

SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORY CENTER  
AND  
MUSEUM

# Review of Achievements 1994-2014

Telling the Stories  
and Preserving  
the History of the  
Saugatuck-Douglas  
Area since 1886





**THE DUNES** | Saugatuck's magnificent landscape is the centerpiece of the area's attraction for residents and visitors alike. It supported the native pine forests that enabled early logging settlements. Today, along with expanses of Lake Michigan shoreline, it provides splendid recreational opportunities for people of many interests and ages.



## THE PLACE

For more than a century the historic Lake Michigan port villages of Saugatuck and Douglas have offered the best in cottage life, entertainment, sports activities, fishing, the arts, and "back-to-nature" opportunities, all set amidst some of America's finest dunelands.

Although the giant steamships that once carried urbanites to the West Michigan shore have been replaced by automobiles, many of the reasons for coming have changed little.

**"A preservationist is someone who knows you can't possibly have a future unless you have a past."**

**—Ken Burns**



**SAUGATUCK'S "MAIN STREET"** | The Kalamazoo River makes its final bend before emptying into "the big lake," Lake Michigan. The cities of Saugatuck and Douglas lie along opposite banks of the river. From Native American times to the present, the Kalamazoo has brought commerce, transportation, and recreation to the area.

**THE "BRIGHTEST SPOT ON THE GREAT LAKES"** | From its construction in 1909 to its destruction by fire in 1960, funseekers from across the Midwest flocked to Saugatuck to swing and sway to the strains of America's best known dance bands at the Big Pavilion, Saugatuck's largest building and America's second largest dance hall. In its heyday, the Big Pavilion welcomed shiploads of weekend partygoers from Chicago as WLS radio broadcast the festivities live.





**THE BARREL** | Since 2010, the Society has been involved in an effort to preserve the beloved Root Beer Barrel (ca. 1952) originally located on Center Street in Douglas. An excellent example of the roadside architecture of the “automobile age,” preserving the barrel means keeping memories alive for many area residents and visitors.

Leslie (Christenson) Such, who worked as a carhop in the 1960s recalled providing “curb service,” carrying trays of frosted mugs of root beer and foot long hot dogs out to cars as people stopped on their way back from the beach.



Saugatuck and Douglas remain the home of Ox-Bow (the summer venue of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago), sandy beaches that are among the country’s best, and fine hotels. There are more recent attractions as well, including an arts center, professional and community theater, and an annual chamber music festival.

Combined with Saugatuck Township, the area’s full-time population numbers around 5,000. Add to those the tens of

**SUMMER SCHOOL OF PAINTING** | For more than 100 years students at Ox-Bow have had the opportunity to study with prominent American artists in the pastoral setting of the Ox-Bow grounds. The former Riverside Inn remains the social hub of the campus with various purpose-built studios stationed throughout the wooded dunelands and beside the lagoon.







thousands of part-time residents, who split their time between the Saugatuck area and primary residences in Chicago, Detroit, or other Midwestern cities, seeking connections to an historic sense of place. To complete the picture, many thousands of tourists who vacation in the area give tourism the distinction of being the chief driver of the area's economy.

The Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society, which operates the History Center and Museum, occupies an important position in the community's cultural and educational infrastructure. Its membership includes over 700 full-time and seasonal residents, the blend of which adds a uniquely cosmopolitan flavor to the local culture. The surrounding, largely rural, Allegan county ranks below average in *per capita* income and has been designated by the Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs as an "underserved county" with regard to the availability of arts and cultural opportunities.

**A MAGNET FOR SUMMER FUN** | Saugatuck's "Oval Beach" has been rated by MTV and Condé-Nast as one of the top beaches in America. Over the years, thousands of visitors each summer have concurred, including Time-Life photographer and Saugatuck resident, Bill Simmons, whose photo (above) documented sun worshippers on Labor Day, 1949.

"....in my times [the Oval] was a magical place, equal to a romantic South Sea island or Mediterranean glamor spot, but at the same time as friendly as a neighborhood block party. Because it was special, visitors returned year after year, often unable to articulate what it was that attracted them."

—Helen Gage DeSoto



**SEASONAL KICK-OFF** | The annual Members' Preview Reception, traditionally held on the Saturday night of Memorial Day Weekend, officially marks the beginning of summer for SDHS members who get their first glimpse of the Museum's annual exhibition and an opportunity to re-connect with old friends.

## MUSEUM & HISTORY CENTER

Founded in 1983, the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society established the Museum (1992) and History Center (2009) to further document, preserve, and present the area's history. With a statewide reputation for innovation, the Society acts as an economic generator building a strong heritage tourism magnet for the Saugatuck-Douglas community, Allegan County, and the state of Michigan.

### Raising the Roof<sup>8</sup> THE SECOND STORY



An Exhibition  
of the Buildings and Architecture  
of the Saugatuck and  
Douglas Area



Members socialize and sample hors d'oeuvres as they preview the 2006 "Raising the Roof" exhibition.



## MISSION & GOALS

The Museum and History Center engage the community through an array of mission-based programs and activities, framed within one or more of five goals:

**Goal 1** | Creating high quality places for exploring and presenting our collective past.

**Goal 2** | Building audiences through expanded public access to local history, heritage education, and preservation awareness.

**Goal 3** | Producing an array of programs for diverse audiences connected to annual themes.



**2010 EXHIBITION** | The Museum exhibit, “A Place Called Ox-Bow,” ready to be opened to visitors on Memorial Day Weekend 2010. By the end of the exhibit’s run in October, nearly 10,000 visitors had passed through the Museum to learn more about this famous summer art school, which had an enormous influence on Saugatuck-area history.

**A POPULAR PUBLIC SPACE** | A visitor stops along the riverfront garden pathway that leads to the Museum to study one of the Learning Station panels designed to help visitors better understand the history of Saugatuck’s physical and cultural landscape. Open to the public year round, an estimated 30,000 visitors pass through the gardens annually.





