

# Remembering When ...

## OUR HISTORY

View from Baldhead 1874

PHOTO BY  
H.C. SIMONSON.

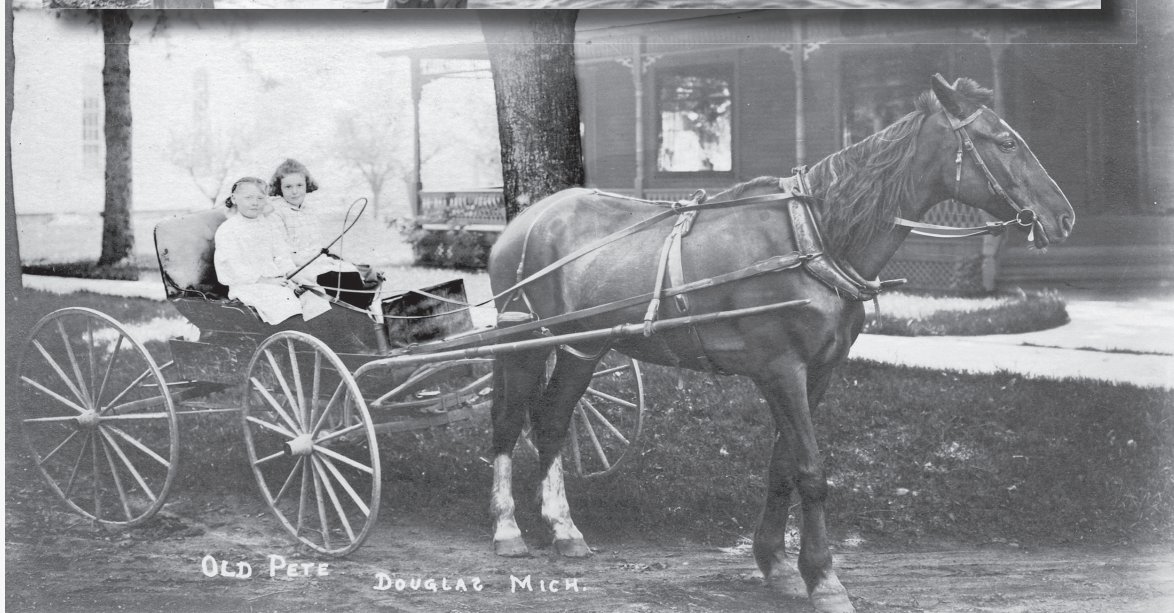


With the passage of the Private Mailing Card Act in 1898 postcards, came into wide use in the United States. The act freed private publishers from government restrictions and what was considered unfair competition from government issued cards. In the next few years the demand for postcards grew and the craze to send and collect them spread rapidly.

This golden age of postcard publishing from 1898 to 1920 coincided with a boom in Saugatuck tourism. About 1907 Herman Simonson saw an opportunity to make his photo hobby his business and was quick to grab the brass ring. Herman had an eye for the kind of photo that made a great postcard. Saugatuck was the place that had it all, including visitors with money to spend. There were plenty of Chicagoans who wanted to remind the folks back home of the good times on the beach, at the Big Pavilion, climbing Mt. Baldhead, camping along the river, boating--what a wonderful vacation they were having! Simonson embellished the interesting scene with any natural prop that came along. His innovations included his employee-Dynamite the donkey- fancy new touring cars, a ferry full of ladies, crowds streaming off a steamer into the brightest spot on the Great Lakes!

Operating from his shop-studio on Culver Street (now site of the Loaf and Mug) and a smaller shop on Water Street near the ferry landing he and assistants took thousands of photographs. Their greatest contribution to the record of our history was the production of "real photo" postcards taken between 1907 and 1920. These were imaged on a large glass plate or later on film and provided a sharp postcard sized photograph for the front of the card. The back of the card was divided for the address and the message. Simonson or one of his assistants would take a photo (at the scene of the action), develop the negative overnight, print it with duplicates on heavy postcard sized photo paper and deliver the order the next day. In addition to custom order, good shot postcards were sold to the public.

The resulting cards are an excellent and now quite scarce, historical record. Original cards are highly prized by collectors--check them out on Ebay! The best cards were distinctively lettered in Herman's hand with a short description and sometimes with the distinctively printed, "Photo By H. C. Simonson." *By Jack Sheridan*



*Clockwise from bottom left -*

*Old Pete pulling a carriage was a winning prop.*

*Swimming beach just inside the new piers ca 1910.*

*An assistant on Dynamite ready for work.*

*The Studio on Culver Street.*

*Selling cards next to the Studio.*

*The Remembering When feature is the creation of Jack Sheridan, Rob Carey and Jim Schmiechen of the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society. We welcome your comments on Remembering When. Call 269 857-7901, email us at [sdhistory@accn.org](mailto: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](http://www.sdhistory.com) and all historical photos are available for purchase in print sizes up to 12x18. 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.*

