An Early Artist in Sault Ste. Marie
By Bernie Arbic

Oscar Vaher was a 25 year old when he came to the Sault from Estonia in 1924. Although we don't know too much about him, we would like to share some of what we do know (and would love to hear from you if you can add to our knowledge). He worked as an artist here until his death in 1962, at age 64. He lived above the Kresge Store on Ashmun Street, and also had a studio there. In 1951, he painted a copy of a painting of the Sault's waterfront, as seen from the Canadian side of the rapids. The original painting he copied was done in 1888 by the Bay City artist W.E. Wright. CCHS owns the Vaher copy, and we invite readers to stop by and enjoy it. A black-and-white photo of the painting is included with this article. I love the scene, and used a color image of it on the cover of my book City of the Rapids. It is valuable documentation of the Sault's waterfront during a very bustling time in our history. The original painting by Wright is owned by LSSU and is on display at the Lou Lukenda Alumni House on the campus. It is somewhat darkened by age, which is why I used the Vaher copy rather than the original for my cover.

Mr. Vaher was not only a painter, but also a sculptor. CCHS has several photos of his sculptures, including the bust of President Franklin D. Roosevelt included in this piece. We also include a picture of Mr. Vaher, shown when he was working on a portrait of George Malcolm. Mr. Malcolm, a beloved educator, was Superintendent of Schools in Sault Ste. Marie from 1916 until his death in 1940. The Malcolm portrait may be seen at the River of History Museum.

According to Genevieve Usimaki (Walter Materna's daughter), Mr. Vaher was instrumental in getting Le Sault Artists Guild started here. We are indebted to him, and hope that this article helps preserve his memory.

Photos are from the Walter Materna Collection

(Above) The only buildings from 1888 which survive and are visible in this scene are the Chippewa County Courthouse, and the St. Mary's Church. The painting is 42” high and 70” wide.

(Above) This clay sculpture of FDR was done by Vaher in 1935. It would be nice to know if it survives somewhere, wouldn't it?

(Center) You can't look at this without thinking of the famous Indian Head nickel. This bas-relief was perhaps done in clay.

(Above) This large portrait of George G. Malcolm may have been done after Mr. Malcolm's death.
EUP History Consortium Meeting
By Mary M. June
The fall meeting on October 13th was hosted by the Bay Mills-Brimley Historical Research Society at the Superior Township Hall in Brimley.

The guest speaker, Tamara Barnes of the Historical Society of Michigan, presented a Youth Programs Workshop. Also, during the meeting, Annegret Goehring stepped down as treasurer and new officers were elected for the group. Janet Russell was elected as Chairman, Elaine Sprague as Secretary, and Mary M. June as Treasurer.

Annegret Goehring was a founding member of the EUPHC and the treasurer for many years. She was instrumental in coordinating the group, arranging for speakers, and in creating the brochure identifying historical groups and museums across the Eastern U.P. Besides her involvement with the EUPHC, Annegret was the curator of the Les Cheneaux Historical Museum for over 20 years, a Board member of the Historical Society of Michigan, the 1998 recipient of the prestigious Charles Follo Award from the Historical Society of Michigan, and she is a talented artist. Her friendship and wisdom have helped many local historical groups to form and grow during her tenure with the EUPHC and we are indebted to her for her many years of service to the group.

Capital Campaign
By Mary M. June
The CCHS Board held a special meeting in November to review its budget and goals in preparation for an upcoming Capital Campaign.

Candace Baker, a new Capital Campaign committee member made a presentation to the Board offering some new ideas, timelines, and possibilities for the Board to consider as it prepares for its new Capital Campaign. Recent donors to our ongoing campaign are listed on our “Thank you” page.

Sault Summer History Camp 2013
CCHS will hold its History Camp again this summer for 9 to 11 year olds.

The Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs (MCACA) has just awarded CCHS a $1,172 mini-grant to help cover the expenses. CCHS Board members and retired teachers Patty Olsen and Ginny Cymbalist are excited about providing another year of history fun and learning. The Johnston and Schoolcraft families and their interests will be the focus of this year’s activities. Let us know if you want to add your name to a mailing list to receive history camp information as soon as it is available.

Rendezvous in the Sault: A History Fest Event, July 26-28
We will have a report on plans for a revised History Fest in our next issue.

Newspaper Research
Did you know that Bayliss Library has Sault newspapers on microfilm going back to 1887? If you know the date of an event you would like to trace, you can contact bayref@baylisslibrary.org and for a small fee, the item will be sent to you. Of course, you may also do the search yourself at the library. CCHS has bound copies of the Evening News that may be browsed (if the books are not too fragile), but photocopying is not possible.

Tour of Homes
The Soo Theatre Project is now the organizer of the Christmas Tour of Homes that was formerly organized by the Red Cross. This year several of the Sault’s historic homes were featured: the former Lipsett House on Spruce Street, along with two others across the street. CCHS is pleased to see these structures are so lovingly maintained.

Cloverland Electric Digitizing Project
By Bernie Arbic
CCHS Board members Carolyn Person and Bernie Arbic continue to work with Cloverland Electric personnel on the project to scan glass negatives owned by the Society, which document the development over a century ago of the water power canal and powerhouse now owned and operated by Cloverland. About 75% of the roughly 1,000 negatives have been scanned (digitized and archived), with descriptive data entered into a database.

In October, thanks to our talented tour guides, CCHS held a fundraiser at Maple Ridge Cemetery. Caroline Grabowski led the tour as Angelique Rains and Paul Sabourin as Alexandre Cadotte.

About 30 people joined us on what was a perfect fall day. Thank you to Board members Caroline and Paul for sharing with us their fascinating stories of people from the past. Did you know that the cemetery was ceded to the City by the Ryan family in 1874 and that the last burials were in April 1901? Learn more from the tour script created by Caroline and Paul. It sells in our Gift Shop for $2. Thank you to Neville’s Superette (founded in 1938) for helping fund the brochure. Paul also created a handout with aerial maps showing the cemetery area years ago and present-day. Copies of the cemetery layout are also available for $2. If you would like a package of the script, aerial map, and layout sent to you, please send $6 to CCHS.

Thank you to everyone for their help with refreshments, including Tony Stackpoole at Cup of the Day, and with setup and take down. Thank you too to Tim Ellis, WSOO, Fred Benoit, and the City of Sault Ste. Marie. Stay tuned for Caroline and Paul’s planned 2013 tours of Riverside Cemetery and Maple Ridge Cemetery.

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