



## After Hours at the Castle Museum

The Castle will stay open until 8:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 5th with free admission from 4:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Our mobile museum, *History on the Move*, will be here and open for visitors. Come learn about this fantastic traveling classroom while enjoying a visit to the Museum. *Peanuts at Bat*, *Geared for Production*, *Historic Pianos* and many more exhibits are now on display.

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Saginaw, MI

# CASTLE COURIER

Newsletter of the Historical Society of Saginaw County

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

www.castlemuseum.org



MAY 2011



PHOTO: LEONARD NADEL, 1956. COURTESY SMITHSONIAN

## History of Guest Worker Program Focus of New Exhibit at the Castle

*Bittersweet Harvest*, a bilingual exhibition, explores the Bracero Program, the largest guest worker program in American history. It opens at the Castle Museum on Saturday, May 21 and runs through July 31, 2011.

**On Friday, May 20th the Museum is hosting a members-only sneak preview party from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Please make plans to attend and enjoy a first look at this powerful exhibit.**

Between 1942 and 1964, millions of Mexican nationals came to the U.S. on short-term labor contracts which offered them much-needed work and economic opportunity. Their dramatic story reveals an important but overlooked chapter in our nation's history which remains highly relevant today.

In addition, the Castle Museum received a grant from the Smithsonian Institution to create a companion exhibit which will explore the guest worker program in the Great Lakes Bay Region, telling stories of local families and their experiences. The Smithsonian Community Grant, funded by MetLife Foundation, is a proud sponsor of related public programs.

*Bittersweet Harvest* is organized by the National Museum of American History in partnership with the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service. Funding was provided by the Smithsonian Latino Center.



**MetLife Foundation** Smithsonian

## MAY CALENDAR

- Tuesday, May 3:** **Lunch and Learn:** *Mary Dow House Tour*. When it was built in 1936, the modern design of Mary Dow's South Jefferson Avenue home was the talk of Saginaw. Designed by her nephew, Midland architect Alden B. Dow, this small home is built of cinder block trimmed in cypress and copper. The talk will focus on the history and design of the house. After the talk, participants may drive or walk to the building which is located two blocks south of the museum and tour the interior. Free with Museum admission. Dessert and beverage provided. **Noon.**
- Thursday, May 5:** **MUSEUM OFFERS EVENING HOURS - FREE ADMISSION 4:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.** See Story in Box Above. Michigan Archaeological Society – Saginaw Valley Chapter. Morley Room. **7:30 p.m.**
- Saturday, May 7:** **NATIONAL TRAIN DAY!** Come celebrate at the Castle Museum by visiting our model railroad exhibit. Kids can make their own candy train. Free with Museum admission. **1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.**
- Tuesday, May 10:** **Lunch and Learn:** *General Motors and Black Migration to Saginaw: The Early Years*. University of Toledo Assistant Professor Willie McKether will discuss the history of African American migration to Saginaw in relation to the automotive manufacturing industry. Free with Museum admission. Dessert and beverage provided. **Noon.**
- Tuesday, May 17:** **Lunch and Learn:** *Pages of History Book Club*. The group will discuss "Michigan's Columbus: The Life of Douglass Houghton" by Steve Lehto. This event is co-sponsored by the Public Libraries of Saginaw. Free with Museum admission. Dessert and beverage provided. **Noon.**
- Friday, May 20:** **Exhibit Preview Party for *Bittersweet Harvest***. For Historical Society members only. Come enjoy light refreshments and a look at our newest Smithsonian exhibition. **4:30 - 6:00 p.m.**
- Saturday, May 21:** *Bittersweet Harvest* **Opens. See Story on Page One.**
- Tuesday, May 24:** **Lunch and Learn:** *The History of Bonsai Trees and How They Are Created*. Al Fassezke, owner of Fassezke Glass, will teach us all about this Japanese art form using miniature trees grown in containers, including a mini demonstration. Free with Museum admission. Dessert and beverage provided. **Noon.**
- No Lunch and Learn on Tuesday, May 31.**

## Walking Tour Marks Anniversary of Saginaw's Historic Fire of 1893

*Visit to Archaeological Dig Included*

On the afternoon of May 20, 1893, a small fire started on the middle grounds – known today as Ojibway Island. A strong wind quickly spread the flames into a densely populated residential district. By the time it was brought under control near Hoyt Street, more than 257 buildings had been destroyed.

**On Friday, May 20, 2011, the Castle Museum will offer a walking tour that will explore the events of that tragic day.** The tour will start at the Museum at 2:00 p.m. where participants will have an opportunity to view original photographs of the fire and related artifacts. From the Castle, the group will walk to the corner of Hoyt and South Jefferson Avenue near the spot where the fire was brought under control.

