

Fall Newsletter

August-October 2022

The Saugatuck-Douglas History Center preserves local history and inspires learning to inform and improve our community.

From summer to holiday season

The last few weeks saw a brisk shift from summer-like weather to gale-force winds and driving rain more suggestive of November than the Halloween spooky season.

While many of our summer visitors and residents have headed home or to warmer climes, people continue to visit exhibits at the Museum and History Center. This year, like many fall seasons before the 2020s, visitors come in fewer numbers, yet spend longer in the galleries and talk more with our docents.

This newsletter offers you some reflection on exhibits, programs, and parties we've enjoyed as well as a couple you'll want to see for yourself.

Eric Gollanek
Executive Director

New publication from *History Book* exhibit artist David Lee Csicko



November Meeting on 180th anniversary of the wreck of the Singapore vessel, S.S. Milwaukie



Come out to the History Center on **Wednesday, November 9th at 7 PM** to learn about the notorious wreck of the S.S. Milwaukie, lost off the coast of Saugatuck Dunes State Park 180 years ago almost to the day in November of 1842.

This program is free and open to the public, held in the upper meeting room at the History Center in Douglas. Presented by Kevin Ailes, President of the Michigan Underwater Preserve Council, we will learn more about the myth, legends, and facts of this remarkable Singapore-built ship lost in a wintry November gale in our backyard!

Artist **David Csicsko** and historian **Owen Keehnen** came by the History Center for a special event in October to share their new book, ***LGBTQ+ Icons***.



Signed copies of the book are available for sale at the History Center and will be sold at the SCA Holiday Market on December 3rd at the History Center booth. **Read more later in this newsletter...**



See this painting and read more about it on our online collections page [here](#)

Collections Update A Fish Shanty Story



Back in July, the History Center received a message from Victoria Hutchins: ***Would we be interested in a painting of fishing boats along the Kalamazoo River?***

You bet we were! Later that month Victoria arranged to get the painting to the History Center, along with **Cecilia Peel** and **Marilyn Hebert Demerest** (seen here with Director Eric Gollanek at the Shanty.)

Both grew up in fishing families as is well known by longtime residents and visitors to the **Historic Demerest Shanty** exhibit on Water Street in Saugatuck. Cecilia was the wife of Donald Peel, a family with close ties to fishing. In addition to living in Saugatuck, they also made Wyoming their home for many years.

Thank you to the **Delke and Peel Families** for this donation. Through closer analysis, collections volunteers led by Sally Winters identified the artist as Jean Peel based on a hidden signature!

The History Center relies on volunteers and generous donors to help care for and build our art and artifact collections. Please contact archives@sdhistoricalsociety.org to learn more.

Seeking Community Input for New Exhibit

The Saugatuck-Douglas History Center is seeking input from the community as it plans its largest and most comprehensive history exhibit yet.

Since 1994, the History Center has produced award-winning exhibits focused on specific topics like local shipwrecks, the Big Pavilion, or Mount Baldhead. These exhibits have been installed at the History Center's Museum at Mount Baldhead Park or at the History Center's Union School building on Center Street in Douglas. They have typically changed every one or two years.

While its prior exhibits have been produced by talented members and volunteers, this time the History Center hired a professional exhibit design and fabrication firm, **Learning Glass**, to help. Based out of the Cranbrook Institute of Science in Birmingham, Michigan, Learning Glass has a long track record of developing award-winning exhibits. Its clients are both large, such as the Detroit Zoo and Historical Society, and small, such as local history museums in Bloomfield Hills, Port Huron, and Greenville.

[Click here to join a community conversation/input session!](#)

The community conversation sessions will be in the meeting room at the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center at 130 Center Street in Douglas. Dates will be confirmed by email; you may also call for more information at 269-857-5751.

Expect a casual discussion with a small group of people who love our towns. Wendy Colsen will serve as moderator supported by Sally Winthers and Randy DiRosa.



For the 30th anniversary of its first exhibit in 2024, the History Center is planning a semi-permanent exhibit that explores the entire arc of our community's history—from pre-settlement to present. Among other things, the exhibit may attempt to answer the question – how did Saugatuck-Douglas happen? How and why did Saugatuck-Douglas become the unique place it is today? This exhibit will be installed at the History Center building in Douglas.

The History Center will also be working with the Saugatuck Public Schools to align the exhibit to complement the current second grade curriculum (the grade in which local history is addressed) based on state standards. A tour of the exhibit and accessory curricular materials may become part of the local history unit for second graders at Douglas Elementary School. The Center also intends to plan activities to involve students at Saugatuck High School with project-based learning or docent opportunities.