**PLANNING AND EXECUTING** | The many projects of the Society are conceived and executed by a cadre of extraordinary volunteers, passionate about engaging with their community and its history. Above a committee is at work in the Old School House History Center.



**THE MAP COLLECTION** | Maps at the History Center are a popular attraction for visitors and members alike.

**LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR YOUNG PEOPLE** | Saugatuck Middle School students with their project—historic site model building combined with historical story telling.



**Goal 4** | Storytelling through exhibitions, heritage preservation, books, tours, and programs.

**Goal 5** | Engaging dedicated volunteers and the membership in management and operations.

**PRESERVATION OF A SIGNIFICANT ARTIFACT**  
Society members get their first glimpse of the freshly restored Francis Lifesaving Boat as it is unveiled at the Members' Preview, Memorial Day Weekend, 2006.





**EXPRESSING GRATITUDE FOR MANY JOBS WELL DONE** | Congregating in the History Center gallery, volunteers enjoy the annual Fall “Thank You” chili supper that was cooked and served by the Board as an expression of gratitude for the many hours of work and intellectual capital that volunteers have put forth in service to another successful season.



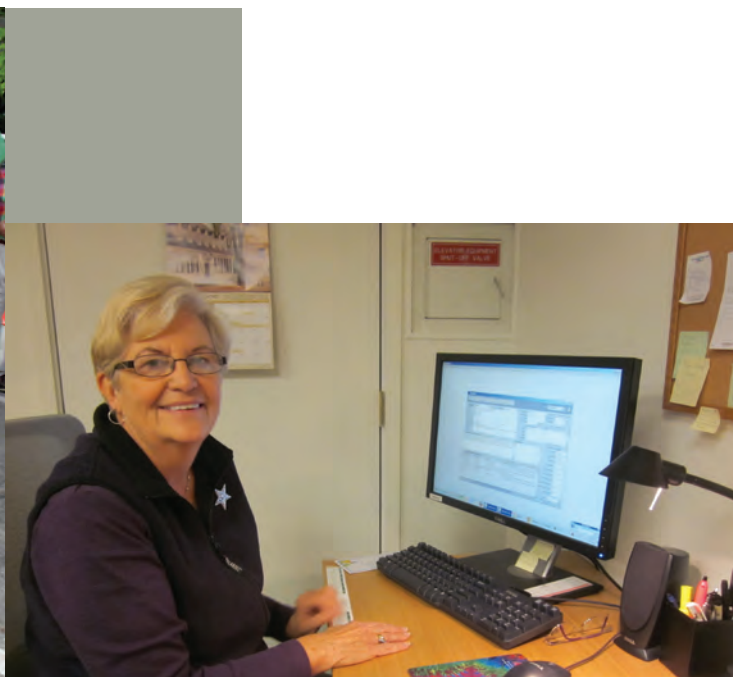
## VOLUNTEERS

With skills and interests as diverse as carpentry expertise needed for restoration projects like the Lifesaving Boat, master gardener certification for the waterfront gardens at the Museum, or the sculptor’s eye, skill, and tools that turned trees into custom, site-specific benches for the garden, volunteers of all stripes find a welcome and much-appreciated place for their talents and time.



**KUDOS** | Volunteers’ many long hours of work are rewarded not only with appreciation from the community and visitors, but also with prestigious state-wide awards.





**AN ALL-VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION** | The working Board and the cadre of over 100 volunteers include more than 50 museum hosts, a large garden design and work group, tech support group, archiving and collections team, and the exhibition production group. A small recordkeeping and administrative staff carry out program and facilities administration needs.

**PROGRAM WORKING GROUPS** | Ongoing groups that work on programs include: Exhibitions, Publications, Heritage Preservation, Family History and Genealogy, Oral History, Gay History, The Art History Project, and Monthly Programs, as well as ad hoc groups that work on special projects, e.g., the Old School House Renovation Task Force, the Root Beer Barrel Rescue Project, the Life Boat Restoration Project, etc.

**SUPPORT WORKING GROUPS** | Support groups include: Volunteer Hosts, Membership, Archives, Communications, Special Events, Technology, Gardens & Landscape, Facilities, Finance, Fundraising & Grants, and Administration, among others.







## FACILITIES

The Society operates two primary facilities.

**THE OLD SCHOOL HOUSE HISTORY CENTER** (*above*) occupies the former Douglas Union School (1867), a stately structure located on a prominent site on Center Street in Douglas.

**THE SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORY MUSEUM** is housed in the historic Village Pump House (1904) on the Saugatuck harbor front at Mt. Baldhead Park.

Both of these historic structures are set within extensive gardens designed as outdoor learning centers. The buildings and the gardens are open for Society programs free of charge and available to the public for rental for other community events.



**A JEWEL ON CENTER STREET** | In 2006 the Society purchased and began renovation of the National Register-listed Douglas Union School (1867) as a venue for the study of local history. Opened in various stages between 2008 and 2012, the History Center is the Society's main base of operations. It houses a large assembly room, a history study room, a gallery for the display of the Society's growing collection of Saugatuck-Douglas area artworks, the archives, a technology center, and Society offices.



**THE HISTORY MUSEUM** | Always free, the Museum is open to visitors from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m. daily from Memorial Day through Labor Day and weekends through October. It attracts 8,000–10,000 visitors per year with an additional 30,000+ visitors to the garden and outdoor Learning Stations.



