



THE FUTURE OF HISTORY

DECEMBER • VOL. 25 • ISSUE 4 • 2025

Our mission is to tell the story of Muskegon County by collecting, preserving, and interpreting the history of its people and natural environment.



**LAKESHORE
MUSEUM CENTER**





Hackley & Hume During The Holidays

The Hackley & Hume Historic Site will host their annual Holiday Tours starting November 29.

See page 6 for dates and details.

MUSEUMS MAKE YOU.

03 **DIRECTOR'S
REPORT**

07 **THE 1937
LEGACY SOCIETY**

04 **ARCHIVE
& COLLECTION**

08 **KEEPING
MUSKEGON COLD**

05 **WHAT'S
ON VIEW?**

10 **MEMBERSHIP
& STORES**

06 **MUSKEGON
HISTORIC SITES**

11 **PLAN
YOUR VISIT**

Beneath The Frost

As autumn fades and winter approaches, the world begins to quiet. Frost settles over the landscape, silencing the pastures and stilling the lakeshore. But beneath that stillness, stories lie waiting; forgotten footpaths, whispered memories, and fragments of history long covered by time. Now gently resurfacing with the help of museum staff.

In this issue, we journey beneath the frost, uncovering the quieter histories of our region. These are not the headline-makers or bold markers on the map, but the subtle traces: a long-closed family shop, a forgotten uniform or toy, or the voices of communities once vibrant and now barely remembered. Each story reveals how the past is never truly gone, only resting, waiting for curious minds and open hearts to bring it into the light once more.

Join us as we explore the hidden layers of Muskegon's heritage and rediscover the amazing history of our community.

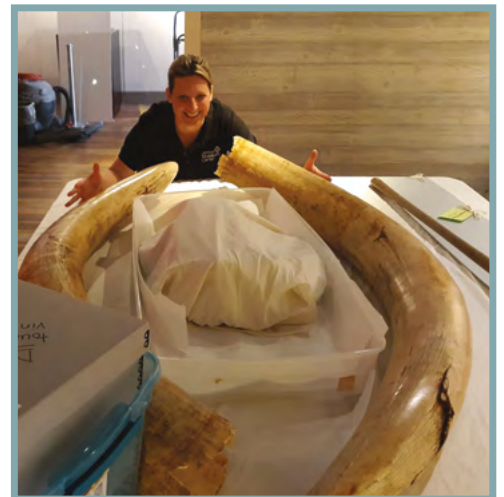
A Living Link to the Past: The Story Behind Our Elephant Tusks

When reflecting on the stories behind our collection, I've always been captivated by the elephant tusks. They serve as a living connection to extinct giants like mastodons and mammoths. For years, the only clue in our records was a single name: Dr. Closz. Due to the museum's many relocations over the decades, much of our documentation was lost. But thanks to technological advances, we occasionally strike gold.

Dr. Harold F. Closz lived on Jefferson Street in downtown Muskegon and served as chief of staff at Hackley Hospital. He began his medical practice in 1922 after serving in the Army Medical Corps during World War I. A respected figure in the medical community, he was affiliated with the American Medical Association, the Muskegon County Medical Association, and the American College of Surgeons.

Beyond medicine, Dr. Closz was an avid hunter. In 1959, he embarked on an African safari, a journey that would intertwine his story with ours. Upon returning, he shared photographs from his trip at a museum benefit event. Later, he donated his collection, including the elephant tusks and rare specimens like rhinoceroses' horns, to the museum.

Today, we preserve these items not only to protect them but to spark conversations about conservation. While cultural views on big game hunting have shifted, these specimens offer a powerful opportunity to educate future generations about endangered species and the importance of protecting our planet's incredible biodiversity.



Melissa Horton
Executive Director

Hovering Into History

Of all the fascinating objects in the museum's collection, one quite literally rises above the rest: a North Muskegon Fire Department Hovercraft. From 1988 to 2004, this hovercraft glided over ice and frigid waters to save lives. Donated by the North Muskegon Fire Department in 2021, it now takes on a new mission: to share the history of ice rescue operations in Muskegon County.