Thank you to the volunteers on the long-term exhibit team: Chair Randy Dirosa, Wendy Colsen, Richard Donovan, Bill Underdown, and Sally Winthers.

Holiday Party is Back at the Saugatuck Yacht Club!



Holiday Party

December 8, 2022 from 6-9 pm
Saugatuck Yacht Club

HOLIDAY BEVERAGES, HORS D'OEUVRES AND A LIGHT SUPPER
\$60.00 PER PERSON • SEATING LIMITED

*Please help remember our Christian Neighbors
by bringing non-perishable food items.*

A SPECIAL TREAT THIS YEAR WILL BE A SILENT AUCTION -
START YOUR HOLIDAY SHOPPING EARLY!

Join your favorite history-loving friends for holiday cheer at the **Saugatuck Yacht Club** on **December 8th** from 6-9 PM.

You'll be treated with holiday beverages including wine, beer, and a speciality cocktail, hors d'oeuvres and a light supper catered by Sharon Shanahan, plus a silent auction!

All this for \$60.00 per person. Seating is limited, so please click the button to reserve your place.

[Click here for your tickets today!](#)

Here's additional ways you can join the party:

Send a check to the History Center at PO Box 617, Douglas MI 49406. Please include the number and names of your party.

You may also email Janet Schmidt at jbschmidt@wmol.com or call the main office at 269-857-5751 to reserve your tickets.

History Center Awards announced at Member Picnic in September



At the Member Picnic on September 14, 2022, **Steve Hutchins** was awarded Saugatuck-Douglas History Center's top-honor **Charles J. Lorenz Award of Achievement** for 2022, and **Annie Hayes** takes SDHC's Volunteer of the Year.

The Lorenz Award was established in 1997 to honor the memory of Charles "Chuck" Lorenz, who gave generously of his time, talent, money and energy in researching the early history of Saugatuck and Singapore, as well as the formation and development of this organization.

Winners are selected each year by a special History Center committee, recognizing distinguished leadership in fulfilling the Center's mission to "help the community understand its past and use its history to shape its future and preserve its quality of life".

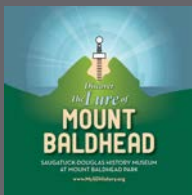
Lorenz Award honoree **Steve Hutchins** (receiving award presented by Secretary Mike Mok) has played an important role at the SDHC for more than 15 years. Hutchins's selection for this award recognizes his leadership of the SDHC and his extraordinary care and responsibility for its buildings, grounds, and facilities. A retired American Airlines Captain and US Navy aviator, Steve also served the community as President of the Board of Saugatuck Public Schools.

Steve has served as the Center's volunteer facilities manager for its two landmark buildings: the History Museum at Mount Baldhead Park (the historic Pump House) and the and History Center in Douglas (Douglas Union School).

Steve became a Board member in 2008 and was elected to the office of Board President in October 2015. In addition to the multitude of tasks and meetings these leadership roles require, Steve has continued to perform the many duties of head of facilities.

The ***Volunteer of the Year*** award honors outstanding service to the History Center.

Annie Hayes (photographed with Vice President John Kerr) joined the History Center in 2021 and has made a big impact first as a museum docent, then later as manager of the gift shop at the History Museum at Mount Baldhead Park. This summer, Hayes took on expanded responsibilities as Volunteer Coordinator across the organization, implementing Sign Up Genius as a new tool for scheduling and tracking volunteer hours.



News from the History Museum at Mount Baldhead

It's been a successful summer season at the History Museum with over 3,500 visitors from July through October.

The gift shop has generated over \$10,000 in sales for our organization in the last four months. Thank you to the gift shop team, especially **Annie Hayes and John Kerr**, for managing the shop, selecting quality history-themed merchandise, and displaying it to sell!

A fun 'Then and Now' moment presented itself this summer. SDHC member **Bonnie McVoy Verwys** stopped by to see the new exhibit and couldn't resist purchasing a painting of the Root Beer Barrel. She worked at the Barrel in the 1950s. Thanks for all you do to support and promote Saugatuck-Douglas history, Bonnie!



Bonnie 'car hopping' at the Barrel in the 1950s.



Winter Farewell to History Center-Douglas Exhibits



Planning is underway to 'travel' the award-winning Century of Progress exhibition in 2023. Possible venues at this time include: MSU campus, Allegan County Community Foundation Building, GVSU campus, and Michigan History Center in Lansing.

