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JANUARY 2010

# CASTLE COURIER

Newsletter of the Historical Society of Saginaw County

500 Federal Avenue  
Saginaw, MI 48607  
(989) 752-2861

[www.castlemuseum.org](http://www.castlemuseum.org)



## Exhibit Offers a Glimpse Into the Extraordinary Lives of American Soldiers

**T**he **American Soldier** is a dramatic exhibition of photographs that captures the essence of servicemen and women over a span of 150 years, ever since the birth of photography when the camera became a notebook to history.

The 116 enlarged photographs in this exhibit capture the danger and the frustration, the humor and the beauty, the camaraderie, the death and the victory that **The American Soldier** encountered in his or her odyssey through history.



This exhibit opens February 18, 2010, and will be on display through April 10 in the Museum's Centennial Hall. This is the first time the exhibit will be in Michigan and it will not return until 2011. We are planning several events centered around this exhibit, and will keep you informed through the *Courier* and on our website.

## JANUARY CALENDAR

- Tuesday, January 5:** **Lunch and Learn:** "Becoming American". Our guest speaker will focus on immigration in the Mid-Michigan area. Event will take place in Centennial Hall. Dessert & beverage included. Free with general admission. **12:00 Noon.**
- Thursday, January 7:** **Michigan Archaeological Society** meeting. Morley Room. **7:30 p.m.**
- Tuesday, January 12:** **Lunch and Learn:** "Oil and Coal in Saginaw: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow". Joe Turner will discuss the history of oil and coal, as well as examine the future of these natural resources. Dessert & beverage included. Free with general admission. **12:00 Noon.**
- Saturday, January 16:** **Girl Scout Badge:** "Exploring History with the Castle". Girl Scouts will explore different areas significant to history, their own troops, their family history and the Great Lakes Bay Region. Cost is \$5.00 per Girl Scout and \$3.00 per adult. For more information, please call Heather Thompson at 752-2861, Ext. 311. **9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. and 1 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.**
- Tuesday, January 19:** **Pages of History Book Club:** *The Pere Marquette Railroad Company* by Paul Wesley Ivey. Dessert & beverage included. Free with general admission. **12:00 Noon.**
- Tuesday, January 26:** **Lunch and Learn:** "The History of Hoyt Park". Paul Virციglio and Larry Brethauer will discuss the history of the Saginaw park with some emphasis given to the outdoor ice rink and the champion speed skating Wrona sisters. Dessert & beverage included. Free with general admission. **12:00 Noon.**

## Help Invigorate Our Docent Program

We can never say enough how important our volunteers are to the success of the Castle Museum and Historical Society. One area we would like to strengthen is our docent program. These volunteer guides enable the society to provide countless tours for students and adults, help the museum fulfill its mission and enrich our community. Being a docent is fun and rewarding. All you need to bring is enthusiasm and a passion for history. The Historical Society will provide in-depth training. As tours are booked in advance, being a docent offers a flexible volunteer schedule.

**An informational meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 12 at 10 a.m. in the Museum's Board Room.** For more information, contact Tom Trombley at 752-2861, Ext. 304, or email Tom at [ttrombley@castlemuseum.org](mailto:ttrombley@castlemuseum.org)



**Mark  
Your  
Calendar!**

The Historical Society of Saginaw County's Annual Meeting is **Saturday, February 27th**. More details to follow in next month's *Courier*.

## Museum Hours

Tuesday - Saturday 10:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Sunday 1:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

## General Admission

Adults \$1.00  
Children \$.50  
Members FREE

The Historical Society of Saginaw County is committed to serve the community by telling the continuing story of the people of the Saginaw region through exploration, preservation and presentation of their historical and cultural heritage.

# castle connections

Geoff Pelkey



It's a good thing Geoff Pelkey is patient man. As Exhibits Coordinator for the Castle Museum, Geoff is responsible for designing and setting up museum displays - a job that often takes weeks, if not months, of planning.

With his background in painting and sculpture, Geoff understands better than most that exhibit design is a creative process. When he was in sculpture class he would sometimes spend one to two months working on a project and then present it to the class for critique.

"What I do here lends itself to that same experience," Geoff noted, adding that this process is what he most enjoys about his job at the Museum. "I get to come in and do something creative every day for a cultural institution," he said.

His favorite exhibit so far has been *Made in Saginaw*, which is located on the second floor of the Museum. "It was the most complete exhibit for me in that I did all the research and was involved in how we chose the artifacts," he said.

When not at work, Geoff, who has a fine arts degree from Eastern Michigan University, spends much of his time painting. "I get a lot of my inspiration from natural forms, such as seeds or seed pods," he said. "I have a lot of interest in the way plants propagate themselves and all the different forms they take."