Invented in Britain in the 1950s, hovercrafts are amphibious vehicles that float just above the surface using a cushion of air created by a large blower. By 1968, a 200-ton hovercraft was ferrying passengers and cars across the English Channel. Inspired by this, Michigan and Milwaukee officials explored a similar service for Lake Michigan, but it proved too costly. In the 1970s, hovercrafts were marketed in Muskegon County as personal recreational vehicles, sold by Baxter's Towing in Fruitport and Heights Auto Sales in Muskegon Heights.



The North Muskegon Fire Department fleet featuring the hovercraft.

Its lifesaving potential was realized by the North Muskegon Fire Department. In 1983, an ice rescue of a fisherman on Muskegon Lake nearly turned tragic when three firefighters fell through thin ice. Fortunately, all were unharmed. This close call led Chief Jay Kersman to seek safer rescue methods, as crews relied on ladders, ropes, and flat-bottom boats. Fred Baxter of Baxter's Towing introduced Kersman to a hovercraft, a controversial idea at the time as no one was using them for ice rescue. Undeterred, the department raised \$5,800 and purchased a 14-foot Neoteric hovercraft in 1987. It arrived as a DIY kit, which firefighters assembled themselves, giving them hands-on knowledge of the new lifesaving tool.

It is a near perfect vessel for the terrain. It can travel where other boats are unable to go, such as the shallow areas of Muskegon Lake. It can travel up to 65 miles per hour. For the fire department, a hovercraft can cut down on the crucial time it takes to get to a victim on the ice. Between 1988 and 2004, 255 individuals were rescued from Muskegon area lakes using this hovercraft.

By 1990, the Whitehall Fire Department raised funds to purchase their own hovercraft. In the first three years of operation, they saved about 30 people. The City of Muskegon, Fruitport Township, and Egelston Township also added hovercrafts to their fleets.

In 2004, the North Muskegon Fire Department received a grant to upgrade to a larger hovercraft with more space for passengers. After years of faithful service, the original hovercraft was retired. Today, it's found a new home at the Lakeshore Museum Center, where it will be preserved and celebrated for the lives it helped save.



Firefighters land the hovercraft on the beach.

Welcome to the Team!

We are glad to introduce the newest member of the Exhibits team, Rachel Landes.

"I'm Rachel, a passionate and creative professional with four years of experience in programs and exhibits at various museums and a BFA in design. Outside of work, I love to read and am learning to sew. My friends and colleagues describe me as dependable and imaginative, and I'm excited to apply these qualities to my new role at Lakeshore Museum Center. I am eager to learn from and collaborate with everyone here and look forward to our shared successes!"

Welcome, Rachel!



Last Chance

The Muskegon Museum of History & Science will close out the year with *Home Front Heroes*. If you have not yet experienced this homage to the 80th anniversary of V-J Day and Muskegon County's contributions to the nation during World War II, be sure to **visit before January 10**.

January 17 is the last day to see *Mosaic Muskegon*, the debut exhibition in the Muskegon County History Gallery. These photos of places in Muskegon County are just a small selection of the collection of photographs donated to the Museum by local photographer William Hansen.



Upcoming

Visit the Muskegon Museum of History and Science to experience *From Here to There*. In this hands-on exhibit, explore how we move things on land, sea, and air. Float on a Hovercraft chair! Send colored balls zooming through air tubes! Lift weights with pulleys, levers, pneumatics, and hydraulics! Discover the laws of gravity and motion! *From Here to There* runs **February 7- May 9**.

In conjunction with *From Here to There*, *Measuring Up* will show off objects from the Museum's collections that deal with the science of measurements. *Measuring Up* will be on display in the Collections Case at the Muskegon Museum of History and Science **starting January 10**.

New things are coming your way at the Muskegon Heritage Museum of Business & Industry! Visit us in the spring to check out the new interactive digital kiosk. Use the kiosk to locate businesses on a map of Muskegon County and view photos, documents, and objects from the collections. This kiosk is an ongoing project and will continue to grow with new information. Stay tuned!



Holiday Cheer at the Hackley & Hume Historic Site

The holidays shine a little brighter in downtown Muskegon when the doors of the Hackley & Hume Historic Site open for the beloved Holiday Tours. A tradition dating back to 1972, these tours invite visitors to experience the warmth, beauty, and festive spirit of the season inside two of Muskegon's most iconic Victorian homes.