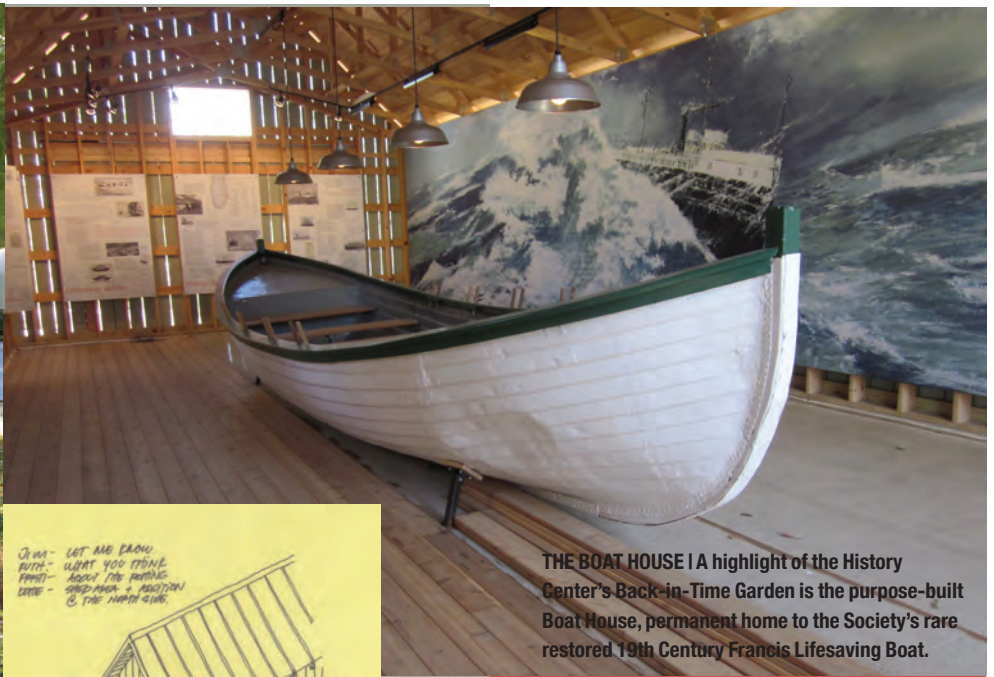
**THE WILSON PAVILION** | Framing a splendid river view, the pavilion is the entry gate to the Saugatuck-Douglas History Museum and Gardens. Along the garden pathway seven Learning Stations teach visitors about Saugatuck's physical and cultural riverfront landscape.







**GETTING SMART IN THE GARDEN** | Stroll and learn our local history via story stops in both the Museum and History Center garden pathways—from peach growing and sand dunes to azaleas and shipwrecks.



**THE BOAT HOUSE** | A highlight of the History Center's Back-in-Time Garden is the purpose-built Boat House, permanent home to the Society's rare restored 19th Century Francis Lifesaving Boat.



The north side of the Boat House (architect: Nicolaas Wilkens) features a Potting Shed and outdoor teaching area for the garden.



The ongoing schedule of activities at the History Center and the Museum includes exhibitions of local history projects by Saugatuck Public School classes, monthly Society programs, a series of weekly "Tuesday Talks" during the summer, semi-monthly meetings of a Family History Group that works on genealogy, a Writing Group, the LGBT History Group, and numerous other meetings and daily activities of the Society. From the History Center, the Society manages its website, which includes a large image blog and online research capability; a book publication program; preservation and documentation projects; a collaborative exhibition and lecture program, and a summer "Root Camp" to bring kids into the "history garden."



# PROGRAMS



**EXPANDING PROGRAMS** | With three levels of program and activity space, the History Center opened in 2009 to quickly become the place for the invention of programming for expanding audiences.

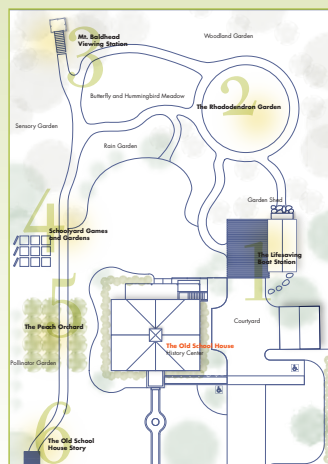


## Our Audiences & Programs

**PARTNERING WITH OUR SCHOOLS** | Mr. Shaw's Advanced Placement Class of 2011-12 collaborated with a curator to plan and write the History Center lifeboat and lifesaving exhibit.

Looking for a map? Are you a postcard collector? Wanting to learn about shipbuilding or your family's history?

The History Center offers multiple opportunities for exploring both the past and the present.



**TAKING HISTORY OUTDOORS** | The History Center's one-acre "Back-in-Time" garden makes history come alive. Community gardeners and landscape professionals joined history curators and designers to convert the old schoolyard into a comprehensive learning experience, with the shipwreck/lifesaving Boathouse, five themed gardens and peach orchard, six "history story" stops, and over 200 azalea and rhododendron plantings (in collaboration with The Azalea Society of Michigan).





**STREETSIDE HISTORY** | Local history goes for high design. The History Center's street entrance gets design attention from the best of Michigan's designers.

**OPENING DAY** | The Boathouse Shipwreck Exhibit, 2012



**PARTNERING WITH OUR SCHOOLS** | Third and fourth grade school kids begin their study of local history and geography with an annual visit to the Museum and History Center.

WHEN THE BELL RINGS AT 11 A.M.

**2012 TUESDAY TALKS**  
At the Old School House History Center

**Lakeshore Life and Fruit Farming: Past and Present**  
by Joan Davidson — sponsored by

**The Hungry Village: Exploring Agri-Business on the Lakeshore**  
by David Green — sponsored by

**Go in Fishin'—Lost Stories and the Big Catch**  
by Mike Peel — sponsored by

**Theater as History: The Red Barn Story**  
by John Joyce — sponsored by

**Re-Designing Douglas: Connecting People to a New Douglas**  
by Ryan Klotzsch — sponsored by

**Saugatuck & Douglas Boys in World War 2: Rediscovering the Dope Newspaper**  
by Jim Schaeffer — sponsored by

**Art Collection Secrets: Stories from the SHS Art Archives**  
by Ken Klotzsch — sponsored by

**Look, See, Hear, How Does Our Garden Grow?**  
by Ruth Johnson, John Migh, and Greg Raymond — sponsored by

**Good Looking? The Art of Looking Good**  
by Martin Leshinski — sponsored by

**TUESDAY TALKS**  
11 a.m. at the Old School House  
130 Center Street, Douglas, MI 49605  
Free admission. Donations always welcome.  
For more information, visit [www.sahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.sahistoricalsociety.org)