The exhibit will be open **Friday-Sunday from 11-3** through October and by appointment until it comes down as new exhibits get underway for 2023.

More than 2,500 visitors have seen the exhibit at the History Center and many more will learn about our unique community's history as the exhibit travels to new venues.

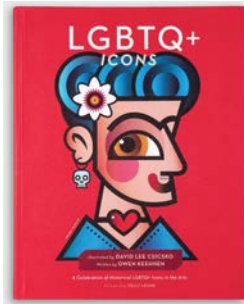
The Michigan Museums Association presented the SDHC with the 2022 Peninsulas Prize for the exhibit *A Century of Progress: 100 Years of LGBTQ History in Saugatuck-Douglas* in May of this year.



Spanning 100 years, the exhibit highlighted people and their stories living along the lakeshore and simultaneously displaying a timeline of national, state, and local LGBTQ developments for added context. These two small Lake Michigan towns were presented by interpretive panels with identifying factors contributing to the inclusive and diverse nature of the communities.

SDHC Returns to the SCA Holiday Market

Save the Date for December 3rd



The History Center will return to the **SCA Holiday Market** this year where the 2022 ornament will make its debut. We will also have 2021 Mt Baldhead ornaments available for sale, as well as personalized

and signed copies of David Lee Csicsko's book *LGBTQ+ Icons*.

[Read more about the Holiday Market here](#)



The 2021 best seller returns to the SCA market again this year, alongside a brand new limited 2022 ornament.

What landmark will be featured this year? Come to the market to find out!

History Lives Here Markers Launches for Second Year!

The Saugatuck-Douglas History Center is excited to announce the second phase of its popular program, ***History Lives Here: Historical Markers Project***, to celebrate history where it happened across our communities. Four new markers are planned for Saugatuck and Douglas in the spring of 2023, bringing history to life for residents and visitors.

This project is the work of a seasoned volunteer team headed by **Bill Hess** with support from **Sally Winthers, Vern and Linda Slusar, and Bill Underdown**. Project historian **Anna Minnebo** returns to develop research and writing of the interpretive panels.

New interpretive markers in development for the spring of 2023 include the history of **Oval Beach and Douglas Beach** as well as the history of sites along **Center Street in Douglas** and **Butler Street in Saugatuck**.

All eight markers have committed sponsors at this time. Thank you for your overwhelming response making this project possible for 2023!



Supported by a V-shaped steel structure fabricated locally by **Jeff Shashaguay**, the interpretive markers stand 7' tall by 2' wide. Full color interpretive panels (2' by 4') designed by veteran SDHC designer **Sally Winthers** use historic photos and text developed by the team to bring history to life for visitors and long-time residents alike. **Tim Erlandson** provided site preparation and concrete work to support the markers.

SDHC goes to the Michigan Museums Association



The scene from the Michigan Museums Association reception at Fort Mackinac on October 11. Chilly and historic networking with a view!



Executive Director **Eric Gollanek** and SDHC project historian **Anna Minnebo** attended the conference and presented a session at the annual meeting of the Michigan Museums Association (MMA) held on Mackinac Island from October 10-12, 2022. This professional development opportunity was supported by a **MACC Professional Development Grant** awarded through the **Holland Area Arts Council**.

This was the first in-person MMA conference in three years. The annual conference, which moves to a new location each year, has returned to Mackinac on the 50th anniversary of the first MMA conference, which was also held on Mackinac Island. The goal of every MMA conference is to bring the Michigan museum community together around professional development goals to elevate the museum community and cultivate vibrant communities. Over 150 attendees from museum of all types and sizes and from throughout the state of Michigan attended.



2022 MMA Annual Conference
Mackinac Island



2000 MMA Annual Conference
Mackinac Island

In addition to attending the three-day conference for professional development, the Executive Director of the SDHC organized a panel session for the conference. Titled *Recontextualizing objects for the 21st century: models for action and change*, the panel explores the ways three diverse Michigan institutions have dealt with complicated objects and the challenges and possibilities in re-contextualizing them. Each example—WWII-era Japanese “Good Luck” Flags, a West Michigan roadside “totem pole” sign, and the Lowell Showboat—raise questions about how to care for historical objects and how to interpret them to a 21st century community and audience.



