

Winter Newsletter

December 2022-
February 2023

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



From holiday season to summer planning...

The excitement of the Holiday Season has led right into planning for the new year 2023. This year marks our 37th year of delivering history programming, exhibits, and caring for our community's memories and treasures.

Thank you to our members who supported the End of Year Campaign. We exceeded our goal of \$30,000, ensuring that we finished the year with the resources to deliver relevant and engaging programming for our community.

In 2023 the History Center will expand its History Lives Here: Historical Markers program at sites along Lakeshore Drive, Oval Beach, Butler Street, and Beery Field in Douglas. New exhibits on local history and women's history in Saugatuck-Douglas will open. The Museum at Mt Baldhead Park will reopen the *Lure of Mt Baldhead* exhibit in May.

This newsletter offers you some reflection on the accomplishments of the last few months. We look forward to sharing more updates in the months ahead with a full slate of programs you won't want to miss!

Eric Gollanek
Executive Director

Carl Hoerman paintings come to History Center



After a multiyear effort working with **Huntington Bank** to guarantee the Carl Hoerman paintings at their Mason Street branch remain on public view in our community, the paintings have found new homes! As of last month, the two 1929 paintings are now at the History Center in Douglas.



***Read more about these paintings
later in this newsletter...***

Special Program on African American History in February

In celebration of Black History Month this February, All Saints Parish of Saugatuck is hosting a special program on the history of Covert, Michigan and race in West Michigan in the nineteenth century.

Black+White

HEALING HISTORIES FOR FAITHFUL FUTURES

Black History Month 2023 at All Saints' Parish
252 Grand Street, Saugatuck

Sunday Worship in February
10:15 a.m.
Music from
Lift Every Voice & Sing
(The African-American Hymnal of
The Episcopal Church)

Sunday Morning Education
9:00 a.m.
February 12 and 19
"Truth and Reconciliation
Pilgrimage" to West Africa
Videos and Discussion

CELEBRATING COVERT, MICHIGAN

An evening with award-winning historian

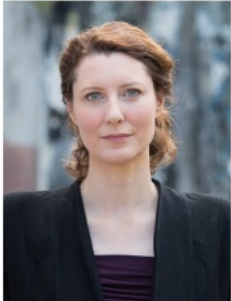
Dr. Anna-Lisa Cox

Wednesday, February 15

All Saints' Parish Hall

7:00 p.m.

Dr. Cox is an historian of nineteenth-century American race relations and racism. She is a Non-Resident Fellow at Harvard University's **Hutchins Center for African and African American Research**. Her original research underpins two exhibits at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture while her writing has been featured in a variety of publications including *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. Her recent book *The Bone and Sinew of the Land: America's Forgotten Black Pioneers and the Struggle for Equality* was honored by the Smithsonian Magazine as one of the best history books of 2018. Her book, *A Stronger Kinship*, won the Michigan Notable Book Award. She just completed a major project for the National Library of Congress Folklife Center collecting oral histories from multi-generational African American farmers in the Midwest.



[Dr. Anna-Lisa Cox](#) is a renowned scholar of nineteenth-century American history who has shared her expertise on the history of the Midwest locally and nationally. The History Center has been pleased to host programs with her. Please consider attending this fascinating and important program!

Holiday Party at the Saugatuck Yacht Club!



The Holiday Party at the **Saugatuck Yacht Club** on **December 8th** was a success for attendees and the History Center alike!

Thank you to Sharon Shanahan and her staff who catered the event. Special thanks to the organizing team of **Janet Schmidt** and **Renee Zita**. Thank you to our bar sponsor, **Jim Sellman** and wine sponsors **Arthur Ashley** and **Darin Reiling**.

This year also featured a silent auction with donated items from artists and merchants. The event raised \$2,500 to support the History Center's year end campaign. **Renee Zita** led the effort and it was a popular and exciting addition to the Holiday Party this year!



