Author Steve Lehto to Speak

On Thursday, July 23, 2009, at 7 p.m., Steve Lehto, author of the new book Michigan’s Columbus, The Life of Douglass Houghton, will speak at the Chippewa County Historical Society. Douglass Houghton accompanied Henry Rowe Schoolcraft on his expedition to explore the source of the Mississippi River. Later, Houghton explored the coast of Lake Superior.

Lehto points out, “Like every other person from Michigan, I have known the name Houghton for as long as I can remember. But as I explored his story more, I discovered that he was a doctor, a mayor of Detroit, a professor at the University of Michigan, and many more things. That, and he died at the age of 36. Clearly, this was a story that needed to be told.”

Steve Lehto is a writer, historian and attorney of Finnish descent. His family has roots in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. Lehto’s grandfather, “Pops” Lehto, was dean of Finlandia University, which was founded in 1896 as Suomi College by Finnish immigrants. Currently he resides in southeast Michigan. He previously wrote Bobby Isaac: What Speed Looks Like, A Most Unused Experiment: Chrysler’s Turbine Car; and Death’s Door: The Truth Behind Michigan’s Largest Mass Murder, published in 2006 by Momentum Books. His new book, along with Death’s Door, will be available for purchase and signing. His talk is free to the public and refreshments will be provided. Park on Ashmun Street or in the Portage Avenue parking lot.

River of History Museum Update

The River of History Museum reopened July 1 with a ribbon cutting ceremony at its new location in the Saub Tribe-owned building (the old Woolworth’s building) at 531 Ashmun Street. You may enter from either Ashmun Street or Court Street. It is open Monday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. The cost is $5.50 for adults and $2.75 for children. The installation is impressive, with additional Native American artwork on display including a birchbark canoe created by Ron Paquin; and donated by Cecil Parvat. There is a future hands-on area for children and school groups and a changing exhibit area. New murals by Native American artist Gaz Shoapem have been painted realistically. The shop is expanded with work by area artists. For views of the new museum, visit www.riverofhistory.org. The museum’s grand opening event is scheduled for July 28, at 5 p.m.

Early Settler’s Descendants Donate His Portrait

Sault resident Jennylee (Church) Olesek, 103, and her younger cousin Rosalie (Church) Sasso, 93, of Drummond Island are the two oldest living descendants of Philetus S. Church. They recently donated a portrait of their great-grandfather. According to Jennylee, “For many years it hung in the Common Council Chambers. It is a portrait of Philetus S. Church.” Philetus Church was the first to build a house in the City of Sault Ste. Marie in 1861, and is known as the father of the City’s Chase S. Osborn Historic Trust. Activities will include birch bark canoe building by Ron Paquin, sponsored by a grant from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs. There will be music, entertainment, food, demonstrations, displays, re-enactors, children’s activities, booths by area nonprofit groups, and more. It will take place behind the Pullar Center on Water Street. The event will benefit the restoration of the Baraga House. Tickets are available for the Friday night Fish Boil and must be purchased in advance. They may be purchased for $12 at the Sault Area Chamber of Commerce, the Sault Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Soo Theatre and the CCHS Gift Shop. Call 665-7852 or 665-9252 for more information. If your nonprofit history organization or museum would like to have a booth at the history fest, please contact the above phone numbers.

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The home of various family members, and more recently in the Betsy Seaman Museum on Drummond Island, but the Stuill was our great-grandfather's home and it belongs here.” The portrait was painted in New York, where Mr. Church lived before coming to this area in the 1840s. Phleute Church was one of the earliest white settlers on Sugar Island, where he established a thriving business trading with the Native Americans from the island and from nearby Garden River. He purchased raspberries from both communities and made jam to sell. His wharf and store were strategically located on the “old channel,” which passed through Lake George. All large vessels trading between Lake Superior and the lower lakes used the old channel until the Mary Lake Channel on the west side of Sugar Island was opened in 1894. A photograph of his docks shows large piles of wood, ready for sale as fuel to passing steamboats. He also had a sawmill and boatyard, where his photograph of his docks shows large piles of wood, ready for sale as fuel.

Capital Campaign and DDA  
The Historical Society is looking forward to improved access to our second floor when a new stairs, firewall, and fire door are installed, thanks to the City and the Downtown Development Authority, who will provide funding through the TIFA II funds. With these new funds, our capital campaign has raised $91,720 so far, with another $86,610 in outstanding pledges. If you would like to participate in the campaign, contributions can be sent to CCHS, P.O. Box 342, Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783, with checks made out to CCHS. Your help is needed and greatly appreciated.

Peter Gianakura’s Book  
Peter Gianakura, long-time Sault restaurateur and owner of the American Cafe, has just published a memoir entitled American Cafe — Reflections from the Grill. CCHS plans to host a book-signing reception at our location on Ashmun Street in the fall. One of the books from the American Cafe, recently restored by Alan Suggitt, will be showcased as part of a new permanent exhibit. The book is available for sale in CCHS’s Gift Shop for $15.95. It may be mailed to you for an additional $3.00 shipping and handling. Call 906-635-7082 if you want to charge it to your credit card. Peter Gianakura will speak about his book on Thursday, August 27, at 7 p.m., at Bayliss Public Library, 541 Library Drive, Sault Ste. Marie. The program is free to the public and his book will be available for purchase and signing. A reception was held in June at the Soo Theatre in the space where the American Cafe was located for almost 70 years. A large crowd turned out and the line of people reportedly extended out the door and down the block. There is a display of photographs of the cafe designed by Bill Gill on view at the Soo Theatre T.S.A.R. office.

