

**MIDLAND CENTER FOR THE ARTS and MIDLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BEGIN RESCUE and DAMAGE ASSESSMENT OF DOAN HISTORY CENTER and HERITAGE PARK**

Early Friday morning, May 22, Midland Center for the Arts facilities staff were able to enter the Doan History Center and Heritage Park to assess the flood damage caused by the catastrophic collapse of the Edenville Dam and the failure of the Sanford Lake Dam. Terri Trotter, President & CEO and Julie Johnson, Director of Museums, toured the facility to get a first-hand look at the damage. They reviewed plans for immediate clean-up and rescue of artifacts. The damage of the facility affects the work of the Midland County Historical Society, an organizational entity operating under the auspices of Midland Center for the Arts.

“Our initial review of the historic campus reveals some hope after a gloomy few days for Midland County,” said Terri Trotter, President & CEO. “The flood waters have caused damage to the facilities, with mud and debris scattered throughout the Midland County history museums. But structurally, the buildings have withstood devastation and many of the archives remain dry. Our biggest concern is for the thousands of papers, artifacts and photographs that celebrate our rich history in Midland County, and most of those valued treasures are safe.”

Water submerged the basement of the 1874 Victorian Bradley Home, emerging through the ground floor level by one inch. The Herbert H. Dow Museum appears virtually unscathed other than water in the basement. The Carriage House, Brine Well and Blacksmith Shop damage have yet to be fully assessed. The facilities staff is pumping water out of the buildings and beginning efforts to dry, cool and fan these historical structures prior to restoration. More than 20 water pumps and 20 industrial-size fans are being utilized in buildings throughout the campus.

“Our mitigation efforts within the archives and Heritage Park, including the historic Bradley Home, Carriage House, Blacksmith Shop, and Herbert H. Dow Museum, were geared toward the 2017 flood level, if not higher,” noted Jake Huss, Historical Programs & Exhibitions Manager. “The 1874 Victorian Bradley Home was prepared for the 1986 flood level. However, this situation is unprecedented, and water filled the basement and even slightly damaged the ground floor of the Historic Bradley Home, which has never happened before.”

Despite being at a higher elevation, the Doan History Center, where most of the Midland County Historical Society archives are stored, took in an estimated 24 inches of water throughout the facility. The exhibits were not damaged, other than water and mud on the floors. A portion of the archives, however, have sustained significant damage.

“Records and files kept on the lowest shelves of the archive storage area were subjected to quite a bit of water,” noted Crystal Laudeman, archivist. “However, our colleagues at Saginaw Valley State University’s Marshall Fredericks Sculpture Museum have provided immediate access to their freezer storage to help preserve wet artifacts, a process which prevents mold and other water damage. After freezing, we will coordinate with other agencies to freeze dry the paperwork, which intensifies the drying process and more successfully restores delicate items. The situation is concerning, but because the Doan Center is well above the river, the situation is manageable and we anticipate that we will be able to restore many of the soaked documents.”

“It has been an emotional and trying week for many residents of Midland County and our staff at Midland Center for the Arts and the Midland County Historical Society,” said Julie Johnson. “We have

received countless nationwide inquiries and offers to assist from volunteers, cultural organizations, community members and donors about our facilities and archives. The dedication and passion for preserving our rich history is strong and we will be able to navigate this devastating flood because of the many people who are committed to our success.”

Center staff are coordinating with Central Michigan University’s Museum Studies program to assist with the preservation of 3-dimensional objects, focusing on the historic Bradley Home. As the Center moves from rescue to restoration, they will also be collaborating with experts from Michigan Museum Association and Michigan Archivists Society, and others from around the nation. The Center has also gratefully accepted assistance from Smithsonian-trained historic preservation and restoration specialist, Jared Yax, Collections Curator from the Tri-Cities Historical Museum.

“Folks have been concerned and worried, and have been asking for ways to assist,” said Jake Huss. “The work right now requires high levels of expertise and training. That fact, along with the international pandemic still ongoing, means that we cannot accommodate volunteers for now. However, we urge those who would like to help us to donate at the Center’s website.”

Midland Center for the Arts is accepting donations to support the Historical Society’s cleanup, assessment, rescue and restoration efforts. For more information or to make a gift, visit midlandcenter.org.

If you have donated an artifact to the Midland Historical Society Archive and are concerned about its status, please do not contact the Society at this time. Once we have an ability to assess the full extent of the issues, Crystal Laudeman will be reaching out to the donors of items that have been affected. Please be patient during this time. We will be developing updates that will appear on an ongoing basis on our website and on the Midland Historical Society Facebook page.