Thank you to our supporters who generously donated items for this event and fundraiser.

Amazwi Gallery, Anne Corlett, Ruth Crowe, David Csicsko, Douglas Root Beer Barrel, Kirby House, Landsharks, Lulu Cadieux, Susan Martel, Phil's Restaurant, Susan Reck, Retro Boat Rentals, Saugatuck Center for the Arts, and Wine Sellers of Saugatuck

Holiday Ornaments Sell Out...and Return for 2023

The History Center returned to the **SCA Holiday Market** on December 3, 2022 where the new **Saugatuck Chain Ferry** ornament made its debut. The 2022 **Mt Baldhead** ornament also made a return showing.



Cool temperatures didn't lower the enthusiasm for these hot items and the full run of ornaments sold out by the afternoon.

Good news for those wanting an ornament!

The 2021 **Mt Baldhead** ornament is available for purchase through the History Center in Douglas.

The 2022 **Saugatuck Chain Ferry Ornament** returns this spring with a new order arriving from Poland in the new few months.



Priced at \$50, this 4-inch-long hanging ornament is hand-crafted in Poland and continues SDHC's tradition of celebrating our community's historic sites and structures as holiday decorations.

Fashioned in blown glass and hand-painted in brilliant colors, this year's ornament depicts Saugatuck's Chain Ferry, one of the only operating hand-cranked passenger ferries in the world. Saugatuck began operating a chain ferry in 1857 as the primary means for crossing the Kalamazoo River before the building of the causeway and bridge near the Blue Star Highway crossing. Saugatuck's ferry has operated between Perryman and Water Streets in the same spot with brief interruptions for more than 150 years. The current ferry depicted in the ornament was built by RE and RJ Peterson in 1965, fabricated in steel and modeled on the gingerbread gothic stylings of nineteenth century river boats.

On December 28, 2022, the National Park Service **officially listed** the Saugatuck Gap Filler Annex on the National Register of Historic Places.

The decommissioned Saugatuck Gap Filler Radar Station was operational from 1958-1968 as part of a continent-wide effort to protect the United States from potential attack during the Cold War.



The effort to list the site on the National Register began in 2017 when historian **Jim Schmiechen** first planted the idea with **Chuck Gustafson**. Chuck's lifetime interest in the history of electronics and military hardware made him the ideal person to document and demonstrate the significance of Saugatuck's Cold War outpost. Together with the help of local preservation advisors **Paula Bedford** and SDHC directors **Nathan Nietering** and **Eric Gollanek**, **Chuck Gustafson** completed the draft nomination and worked through revisions. In total the nomination process took more than five years to complete.

The City of Saugatuck took an active role in stabilizing the site in 2021. That year, Saugatuck City Council 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 and perform important work clearing the site of vegetation, repairing damage to the structure, and securing the site.

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.

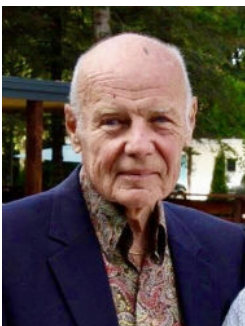
Thank you to the many, many volunteers who have worked to save the RADAR station and ensure it is recognized for its significance through the National Register of Historic Places.

Check out the January 2023 news coverage of the Mount Baldhead National Register listing!

[Click here for the Holland Sentinel article on the National Register listing!](#)

[Watch a Fox 17 news story on Mt Baldhead!](#)

In Memoriam



Dick Lyons, member

February 4, 1933 - January 27, 2023

Dick Lyons served as a key member of the team that restored the Francis Metallic Surfboat (1854) now on display at the History Center in Douglas.

[Link to obituary](#)

Jana Tibbits, long-serving SDHC accountant

January 23, 1962 - January 28, 2023

For the past twenty years, Jana Tibbits provided financial services for the SDHC as its CPA as well as serving many nonprofits and businesses across Allegan County.