Saugatuck Center for the Arts and the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society present

**Small Towns Big Picture**  
The Bill Simmons Photographs: Saugatuck-Douglas, 1941-1960

JANUARY 14 through MARCH 9  
Bertha Krueger Reid Exhibition Hall  
at Saugatuck Center for the Arts  
Open Weekdays  
9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
and during evening events  
Admission Always Free

**OPENING RECEPTION**  
Saturday, January 14  
6:00 to 9:00 p.m.  
preceding the re-screening of  
the documentary film "everydayPeople"  
at 6:00

A collaborative project of the Saugatuck Center for the Arts and the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society

**Center Arts**  
SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PO Box 107  
Douglas, MI 49605  
269.457.2700  
www.saugatuckarts.org

**a passion for painting**  
celebrating a century of art in saugatuck-douglas

August 13 to October 4

Reception and Opening Reception  
Saturday, August 13, 6:00-9:00 p.m.  
and during evening events

Admission Always Free

PO Box 107  
Douglas, MI 49605  
269.457.2700  
www.saugatuckarts.org

**Center Arts**  
SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**PIE**  
A Slice of Pure Michigan

**AN EXHIBITION**  
Celebrating creativity with a slice of growing MI  
inviting to art and history

Thursday, June 2  
5:00 p.m. | Reception  
7:00 p.m. | "Movie Night"  
Location: Saugatuck Center for the Arts  
Open weekdays 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
and during evening events  
Admission Free

August 29 through June 20  
Bertha Krueger Reid Exhibition Hall  
Saugatuck Center for the Arts  
Open weekdays 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
and during evening events  
Admission Free

A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT OF  
Center Arts  
SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PO Box 107  
Douglas, MI 49605  
269.457.2700  
www.saugatuckarts.org

**A SUMMER SERIES** | "Tuesday Talks" at the History Center as well as lectures and exhibitions at the Saugatuck Center for the Arts highlight various topics that complement the annual Museum exhibition theme. For example, "A Passion for Painting" featured the area's best-loved professional and non-professional painters of the past and was staged to coincide with the Museum's "A Place Called Ox-Bow" exhibition. Likewise, "Pie: A Slice of Pure Michigan" and "Small Towns, Big Picture" were corollaries to the "Everyday Life" theme.



# PROGRAMS

**STANDING ROOM ONLY** | A sampling of our 20 monthly and Tuesday Talk programs for 2014, which drew a cumulative attendance of more than 1,500.



**OUR RURAL HERITAGE** | In an early summer monthly program at Pleasant Hill Farm near Fennville, Joan Donaldson, author and proprietor, with her husband, John, guides Society members through the four seasons of farm life—from blueberry picking, vegetable gardening, raising goats, maple syrup production, to the 19th-century architectural models for their farmhouse and buildings.



**QUITE A BUZZ** | Michael Pcolinski, local beekeeper, presented “Bee Garden Buzz,” a Tuesday Talk that gave members insight into the life cycle of the honeybee and explained the process of honey production.



**BURIED HISTORY** | “Ghosts in the Graveyard” was the October 2014 Monthly Program in which the History Center Players told lively stories of local characters of the past.







**HOUSES ON THE MOVE** | A Tuesday Talk about how three historic homes of architectural and historic significance were saved from demolition by creative-thinkers who moved them to new locations in the community.



**HISTORY CENTER GARDEN** | As the Back-In-Time Garden grows, so does its programming. In 2014 the Garden was the scene for the Center's first "Root Camp." Dressed in period clothing, kids engaged in garden planting, played traditional schoolyard games, wrote scripts, listened to shipwreck stories, and more.



**A WELCOME SPLASH OF SPRING COLOR** | John Migas, member both of our garden committee and the Azalea Society of America, presented a Tuesday Talk on the art and appreciation of azalea and rhododendron growing.





**PUBLIC TELEVISION PARTNERSHIP** | In 2011 the Society's board initiated a collaboration with WGVU Public Television of Grand Rapids for the production of "The Saugatuck and Douglas Story"—the first in WGVU's "Michigan Hometown Stories" series to be aired throughout Michigan.

## PROGRAMS



**NEWSPAPER PROJECT** | The Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Chronicle is a free "back-in-time" broadsheet newspaper with lively stories that encourage readers to seek out local sites. The paper was conceived by the Society as a vehicle to attract new audiences for local history. Advertising sales support the publication as well as the Society's general operations. Over 20,000 copies are distributed annually.



**THE ARTIST AS HISTORIAN** | Growing out of our community's legacy as an art community, the SDHS has developed a collection of local artworks and established the History Center Art Gallery for the study and appreciation of the history of the area's art and artists. The growing collection consists of more than 100 artworks by famous and not-so-famous artists and architects.



**ON-SITE LEARNING** | Tour venues provide the public a variety of opportunities for experiencing local history and geography: program-specific tours, self-guided walking tours, village trolley tours, elementary school walking tours and museum visits. In 2012 these tours reached well over 1,000 participants.





**A SALUTE TO OUR VETERANS** | With support from the Society's team of historians, local veterans record their past with public presentations and oral history documentation. The archival recovery of the WWII Douglas veterans' newspaper, *The Dope*, brings to life many forgotten chapters of the life and times during the War at both the front and at home.



#### YOUNG SCHOLARS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM |

Since 2010 the Museum and History Center have collaborated with several Michigan public universities to bring advanced pre-professional college students to work with the Society's leaders in developing new and more diverse audiences for the study and enjoyment of local history. The scholars shown above worked at the History Center during the summer of 2010.