Maple Ridge Cemetery  
If you haven’t seen the new fencing surrounding the Maple Ridge Cemetery on the 1500 block of Ashmun Street in the Sault, you’ll want to take a look. The project, funded through the City general fund and the Chas. O. S. Hornbeam Historic Trust, has been a long-time goal of the City, and received much encouragement from the City’s Historical Development Commission, which, by ordinance, has a majority of appointees recommended by CCHS. The fencing was fabricated by subcontractor Cashman Fabrication and Machine in Kincheloe and installed by contractor Delta Fence & Construction of Escanaba.

Historic Churches Program  
The Historic Churches Program began July 6 at St. George Greek Orthodox Church with a film entitled “From the Little Mountain: Reflections on Orthodox Christian Monasticism.” Peter Gianakura and David Baumann provided commentary and shared some personal anecdotes. The next program of the season was held at Central United Methodist Church, with Professor James Moody giving a lively lecture on the history of the church building. Next week’s program will take place on Monday, July 27, at St. Mary’s Catholic Church, with Susan Askwith, Sharon MacLaren, and Dave Stanaway presenting “Brooke Frederic Baraga and His Sault Palace.”

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EUPHC  
The EUP History Consortium met in Pickford on May 2. Moira Wilson spoke about self-publishing. Board member Janet Russell explained representing CCHS. She also gave an update about what is happening in Brimley. Funding is underway to raise money for the depot. A large wooden truck will be raffled. It is on view this summer at the museum's caboose, the Sault Summer Arts Festival, and the Sault History Fest. The fall meeting will take place in Brimley on October 10. The topic will be “Haringe/Artifact Storage.”

UP History Conference  
The UP History Conference took place in Newberry in June. Carol Taylor, who has built a valuable archive of Upper Peninsula history and has long been involved with the Lake County Historical Museum, positively said the Charles Folio History Award. The Keweenaw County Historical Society won the Superior Award. Bayliss Public Library director Ken Miller co-chaired the conference on the library's photographic and historic resources.

Preserve America  
The City of Sault Ste. Marie was recently honored for its designation as a Preserve America Community. The designation recognizes governmental entities across the country for their efforts to preserve and protect our nation’s architectural and historic resources within their communities. With the recognition comes a future opportunity for grants for planning, education, and promotion with the aim of increasing heritage tourism and economic growth. The application the City submitted showcased CCHS’s building and the cooperation between private, nonprofit, and governmental organizations that has taken place to preserve this historic structure. Also highlighted in the application was the cooperative efforts between nonprofit, private, and government groups in promoting and preserving the Water Street Historic block buildings.

DAA Plaque Project  
The plaques for the Palace Restaurant and the Ramada Ojibway Hotel will be unveiled this week. These two historic structures, the first built in 1903 and the second in 1927, are both located in the 200 block of Portage Avenue. Our thanks to the owners for their efforts to maintain these buildings and for their willingness to share the history with the community. CCHS, working with the Downtown Development Authority, which sponsors the plaque project, provided research, text, and photos for each plaque.

Twilight Walking Tours  
Jim Cooling and company are offering walking tours along Water Street on Fridays and Saturdays throughout the summer and select dates in September and October. They will lead groups to the History Fest with special tours on August 14 and at 5, 7, and 9 p.m., meeting at the Portage Avenue main entrance of the Soo Locks. Tours are free; tips are appreciated. For more information, call 906-495-7122, or check out www.twilightwalkingtours.com.

TRACES Bus-eum  
The TRACES bus-eum again made a stop in Sault Ste. Marie thanks to CCHS’s co-sponsorship with the American Legion Post #3. The display, “Heard in the Heartland: German POWs in the Midwest, 1943-46,” was visited by hundreds of people in May, thanks to the City’s Tourism Commission.

Oral History Conference  
The Michigan Oral History Association (MOHA) will hold its 2009 Conference in Marquette, Michigan, Friday and Saturday, September 25 and 26. The event is planned to appeal to oral historians, teachers, students, journalists, family historians and genealogists, and collection developers for libraries, museums, and cultural centers, among others. Keynote speaker will be Barbara W. Sommer, an experienced oral history practitioner and author of Capturing the Living Past: An Oral History Primer, and co-author of American Indian Oral History Manual: Making Many Voices Heard. The 2-day event will include a half-day workshop on the basics of doing oral history, breakout sessions including roundtable, panel and individual presentations, a walking tour of local sites of interest, and a visit to the Michigan Iron Industry Museum in Negaunee. Registration forms for the conference will be available soon, along with complete program details. Questions may be directed to MOHA (at 517) 321-7166 or check out www.michiganora.org.