[Link to obituary](#)



Carl Hoerman Paintings in Saugatuck



An inscription in pencil records the date October 26, 1929 on the frame of painting.

Carl Hoerman (1885-1955), is arguably Saugatuck's most famous artist. The German émigré architect and painter left an impressive artistic legacy in Saugatuck. This masterpiece, *Big Pavilion from the Douglas Shore* (1929) was borrowed from the bank as a highlight from the SDHC's 1997 exhibit, *Painting the Town: A History of Art in Saugatuck-Douglas* and reproduced in the catalog. He has been the subject of an exhibit presented by the SDHC in collaboration with the Saugatuck Center for the Arts in 2007.

Iconic Hoerman painting returns to Douglas

Two of Saugatuck's artistic masterpieces have come to the History Center in the new year.

The paintings depicting familiar sights in Saugatuck and the Lakeshore dunescape were painted by Carl Hoerman in 1929. For nearly 90 years these paintings adorned Saugatuck's Fruit Growers Bank on Mason Street.

With the closure of the bank at that location in 2023, the paintings needed a 'forever home' and the History Center is grateful to **Huntington Bank** for choosing to donate the artworks.

Thank you as well to the SDHC members and community members who advocated for these artworks to stay in our community.

[Click here to learn more about this painting through our collections database on Catalog-It](#)

Best known for his landscape paintings, Hoerman was equally at home painting the desert scenes of the American Southwest as the Lake Michigan dune-scapes that speak to the sense of place along Saugatuck's "Art Coast" then and now. In addition to painting, Hoerman was an architect and designer in the Arts and Crafts tradition with numerous projects in Saugatuck as well as in the California desert.

The second Hoerman painting donated to the History Center by Huntington Bank is a wooded dunes scene. A note in pencil on the frame records the date September 24, 1929.

[Click here to learn more about this dune scene on Catalog-it](#)



Huntington Bank donated two additional Carl Hoerman paintings dated 1930 to the Saugatuck Center for the Arts. These paintings will also be on view to the public.

Watch for updates announcing opening hours and special programs later this month from the SCA and SDHC.



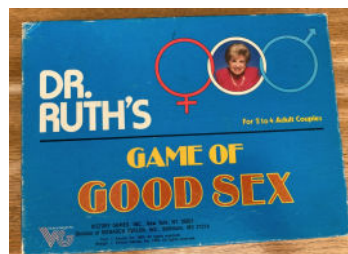
The 1929 landscape at the History Center captures a view of Lake Kalamazoo from the Douglas shore with the village of Saugatuck in the middle ground. On the left is the Big Pavilion. To the right one can identify the Saugatuck Fruit Exchange with its monitor roof. *What other buildings or features can you identify?*

Collections Updates

Do you love eBay?

The SDHC needs your skills!

Through the years, the SDHC has received an astounding collection of vintage treasures. Unfortunately, some do



For example, Dr. Ruth's Game of Good Sex.

not pertain to local history and need a new home.

We are looking for an individual with the time and computer skills to post, manage and fulfill eBay sales.

Are you game?

Please email Sally@MySDHistory.org

Is it a unique and interesting item? Yes.

Does it speak to a particular moment in history? Yes!

Is it directly relevant to the history of the Saugatuck-Douglas area? Perhaps not.

This is the kind of item that the SDHC Collections Committee hopes to sell on eBay.

SDHC Family History Group

The Family History Group is taking a break from formal monthly meetings, instead we will be offering individual help with your family history research. If you want to get started on your family history research and don't know how to start or have reached a brick wall with your research and need some suggestions of where to go next or if you need help on how to use the Ancestry account, please send the group an email to sdhsfamilyhistory@gmail.com with your name, phone number and/or email address and how we can help. The email will be forward to someone in the group. They will contact you.

The Ancestry account and all the trees will continue to be maintained for SDHC members.

Happy Researching
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 country.

Members are the lifeblood of our volunteer organization.

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

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.

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