**FRIEND-RAISERS AND FUNDRAISERS** | An ongoing series of culinary events, the popular "Dine Around Town" evenings support the work of the Museum and History Center. From gourmet dinners to casual cocktail parties, guests visit private homes and businesses throughout the community to enjoy great food and great times while supporting a great cause.



Eats  
"History Lives Here!"





## EXHIBITIONS & PUBLICATIONS

### A 22-Year Record of Success

Since 1993, the Society has welcomed visitors to 31 local history exhibitions at its various venues—identifying collective memory and encouraging local story telling. By offering regularly-changing exhibitions, audiences revisit to discover additional meaningful interpretations of our collective past, hence the Society's motto:

**"History Lives Here."**

Annual Museum exhibits are augmented by complementary exhibitions, produced by middle and high school students, who provide fresh ways of interpreting the past. The Society collaborates in producing arts and humanities related exhibitions at the Saugatuck Center for the Arts.

**A ROBUST EXHIBITION PROGRAM** | Exhibitions at the History Museum have garnered awards statewide from the Historical Society of Michigan, the Michigan Museums Association, and state and national grants.





# EXHIBITIONS & PUBLICATIONS

**1994 | THE BIG PAVILION: THE BRIGHTEST SPOT ON THE GREAT LAKES |** The Society's first exhibition in its new museum in the Pump House featured the waterfront dance hall (1909) that put Saugatuck on the Midwest's vacation map, bringing thousands of people of all classes, many by giant steamships from Chicago, to experience the modern big-band phenomenon.



**1996 | WISH YOU WERE HERE: POSTCARDS FROM THE PAST |** A postcard sent home was the preferred form of "social media" for much of the 20th century, and the sights and good times of the Saugatuck area offered many possibilities for messages back home. Today the cards tell us about what was "cool" then and hint at what travel life was like.



**1997 | PAINTING THE TOWN: A HISTORY OF ART IN SAUGATUCK AND DOUGLAS |** Attracted by the scenery—the vast dunes, lakes, and woods that stretch along Lake Michigan—by 1900 artists were coming in droves. They established an art colony and several painting schools, rapidly making Saugatuck a famous venue for "plein air" landscape painting. (Accompanied by the book, *Painting the Town. A Century of Art in Saugatuck and Douglas*, see p. 21. The book and exhibit were featured in the article "Art as History" in *Michigan History Magazine*, May-June 1998.)

**1998 | HEROES, ROGUES, & JUST PLAIN FOLKS** Saugatuck and the surrounding area have had an uncommonly diverse and interesting population including writers, diplomats, shopkeepers, engineers, dancers, ferrymen, and television personalities. The exhibition's 72 biographical narratives provide an understanding of the community. (Accompanied by the book, *Heroes, Rogues, & Just Plain Folks*, see p. 21.)



**1999 | RAISING THE ROOF: THE BUILDINGS AND ARCHITECTURE OF THE SAUGATUCK AND DOUGLAS AREA |** For many people, "Reading" buildings is a way of connecting with the past. Using high-quality photo documentation, building models, and architectural artifacts, this exhibition was a complete social and spatial history of the villages. (Accompanied by the book: *Raising the Roof: A History of the Architecture and Buildings of the Saugatuck and Douglas Area*, see p. 21.)



**2000 | LOST & FOUND: GHOST TOWNS OF THE SAUGATUCK AREA |** Some towns die and leave behind only the ghosts of history. This exhibit separated fact from myth to honor ten area ghost towns and what became of them. Particular attention was given to the buried village of Singapore at the Saugatuck harbor, often referred to as "Michigan's Pompeii." (Accompanied by a book of the same title, see p.21.)



**1995 | DOUGLAS: THE VILLAGE OF FRIENDLINESS.** A history of Douglas with text, photographs, artifacts, architectural models and a giant mobile of "village portraits." This exhibition charted the "Douglas Renaissance" of the 1980s, marking the renewal, restoration, and economic growth of largely abandoned Center Street.



# EXHIBITIONS & PUBLICATIONS

**2001 | OFF THE RECORD: THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF BILL SIMMONS** | Based on one of the finest collections of photographs of mid-century America, these photographs offer a unique window into small-town America. (Accompanied by a book of the same title, see p. 23.)



**2002 | STORM FIRE & ICE: SHIPWRECKS OF THE SAUGATUCK AREA** | With emphasis on the great Chicora disaster of 1895, "Storm, Fire, & Ice" looked at 36 maritime tragedies and some amazing acts of heroism connected to the busy Lake Michigan port of Saugatuck. (Accompanied by a book of the same title, see p. 23.)



**2003 | SNAPSHOTS: A SAUGATUCK ALBUM** Essays and photos give voice to the thousands of people who came to these shores, interacting with each other and with nature as they looked for fortune, good health, social freedom, and good times. (Accompanied by a book of the same title, see p. 23.)

**2004 | TALES OF THE VILLAGES: A SAUGATUCK- DOUGLAS STORY BOOK** | From lakeshore children who collected pennies to build a chapel, to Burr Tillstrom's puppet show days, this exhibit told tales of nine local residents. (Accompanied by a *Tales of the Villages Coloring Book*, see p. 23.)



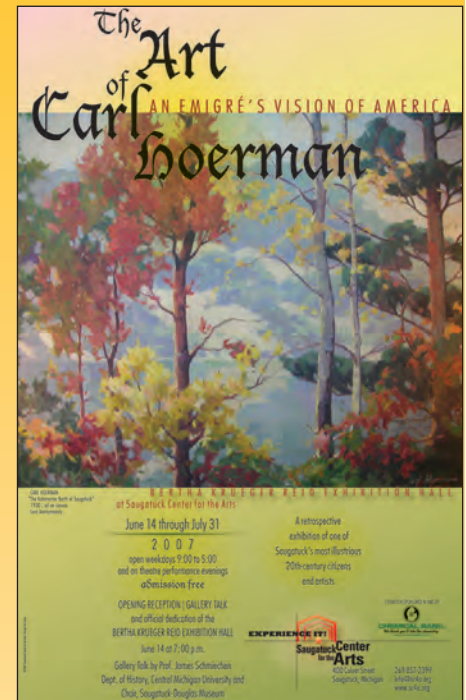
**2005 | LINCOLN'S "READY MADE" SOLDIERS: SAUGATUCK AREA MEN IN THE CIVIL WAR** With emphasis on newly discovered letters and autobiographies, this exhibit told the story of Saugatuck men who fought in the American Civil War. (Accompanied by a book of the same title, see p. 23.)