*Walking Tour (continued on Page Three)*



### 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.

# Saturday, May 7th National Train Day!



The Castle Museum and the Saginaw Railway Museum want you to come help us celebrate National Train Day, a holiday started by Amtrak to celebrate the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad and enhance public awareness of the railroad industry.

At the Castle Museum visitors of all ages will enjoy our model railroad, which features more than 1,000 feet of track. While at the Museum, kids can make a yummy candy train of their own. Stop by any time between 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. to make this fun treat. Free with paid admission to the

Museum. Questions? Call Ruth Mancina at 752-2861, Ext 315 or email her at [rmancina@castlemuseum.org](mailto:rmancina@castlemuseum.org).

The Saginaw Railway Museum will celebrate with an Open House on May 7th from 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. The museum has displays on the Transcontinental Railroad and on the last passenger service out of Saginaw. The open house will be followed by a slideshow featuring the "good old days" of Michigan railroading. There is no admission fee, but donations are greatly appreciated. Visit [www.saginawrailwaymuseum.org](http://www.saginawrailwaymuseum.org) for more information.

## The Artifact

### Photograph from Fire of 1893

The museum's collection contains a number of rare images of the devastation wrought by the great fire of May 20, 1893. In less than two and a half hours, 257 buildings in a 23 block area were destroyed.

The Detroit Free Press stated: "One might as well have tried to stop the tide of the ocean as to have prevented the great sea of flame, fanned by the wind, from fulfilling its purpose. In some cases houses were wiped out of existence in fifteen minutes..."

Taken at the corner of South Jefferson and Hoyt Street, near the spot where the fire was brought under control, this photograph captures the power and force of the disaster. Chimneys, crumbling foundations and piles of ash are all that remain of once elegant homes. However, the conflagration destroyed more than homes and buildings. It disrupted lives and the rhythm of the community.

Accounts of the event describe the day following the fire as being like a holiday and note that the streets were filled with people driving to see the ruins. Careful study of this image reveals people digging through the rubble looking for the rare items that might have survived the fire. It also shows people – tourists – strolling along the sidewalks viewing the ruins. The papers referred to it as the "Burnt Over District" and it was a popular attraction. The railroads offered excursion trains from Detroit to view the ruins and at least two Saginaw photographers, the Goodridge Brothers and B.S. Krupp, sold commemorative images of the "Burnt District of Saginaw."



View of the intersection of South Jefferson Avenue and Hoyt Street after the fire of 1893. Photograph by the B.S. Krupp



Jazz on Jefferson is an evening of music, art and food on Saginaw's Historic South Jefferson Avenue.

This year it will include a classic car show in front of the Castle Museum, historic home tours, free admission to the Castle Museum, strawberry shortcake, food vendors and more.

At 8:00 p.m. the Robert Lee Revue will give a free performance at First Congregational Church.

The Saginaw High Marching Band will get the party started at 4:45 p.m.

Jazz on Jefferson is a project of the Jefferson Avenue Events and Marketing Committee supported by the Saginaw Arts and Enrichment Commission, Saginaw Celebrates Summer, Hemlock Semiconductor and Hausbeck Pickles and Peppers.

*Hope to see you there!*

## Memorials

A Memorial Gift has been made by  
*Mary Johnson*  
in memory of her parents  
**Mr. and Mrs. Mike and Susan Pelish**

A Memorial Gift has been made by  
*Judy Lappens*  
*Scott and Kim Conkwright*  
*Annie & Rosie Alaniz*  
*Jane Easlick*  
*Gayle Gunningham*  
in memory of  
**Annie Conkwright**

A Memorial Gift has been made by  
*Jim & Pat Appold*  
in memory of  
**Geraldine Schwannecke**

## Walking Tour (continued from Page One)

After that, the group will walk into the heart of the burned over district and look at homes that were constructed after the fire. Also included on the tour will be a chance to view the Castle Museum's 2011 archaeological dig at the site of a home destroyed by the fire.

The event will involve a little over one mile of walking. People who do not wish to walk may participate by meeting at the museum and driving to three key points on the tour. Maps will be distributed on the day of the tour.

The tour is \$5.00 per person. It is free for members of the Historical Society of Saginaw County. Participants can pay the day of the tour. For more information, please call Tom Trombley at 752-2861, Ext. 304.

**Good News!** The Castle Museum's History on the Move was nominated for a 2011 All Area Arts Award. Winners will be announced May 5th.

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