The season kicked off on Saturday, November 29, from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m., with an evening full of holiday cheer. Guests got creative by designing their own ornaments and postcards, snapped a cozy photo in a carriage, and wandered through the beautifully decorated rooms of the Hackley and Hume Houses. Each space glows with historic charm and unique holiday décor, lovingly designed by local decorating groups.

Visitors are playing an important role in this year's festivities by helping to decide which room is the most spectacularly decorated! Each admission includes two free voting tickets for the "Best-Decorated Room" contest. Additional votes can be purchased for \$1 each or six for \$5, with voting continuing through December 28. It's a fun and interactive way to celebrate the season while supporting the museum's ongoing preservation efforts.

The Site will remain open for walk-through tours on December 6, 13, 20, 27, and 28, from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. Each tour offers a self-paced experience, allowing visitors to soak in the glittering trees, warm lights, and nostalgic atmosphere that fill every room.

Tickets are available at the door for \$12 for adults, \$10 for seniors, and \$5 for children ages 3-12, making it an affordable and memorable outing for families, friends, and anyone who loves local history and holiday traditions.

As part of the **Lakeshore Museum Center** family of museums, the Hackley & Hume Historic Site continues to share the stories of Muskegon's past in new and meaningful ways. Whether you're revisiting a beloved tradition or discovering it for the first time, the Holiday Tours promise a magical journey through history, community, and the joy of the season.



Celebrating The Museum's Founders

Margaret Drake Elliott served on our board of trustees for 50 years. A fascinating and inspiring person, Margaret was inducted into the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame in 1999. An excerpt from her Hall of Fame biography paints a picture of her extensive contributions:

Margaret Drake epitomized the term "Superwoman." Her interests were vast and her talents many. She had been a writer, poet, herbalist, biologist, botanist, teacher, lecturer, leader, organizer, and naturalist.



Margaret Drake Elliott seated in front of the sign for the park named in her honor, near Pere Marquette Beach.

Margaret was born in Breckenridge, Michigan, in 1904. Her father was a prominent doctor in the area. In fact, he is listed as the attending physician on Margaret's birth certificate! Upon her death, the house she grew up in, now called Drake Memorial House, was bequeathed to the Breckenridge/Wheeler Historical Society and is now operated as a historical house museum.

Margaret met her husband, Paul Elliott, at Albion College, where it's rumored that in 1924, he graduated as the valedictorian and she as the salutatorian! She and Paul both received Master's degrees from the University of Michigan. He later became editor of the Muskegon Chronicle, a publication where she received notoriety of her own. From her Hall of Fame biography:

One of the first women outdoors writers in the U.S., Elliott helped educate readers for 62 years about the natural world, and she helped give them a greater appreciation for all living things.

Highly regarded by the local Native American community for her advocacy of Native culture and quality of life for Native Americans, she was adopted into the Ottawa tribe and given the name Ag-Kaa-Noo-Gaa-Qua, meaning "Friendly Teaching Lady".

Margaret served as an educator and librarian at Muskegon Public Schools for 37 years. She was affiliated with a variety of organizations, many of which she was a charter member. She acquired a long list of awards and recognitions. Notably, in 1992, the city named Margaret Drake Elliott Park in her honor.

Leaving behind an incredible legacy of investment in Muskegon, Margaret died in 1999 at the age of 94. Lakeshore Museum Center would not be what it is today without her passion, foresight, and influence.

Our 1937 Legacy Society invites you to ask yourself: What will be your legacy? If you'd like to learn more about planned giving and leaving an impact on Muskegon's history, please contact Morgan Witmer at morgan@lakeshoremuseum.org.



The headdress was presented to Ag-Kaa-Noo-Gaa-Qua from the Ottawa tribe.

Morgan Witmer, Development & Office Administrator



A holiday card featuring 2 year old Margaret Drake Elliott.

"I never get lonesome, I have a vast amount of memories and they crowd in around me. You can't help looking back. I've learned that material things are not important, but my friends and faith are. I'd rather be out with the rabbits and 'possums'. My philosophy of nature includes everything with humanity. That is why all my hobbies fit into one another."