Alongside museum professionals from the Lowell Area Historical Society and Grand Rapids Public Museum, Anna Minnebo presented on how the SDHC chose to reinstall a much loved work of roadside signage in the Back-in-Time history garden in 2020. The circa 1965 object was recontextualized as a mid-20th century example of Native American appropriation in pop culture. The reinterpretation also occurred alongside the dedication of a permanent exhibit of Anishinaabe history from pre-history to the present day and the installation of a public sculpture by Grand Rapids-based Anishinaabe artist Jason Quigno in the summer of 2022.

Mount Baldhead National Register Nomination Approved



On September 23, 2022, the State Historic Review Board in Lansing approved the National Register nomination for the decommissioned Mount Baldhead radar station to the National Park Service’s National Registry of Historic Places.

The state review board unanimously voted in favor of approving the Cold War era air defense radar station, officially known as the Saugatuck Gap Filler Annex for nomination to the National Register. Listing on the National Register is the first step towards eligibility for federal preservation tax credits and grant programs.

Recognizing the declining condition of the 1950’s vintage radar station, one of only two left in the country, Saugatuck City Council in 2021 authorized a group of local experts, city officials, and members of the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center to evaluate the property at the top of Mount Baldhead Park.

City Council members **Scott Dean and Russ Gardner** represented the city on the workgroup with John Kerr representing the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center. They were joined by what council member Dean would later refer to as a “dream team” of amateur historians, electrical engineers, and local craftsmen including **Vic Bella, John Kerr, Bob Sapita, Chuck Gustafson, and Brent**

Birkholz who had previously rebuilt the holiday star attached to the radar tower.



SDHC member and Friends of the Mt. Baldhead Radar Station historian Chuck Gustafson presenting to the State Historic Review Board in Lansing.
Photo by John Kerr

Check out some recent stories about the Mt Baldhead Radar Station and historic preservation in Saugatuck-Douglas!

Click here for the WoodTV8 feature taking you to the summit of Mt. Baldhead

Click here for the Holland Sentinel article on the National Register nomination

In Memoriam



Chris Spencer, lifetime member

November 22, 1943 - July 28, 2022
(Pictured center at the History Center in 2019)

[Link to obituary](#)

As a lifelong admirer of art, history, and music, Chris traveled the world with his husband and partner of almost 40 years, Charles Aschbrenner, who preceded him in death in 2016. Chris and Charles were generous supporters of the arts and history, having donated many significant artworks and LGBTQ history collections to the History Center as well as notable institutions across the region.



Len Lynema, *Coral Gables* oil painting, donated by Chris Spencer and Charles Aschbrenner



Carl Hoerman, *Grand Canyon* etching, donated by Chris Spencer and Charles Aschbrenner

SDHC Family History Group

Come and join the Family History Group on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 3:30pm at the History Center in Douglas for a discussion about researching your family history.

If you are not on our mailing list, please send a request to sdhsfamilyhistory@gmail.com and a link will be sent to you for the meetings. Hope you can join us. John Mayer and Judi Thomas

2022 Membership News

The Board of Directors approved a simplified membership structure in 2021.

- **Individual \$40**
- **Household \$60**
- **Business Partner \$250**
- **Lifetime Member \$1,000**

Membership runs through March 31 each year. Renewal information will be mailed in April.

Become a lifetime member! No annual renewals and special invites to Lifetime member only events!

Click here to renew or make a donation with PayPal today!

About the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center

The Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society was founded in 1986 by a group of charter members interested in preserving and sharing the unique history of Saugatuck, Douglas and the surrounding area. In 2016, the Society was renamed the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center to celebrate its growth and to recognize the development of the History Museum at Mt Baldhead Park and History Center-Douglas sites.

We are a vibrant non-profit 501(c)3 history organization with nearly 700 members residing in nearby communities and across the



The Saugatuck-Douglas History Museum at Mount Baldhead Park is located at 735 Park Street in Saugatuck, in the historic Saugatuck Pump House building.

The History Center--Downtown Douglas and Francis Surfboat Exhibit are located at 130 Center Street in Douglas.

country.

Members are the lifeblood of our volunteer organization.

To renew or join as a member, [visit our website](#) for more information.

The adjoining Back-in-Time Garden and Surfboat Exhibit are open daily.

The History Center Archives are available for research by appointment. For more information, e-mail the archives directly at archives@sdhistoricalsociety.org

History Center main phone: 269-857-5751
Archives direct phone: 269-857-7901



The SDHC is supported with a grant from **Michigan Humanities** and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act economic stabilization plan.

The SDHC also receives operational support from the Michigan Arts and Culture Council (MACC) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

Saugatuck-Douglas History Center
www.mySDhistory.org

Follow us on social media for photos and real-time updates

