and shipwrecks.

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