KEEPING MUSKEGON COLD

08

Ice Harvesting on Muskegon Lake

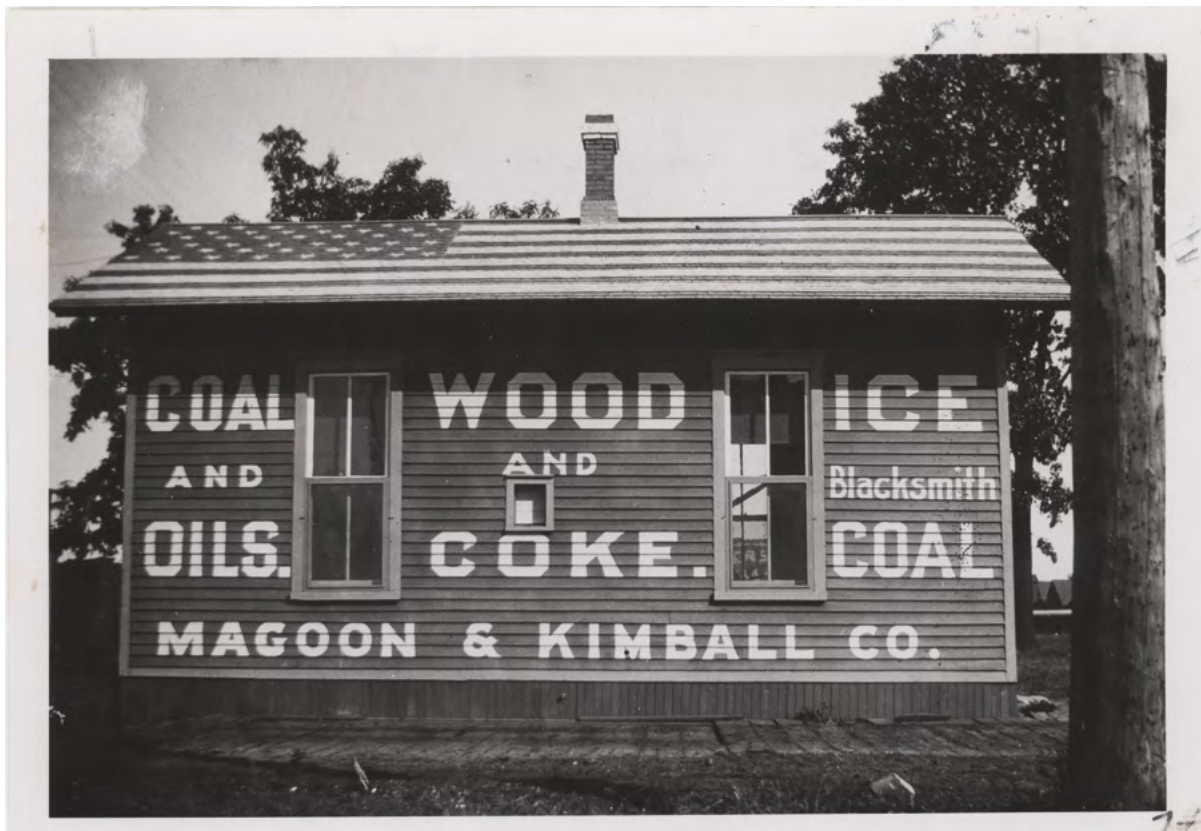
When we think of Muskegon's winters in the 1800s, we imagine quieter times. This is the season when many of the men moved northward to work in the lumbering camps that would make Muskegon famous, and sawmills were closed down. However, when the temperatures plunged, a new industry took over the lake: ice harvesting. This industry shared many of the same tools as lumbering: it utilizing horses, saws, pike poles, and a conveyor belt to transport its product.

Once Muskegon Lake was frozen, the process would begin. First, men would scrape the snow off the ice and locate ice patches. The best ice was roughly 10-12 inches thick and smooth on the surface. Next, horses would pull a blade much like a plow to open a channel from the middle of the lake to the shoreline icehouses; they cut long parallel rows. With saws and pry bars, the rows of ice were cut into long rectangles and pushed down the cut channel using spiked poles.

