



NEWS From
Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society
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**SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORICAL SOCIETY
TAKES OWNERSHIP OF THE OLD SCHOOL HOUSE**

SAUGATUCK, NOV. 2, 2006 -- The Old School House, a prominent historic landmark along Center Street in Douglas since 1867, finally belongs to the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society, culminating a successful 12-month fundraising campaign to buy, preserve and rededicate the building as a unique new Discovery Center in collaboration with the area's District Library and Public Schools.

Listed on both the Michigan and National Registers of Historic Places, The Old School House (Douglas-Union School) is one of the oldest multi-classroom school buildings in Michigan and considered one of the finest examples of 19th century school architecture in America. The structure served as a public school until 1957 and has many alumni among current area residents. It has been owned and carefully maintained as a four-unit apartment building since 1962 by the family of Ms. Nancy J. Budd, now a resident of Holland.

"I've been thinking about this possibility for years," Ms. Budd said, "so I'm absolutely delighted now that the Society was able to buy this property. Their fundraising campaign was done beautifully, and I think their plans for a Discovery Center are just wonderful for the entire community. We can all look forward now to those plans becoming reality."

Discovery Center plans envision a community resource where children and adults alike can explore the area's history, culture, ecology and architecture through recreational activities, educational programs, special events and access to a unique archive of local artifacts, photos, records and newspapers. As such, the Center also is expected to enhance the area's destination appeal in the growing heritage tourism industry.

In addition to the School House building, the surrounding property includes the equivalent of six city lots within its 186' x 263' perimeter. Tentative plans for these grounds include a Historic Garden Learning Center reflecting indigenous trees and plants prominent in our area's past, and an open-air exhibition space.

Signing closing documents as Historical Society president, Dottie Lyon said "the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society is delighted to be the proud new owners of the historically significant Old School House. We are so grateful to Nancy Budd for working with us, giving us time to raise funds and for her very generous donation to the Society. We also give special thanks for the donated services of Society members Ken Gold as our attorney with Allen Brothers, and Jeff Wilcox as consulting real estate broker with Coldwell Banker Woodland Schmidt. Of course, we greatly appreciate the support of our Society members and our community, and look forward to implementing Phase 2 of this exciting project."

The project's second phase -- converting the first floor, basement and grounds into Discovery Center facilities, archival storage and offices for the Society's growing Technology Center -- will start with finalizing the architectural details at Fenns Design Mill in Douglas as soon as fundraising efforts achieve their total goal.

The Society's fundraising campaign began late in 2005 with a total fundraising goal of \$1,110,000 needed to support refurbishing work and endowment for on-going operation in addition to purchase. Underpinned by a Pleasant T. Rowland Foundation matching grant for up

to \$425,000, the campaign raised another \$525,000 in donations from several hundred local residents and businesses, including a recent grant from Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs (MCACA) earmarking \$35,000 for renovation. With approximately \$150,000 remaining to be raised, the Society urges more area businesses and residents to contribute toward the completion of this campaign, and with that, the earliest possible start on development of this distinctive community asset. Contributions may be sent to The School House Project, Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society, PO Box 617, Douglas, MI 49406.

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(This image is for review only -- a jpeg version is attached for print reproduction.)



At closing, Historical Society President Dottie Lyon (left) presents purchase check to Nancy Budd along with a School House Project "Proud Supporter" sticker. Standing behind are Jeff Wilcox (left), Society member and consulting real estate broker, and Tom Anthrop, Chair, School House Project Task Force.