# The Artifact

The inscription on the circa 1870 bed frame donated by Steve Rohloff reads "Feige Bros., E. Saginaw, Mich." This hand-lettered label connects this object - pictured below - with one of Saginaw's oldest business firms.

The Feige Company was established in Saginaw in 1854 by Engelhardt Feige. In his history of Saginaw County, James C. Mills states that this shop "was the foundation of a successful enterprise... the name of Feige being synonymous with all that is best in the trade."

The Feige Company has a rich and complex history. By the 1860's the firm had entered into the retail market. Englehardt Feige's sons developed several related furniture businesses. In 1878, the company won a contract to supply furniture for the Michigan Capitol Building in Lansing. (Many pieces of this furniture continue to be used in the Capitol building). Although they no longer manufacture furniture, the company continues as Feige's Interiors.

Mr. Rohloff's donation is an important addition to the museum's collection. While we have three other pieces of furniture attributed to firms operated by the Feige family, this is the first labeled piece we have acquired.



# Members Enjoy Sneak Preview

About 75 Historical Society members attended a wine and cheese reception on December 17 to view our newest exhibit,

*"Becoming American: Teenagers & Immigration"*

The exhibit opened to the public December 19 and will be on display until February 4th, 2010. These poignant photographs put a "human" face to the issue of immigration. Please stop

by to see this display, which is organized by the Smithsonian Traveling Exhibition Service.



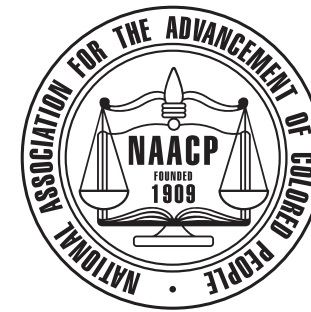
# Team Continues to Make Important Finds at Clunie Site

Since 2005, our Curator of Archaeology, Jeff Sommer, has spent his summers at the Clunie site, which is a Native American campsite located along the Tittabawassee River within the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge.

The Clunie site was most frequently occupied in the two centuries prior to the arrival of Europeans in the area, roughly between AD 1400 and 1650. Archaeologists often refer to this as the Late Prehistoric period. Despite the relatively recent timeframe, we have very few sites that date to this period, making the Clunie site an extremely important source of information.

Our most important finds this year were not artifacts, but rather "features." Archaeological "features" include such things as storage pits, hearths, trash pits, post molds, and wall trenches. The features we encountered this year include a trash pit, a large hearth with evidence of repeated use, and a large, bark-lined pit that served first as a storage facility, later as a hearth, and finally as a trash pit. Several charred tubers (potato-like roots) were found near the bottom of the pit. These are almost certainly one of the materials being stored in this prehistoric version of a root cellar. When additional analyses are completed, we expect to learn what, if any, other items were also being stored in this pit.

Each year, as new data are combined with previous findings, our knowledge and understanding of the past increases. Ultimately, we will piece together a detailed picture of what life was like for those who preceded us in the Saginaw Valley.



# Museum to Open Two Exhibits in February

Homelessness and Celebrating 100 Years of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People are the focus of two exhibits that will be on display at the Castle Museum for the month of February.

*Your Story and Mine: A Community of Hope* is a multi-faceted traveling exhibit that was created by homeless adults. The exhibit and programming is a collaborative effort between the Museum and the Public Libraries of Saginaw. It includes a mural, individual works of art, photography, poetry and a panel exhibit with oral history highlights and a short documentary video presenting an overview of homelessness. In Saginaw County, there were nearly 2,000 homeless people in 2007, with more than 250 of those people being children.

As the NAACP celebrates its 100th anniversary, the Saginaw Branch is not far behind as it marks its 90th year in existence. To commemorate these milestones, the Museum will offer an exhibit that will include artifacts, the history of the organization, and highlight accomplishments of African Americans in Saginaw.

# Thank You Donors!

The Castle Museum of Saginaw County History received \$20,000 for its endowment fund from the estate of Howard Kern. A sincere thank you to Mr. Kern's family for this generous gift.

Two donations to the Museum have been made in memory of  
*Dale Skran, Sr.*  
From  
Jonathon Weiss & Minta Paltin

# From a letter we received on November 3, 2009

"Four years after discovering Saginaw's Castle Museum, it is still my all-time favorite...the helpful staff, detailed exhibits, historic postcards, and the wealth of books available for purchase really were the icing on the cake. It was this experience that encouraged me to become a member of the Historical Society."

*Heather Koch  
Northville*