Near the base of the shoreline, these rectangles were cut and broken into small ice blocks. A conveyor belt brought the blocks into the icehouse. To keep the ice from melting, ever-present and free sawdust was added to ice designated for refrigeration purposes. Straw was used for ice to be used in drinks.

In a good year, 30 million pounds of ice were cut and stored from Muskegon Lake. This work was done not only by ice companies, but also by businesses like the Occidental Hotel for its patrons, and the Goodrich and Crosby transportation companies for use on their boats. By the 1920s, artificial means of making ice were becoming common, and by the early 1930s, the industry had disappeared from Muskegon Lake.

Pat Horn, Program Manager



Magoon & Kimball Company offices on the northeast corner of Western Avenue and Third Street, Muskegon, Michigan, circa 1911.

KEEPING MUSKEGON COLD

09

From Lake to Ice Box: Ice Delivery in Muskegon

The history of ice delivery companies in Muskegon County dates to about 1877. The first mention in the *Muskegon Daily Chronicle* of home ice delivery was in 1877. Peter Neil had an office on Pine Street and offered \$6 seasonal delivery of “unwashed [ice] thrown in the yard or \$8 washed and delivered in the home.”

In December 1884, the Muskegon Ice Company completed construction of two 60 feet x 140 feet ice houses in the Lakeside neighborhood. Those houses held 1,000 tons each and were expected to hold two seasons worth of ice. Muskegon Brewing Company also began commercial harvest for their own use.

In May of 1891, Magoon & Kimball Company formed. They went on to become the largest ice dealer in town over the next quarter century. By 1915,

there were eight retail ice companies in Muskegon County: the Donelson Brothers at 381 Lake St., Independent Ice Co at 151 Marquette Ave., Lakeside Fuel & Ice Co at 469 Lake St., Magoon & Kimball at 138 Western Ave., Neil & Alwynse at the foot of Terrace St., Fred Hinman in Montague, Mona Lake Ice Co in Muskegon Heights, and Vincent O. Clinger in North Muskegon.

By the early 1900s, time was running out for the industry. The first electric home refrigerator hit the market in 1913. In 1922, the Muskegon Bottling Company started advertising the “purest of the pure” artificial ice. The last of the home delivery companies stopped using “natural” lake ice in 1933. Mona Lake Ice continued making and delivering ice until 1957.

Kirk Bunke, Site Manager

IT IS FALSE

Some of our competitors are stating that “Magoon & Kimball Co. cannot furnish their customers with pure Diamond Lake Ice.”

We wish to inform the public that

MAGOON & KIMBALL CO.

CAN and WILL furnish them with

Pure Diamond Lake Ice

as we have an ample supply for any and all demands liable to be made upon us this season, and any statement to the contrary is deliberate falsehood.

Yours truly,

Magoon & Kimball Co.

'Phone 98.

Ad for Magoon & Kimball dated April 15, 1893, from the Muskegon Daily Chronicle



Mona Lake Ice Company ice pick, circa 1940.

Celebrating 60 Years of the Snurfer and 30 Years of a Holiday Tradition

This year marks a double celebration for the Lakeshore Museum Center! Not only does 2025 commemorate the **60th anniversary** of the invention of the **Snurfer**, but it also marks the **30th anniversary** of our beloved **holiday ornament tradition**.

Born right here in Muskegon in 1965, the Snurfer was the creation of Sherman Poppen, who tied two skis together on Christmas Day to entertain his daughters. That playful invention sparked a winter sport revolution, snowboarding, and became a proud part of our community's history. Our 2025 holiday ornament features the original Snurfer brand design, celebrating 60 years of Muskegon's impact on snow sports worldwide.

In honor of our ornaments' 30th anniversary, we are bringing back the very first ornament we ever produced in white porcelain: **The Blockhouse**

(1999). This re-release will be available in a minimal quantity—an elegant nod to the beginning of a tradition that has connected our community and celebrated local history for three decades.

Both ornaments will be available for purchase this holiday season in our museum gift stores, but please note: The Blockhouse ornament will be exclusively at the Muskegon Museum of History & Science.