**2006 | RAISING THE ROOF: THE SECOND STORY** | This exhibition posited that architecture can reveal many layers of sometimes common, often unique history of our villages. A notable component was stories and drawings about local places by Saugatuck Middle School students. (Accompanied by the book, *Raising the Roof: A History of the Architecture and Buildings of the Saugatuck and Douglas Area—Rev. Ed.*, see p. 23.)



**2007 | WALLS TALKING: STORIES OUR HOUSES TELL** | Featuring over 40 "house stories," including room reconstructions that told of three very different lives—a single farmwoman, a local artist, and a famous American muralist. The exhibit featured 27 stories by Saugatuck Middle School students.

**2007 | THE ART OF CARL HOERMAN: AN ÉMIGRÉ'S VISION OF AMERICA** | In collaboration with the Saugatuck Center for the Arts. Hoerman (1885-1955) was a well-known Saugatuck *plein air* artist and architect. His personal vision of the Arts and Crafts Movement reflected his German heritage. This was the first retrospective of his work.



**2008 | MOMENTS IN TIME: THE ARTIST AS STORYTELLER** | Paintings, lithographs, and drawings told about Saugatuck life in a way rarely recorded by photographers or writers, featuring the reconstructed studios of two well-known artists, William Olendorf and John Norton. (Accompanied by a portfolio of 13 prints and drawings from the exhibition and the book, *History By Camera. Saugatuck and Douglas Photographs. 1870-1970*, see p. 23.)





# EXHIBITIONS & PUBLICATIONS

**2009 | SUMMERTIME: A CENTURY OF LEISURE AT THE LAKE MICHIGAN SHORE** | A ground-breaking exhibition that considered the history of "summertime" through artifacts, images, stories, and photographs—from steamships full of funseekers to fishing, boating, beach culture, swimsuit fashion, cottage life, and sexual liberation. A scale model highlighted the story of the famous Big Pavilion dance hall (1909-1960). The exhibit featured a display of "Postcards from Home" by high school art classes. The "Summertime Post Office Station" yielded over 300 summertime postcards drawn by young visitors. (Accompanied by the book, *The Big Pavilion: The Brightest Spot on the Great Lakes*, see p. 23.)



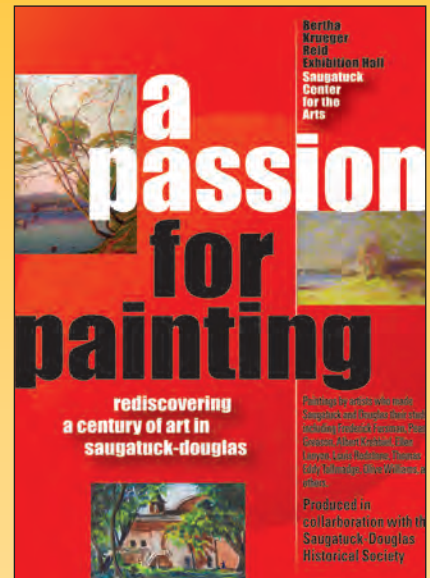
**2009 | BLAST FROM THE PAST** | Saugatuck Middle School 6th graders wrote historical fiction and built models to tell summertime stories for a concurrent exhibition staged at the Old School House History Center.



**2010 | A PLACE CALLED OX-BOW: 100 YEARS OF CONNECTING ART, NATURE, AND PEOPLE** | The first exhibition of the history of America's longest existing art colony/school. The Ox-Bow Summer School at Saugatuck was founded by rebellious artists from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1910. The exhibit featured work from French *plein air* painting to American abstraction, Ox-Bow's artists and its social scene, and ceramic garden sculptures by Saugatuck High School art students. (Accompanied by the book, *A Portrait of Ox-Bow, Architecture, Art, and Artists.*)



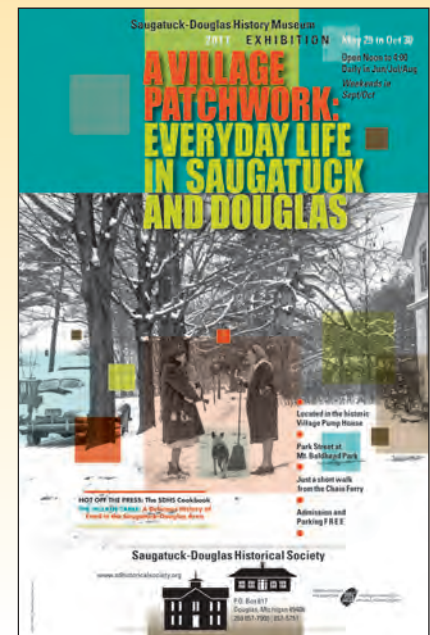
**2010 | A PASSION FOR PAINTING: REDISCOVERING A CENTURY OF ART IN SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS** | A collaborative project with the Saugatuck Center for the Arts. 33 paintings illustrated the range of work that has made Saugatuck synonymous with art and art history in the Midwest, including names such as Frederick Fursman, Albert Krehbiel, Ellen Lanyon, Louis Redstone, and Thomas Eddy Talmadge. (Accompanied by a lecture, "A Passion for Painting," September 16, 2010.)



**2011-12 | A VILLAGE PATCHWORK: EVERYDAY LIFE IN SAUGATUCK AND DOUGLAS** | A look at "off-season" village life and the villagers who engaged in work, school, church, civic life, and much more. Saugatuck High School art classes interpreted local life in the manner of Joseph Cornell-style box art, using artifacts from the archives, with accompanying stories. (Accompanying book, *The Village Table: A Delicious History of Food in the Saugatuck-Douglas Area*, see p. 23.)



**2009 | SIGNS OF THE TIMES: HISTORIC SIGNS FROM THE SAUGATUCK AND DOUGLAS AREA** | A collaborative project with the Saugatuck Center for the Arts. Using 24 signs as markers of time and place, old signboards chronicled the commercial past, telling of places lost in time, ways of work, and everyday social and economic life.





# EXHIBITIONS & PUBLICATIONS

## 2011 | PIE: A SLICE OF PURE MICHIGAN

A collaboration with the Saugatuck Center for the Arts. "Pie" was a colorful story of how fruit from local orchards made its way to distant markets and the unlikely path from piemaking to art, in which a large, abandoned pie factory was transformed into a venue for the performing and visual arts.



2012 | SMALL TOWNS, BIG PICTURE. THE BILL SIMMONS PHOTOGRAPHS: SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS, 1941-1960 | A collaborative project with Saugatuck Center for the Arts. Time-Life photographer Bill Simmons took nearly 3,000 photographs of the villages of Saugatuck and Douglas between 1939 and 1960. Lost for decades, the 31 over-sized Simmons images provided a unique window into Mid-century Michigan life.



2012 | SMALL TOWNS, BIG CHANGES. An exhibit of 72 drawings by Saugatuck Middle School 6th graders at the History Center, with a book of oral interviews by the same title.

2012 | ROWING THEM SAFELY HOME: THE STORY OF SHIPWRECKS AND LIFESAVING ON LAKE MICHIGAN | The restored 1854 Francis Gallinipper life saving boat is surrounded by display panels and a 47-by-9-foot mural of the 1895 wreck of the steamship Chicora as a permanent exhibition in the Boathouse. Featured at the opening of the Shipwrecks exhibit was the Saugatuck High School 12th Grade Advanced English Class production of their play, "Mutiny Aboard the Ship Milwaukee, 1842."



2012 | SHIPWRECKS, HEROES, AND SCALLYWAGS Saugatuck Middle School 6th Graders combined historical fiction writing with local shipwreck stories, artwork, and model building.



## We Interact.

We invite community participation in exhibiton building, which encourages fresh—and often surprising—interpretations of the past. All of our exhibits are planned, written, designed, and produced by members of the community, bringing about innovation and personal investment in heritage preservation.

2012 | 1936 MINIATURE CIRCUS | The story of model circus building, featuring the rare authentic 1936 scale model A. G. Barnum's circus with over 200 moving parts was witnessed by 1,085 visitors during this 10-day exhibit at the History Center.



2013-14 | DUNELANDS: FOOTPRINTS ON THE SAND Stories of nature, man, and the stewardship of our area's spectacular dunelands. Featuring a panoramic photograph by James Cook and hanging beach-debris sculpture by artist Ted Reyda.



2013 | MT. BALDHEAD EXHIBIT | Saugatuck Middle School 8th Grade project, "History as Poetry."



2014 | "ROOT CAMP" | A week in the History Center Garden and Boat House learning about local history.



## PUBLICATIONS







HERITAGE FESTIVAL | Attracting hundreds of participants, the frequent Heritage Festival home walking tours build community pride and teach the value of design that respects the best of the past and adds value to the Michigan economy.



HERITAGE AWARDS | Since 2001, the annual Heritage Preservation Awards program has recognized over 230 homeowners and builders for projects that respect the town's scale and character.



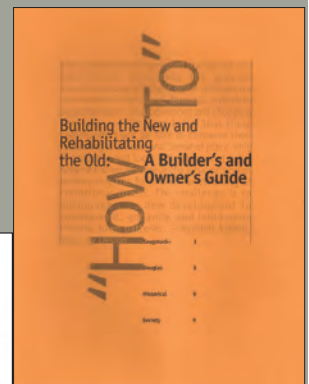
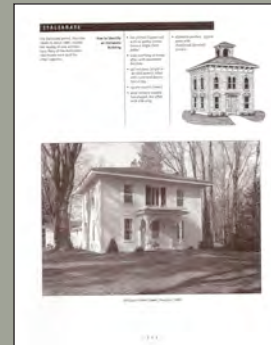
## Heritage Education

A Richer Present,  
A Sustainable Future

Since 2000, with attention to school children, residents, businesses, and visitors, the society's Heritage Preservation Group has worked to document what is good about the old, demonstrate good preservation and construction practices, and make history part of community life and the local economy.



The local newspaper series, "Remembering When" and "History Mystery" bring stories of people, places, and events to a large readership and introduce them to the Society's vast photographic archives.



In 1999 the Society published *Building the New and Rehabilitating the Old: A Builder's and Owner's Guide*, a "How To" book to guide those involved in local building projects towards more preservation-sensitive solutions. Hundreds of copies have been distributed free of charge.





**DOUGLAS UNION SCHOOL \$1.4 MILLION HISTORY CENTER RENOVATION** | Ceased school operation in 1957 and reclaimed for community service in 2006-09. After thousands of hours of volunteer planning, design, and hands-on labor, this extraordinary example of Michigan Civil War-era school architecture was reborn as the Society's History Center.



**PUMPHOUSE BECOMES A MUSEUM** | When the 1904 architecturally significant village pumping station (engineer-architect John Alvord) fell into disuse in 1992, the Society undertook a restoration/renovation project, converting the structure into the area's first museum. With the addition of a garden pathway, entry pavilion, and outdoor "learning stations," it is now one of Michigan's most highly-acclaimed small museums.