Join us in celebrating Muskegon's creativity, history, and the enduring traditions that make our museum, and our community, so special.

Don't forget: Lakeshore Museum Center members receive **10% off all gift store purchases**, including these special edition ornaments. It is our way of saying thank you for supporting our mission and sharing in Muskegon's stories year after year.

Graciela Alberino-Stidham,
Guest Relations Manager



PLAN YOUR VISIT

Upcoming Events

11

Muskegon Museum of History & Science



December 6

Holiday Tours
3:00pm–7:00pm

December 11

Play & Learn
10:00am

December 13

Holiday Tours
3:00pm–7:00pm

December 13

Special Open Day
11:00am–4:00pm

December 20, 27, 28

Holiday Tours
3:00pm–7:00pm

January 8

Play & Learn
10:00am

Hackley & Hume Historic Site



January 10

Last Day: *Home Front Heroes*
Exhibit

January 20

Homeschool Day: Michigan
Glacier and the Ice Age

January 22

Play & Learn
10:00am

February 7

Exhibit Opening:
From Here To There

February 12

Play & Learn
10:00am

February 17

Homeschool Day:
From Here To There

Muskegon Heritage Museum of Business & Industry



February 19

Book Club: *Iron Empires*
6:00pm–7:00pm

February 26

Play & Learn
10:00am

February 28

Here To There
Science Saturday
1:00pm–3:00pm

All Sites Closed

December 12
December 24-26
December 31-Jan 1
January 19
February 16

Recent Acquisitions

The Lakeshore Museum Center actively collects objects and archival material relevant to Muskegon County's natural and cultural history. These items are reviewed by the Acquisitions Committee and the Board of Trustees for their condition, their relevance to Muskegon County, and the LMC's ability to care for the objects. We are grateful to our donors for their ongoing contributions to the Muskegon County Archive & Collection.

In the third quarter of 2025, the LMC was offered 75 objects. The following objects were accepted into the collection:

Photographs

- Two photographs of Cedaire Blais and his family
- Three photographs of a fire at the Brunswick-Balke-Collender factory, February 19, 1923

Objects

- Scalpel owned by Louise Price who attended the Mercy School of Nursing, circa 1940s

Brenda Nemetz, Collections Manager & Registrar



Muskegon Museum of History & Science

430 W. Clay Ave., Muskegon

231.722.0278

Hackley & Hume Historic Site

484 W. Webster Ave., Muskegon

231.722.7578

Fire Barn Museum

484 W. Webster Ave., Muskegon

231.722.7578

Scolnik House of the Depression Era

484 W. Webster Ave., Muskegon

231.722.7578

Muskegon Heritage Museum of Business & Industry

561 W. Western Ave., Muskegon

231.722.1363

www.lakeshoremuseum.org



**LAKESHORE
MUSEUM CENTER**



Superheroes at the Symphony
Jan 30 | Frauenthal Center | 7:30pm
ON SALE NOW!

ART NOUVEAU
THE AGE OF ELEGANCE
OCTOBER 2 - JANUARY 11
MUSKEGON MUSEUM OF ART
UNDERWRITTEN BY
WENDY & GARY MERKEY **Rehmann**

MUSKEGON CIVIC THEATRE
2025-2026 SEASON 41 presents
TICKETS AVAILABLE AT **otix** FRAUENTHAL CENTER
Box Office: Tuesday-Friday 11am-5pm, 231-727-8001, www.frauenthal.org
Season Sponsors: COMMUNITY FOUNDATION, PRO AUDIO, Patrick O'Leary and Karen Yamasaki
ONCE ON THIS ISLAND A MUSICAL
Book and Lyrics by Lynn Ahrens, Music by Stephen Flaherty
Based upon the novel "My Love, My Love" by Rosa Guy
January 16-25, 2026
Black Box on the Frauenthal Stage
Love, Loss, and What I Wore
by Nora Ephron and Delia Ephron
Based on the book by Ilene Beckerman
February 14-22, 2026
Frau Lounge
muskegoncivictheatre.org

Discover **EVERYTHING** Imaginable
HACKLEY Public Library
Everything Imaginable.
hackleylibrary.org