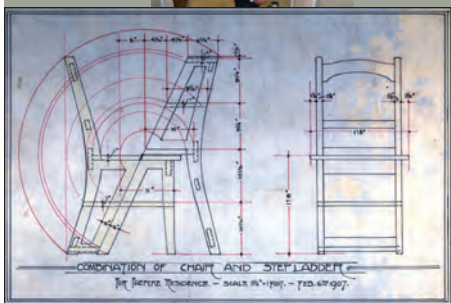


**SIMMONS PHOTO COLLECTION REDISCOVERED** | Lost for half a century, an important collection of nearly 3,000 photographic negatives of Saugatuck (1940-1961) by Time-Life photographer William Simmons were retrieved, digitized, archived, and indexed, culminating in the exhibition, "Off the Record" and a 133-page book with 150 of the images.

## Heritage Preservation: Participatory History

Some Significant Projects

For many volunteers the mystery, complexity, and creative ingenuity in the act of salvaging historic objects is a way of embracing a sense of place and time. Each one of these projects was managed by members of the community.



**ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS SAVED** | This endangered collection of 33 original architectural drawings by Carl Hoerman (1885-1955) was rescued and placed in the Society's archives and is now available for public study.



**RARE CANOE GIVEN A NEW HOME** | An 1845 Indian dugout canoe, made locally by "Indian Joe" Shashaguay, was gifted to the Society and placed on public display in 2011.

**FRANCIS LIFEBOAT RESCUED** | Abandoned, the rare Francis regulation iron lifeboat (1854) was restored in 2004-06. Designed by Joseph Francis, a founder of the U.S. lifesaving movement and built by builders of the Civil War-era "ironsides," it is one of only two known to remain in existence.



**ROOT BEER BARREL SAVED** | A beloved Douglas landmark and significant example of mid-century American roadside architecture, the barrel (1940s) was scheduled for demolition when volunteers stepped in to rescue, restore, and return it to public use.



# Recognition & Awards



- 1997 Quest for Excellence Book Design Award, *Painting the Town*  
Michigan Museums Association
- 1999 Quest for Excellence Graphic Design Award, *Raising the Roof*  
Michigan Museums Association
- 1999 Quest for Excellence Exhibition Design Award, "Raising the Roof" Exhibition  
Michigan Museums Association
- 2000 Quest for Excellence Graphic Design Award, *Lost & Found*  
Michigan Museums Association
- 2000 Exhibition Design Award, "Lost & Found" Exhibition  
Michigan Museums Association
- 2002 Award of Merit  
Historical Society of Michigan
- 2002 Tourism Achievement Award  
Saugatuck-Douglas Convention and Visitors Bureau
- 2003 Preserve America Designation  
National Park Service, US Department of the Interior
- 2004 Institutional Recognition in book, *Rooted In Place/Cultivating Community*  
Michigan State University  
Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs (MCACA)
- 2004 Quest for Excellence Exhibition Award, "Tales of the Villages" Exhibition  
Michigan Museums Association
- 2006 Heritage Guardian Award (1st recipient)  
State of Michigan
- 2006 Best Museum Award  
*Lake Magazine*
- 2007 Quest for Excellence Exhibition Award, "Walls Talking" Exhibition  
Michigan Museums Association
- 2008 Preserve America Designation  
National Park Service, US Department of the Interior
- 2010 Quest for Excellence Graphic Design Award, *Raising the Roof*, Revised Ed.  
Michigan Museums Association
- 2010 Museums for America Designation  
Federal Institute for Museum and Library Services
- 2010 Exhibition Award, "A Place Called Ox-Bow" Exhibition  
Historical Society of Michigan
- 2012 Book Award, *The Village Table*  
American Association of State and Local History





# Financial Highlights



## GRANT FUNDING

*(1-for-1 matches fulfilled for all grants.)*

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 2006 | The Pleasant T. Rowland Foundation<br>\$425,000                                      |
| 2008 | Preserve America<br>National Park Service, US Department of the Interior<br>\$23,265 |
| 2010 | Museums for America<br>Institute of Museum and Library Services<br>\$47,000          |
| 2011 | Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs<br>State of Michigan<br>\$7,500       |
| 2012 | Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs<br>State of Michigan<br>\$12,000      |
| 2013 | Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs<br>State of Michigan<br>\$12,000      |

## MAJOR CAPITAL FUNDRAISING

*(includes Grants, above)*

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 1993-2002 | Museum & Garden restoration/improvements/additions<br>\$102,000           |
| 2005-2006 | Old School House purchase/renovation as the History Center<br>\$1,250,000 |
| 2010-2012 | History Center, Back-In-Time Garden, Boat House<br>\$212,365              |

## THE BOTTOM LINE

Total capital investment in Museum and History Center properties  
\$1,564,365.

Total outstanding SDHS debt  
\$0





Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society  
P.O. Box 617  
Douglas, MI 49406  
269 857-5751  
[www.sdhistoricalociety.org](http://www.sdhistoricalociety.org)

SDHS Board of Directors  
2013-14

Sharon M. Kelly, *President*  
Bill Hess, *Vice-President*  
Sharon Bauer, *Secretary-Treasurer*

*Members-at-Large*

James Cook  
Steve Hutchins  
Ed Kelly  
Christina Lewis  
James Schmiechen  
Judi Vanderbeck  
Renee Zita

The Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society believes in equal access to facilities and opportunities for all persons. It is the policy of the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society not to engage in discrimination or harassment against any person because of race, color, religion, gender (including pregnancy), national origin, ethnicity, ancestry, age, marital status, disability, height, weight, gender identification, or sexual orientation and to comply with all federal, state, and local nondiscrimination, equal opportunity, and affirmative action laws, orders, and regulations. This nondiscrimination policy applies to employment, access, and treatment in SDHS facilities, programs, and activities.

© 2014 Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society

text | James Schmiechen  
design | Ken Carls  
photos | SDHS Archives

Activities supported by a grant from



and

