



Invitation to the

2026 SACA Annual Meet

September 18, 19, 20, 2026

Dear SACA Members, Invitees, and others generally interested in steam:

You are invited This is an invitation to the Twenty-second Annual Steam Club meet here in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Previously, the meets were hosted in Danville, Illinois by Al Reynolds and, before that, in Greensboro, North Carolina by R.A. Gibbs.

These annual meets have been hosted by current and former club presidents, or other officers, and they are the *de facto* annual membership and business meetings, mostly because there is no other organization or entity in the club to do the hosting. The major prerequisite to hosting one of these meetings is to have an area—parking lot, farm roads, fairgrounds driveways, whatever—to park real or homemade steam things, and then from time to time, fire them up, blow steam all over, and sometimes get them to move under their own power. The minor prerequisite is to figure out how to get the doors unlocked for indoor space complete with indoor plumbing and then make a table with coffee and donuts available.

I will describe what usually happens at these events but should first explain what these meets are not. Most of those who show up do not own a real steam automobile, despite the name of this organization, but are generally knowledgeable and interested in steam power and are interested in it and having worked with it at one level or the other. Therefore, this is not a steam automobile show where someone can arrive, stay a few hours, and see everything there is to see. What we all want to see are several \$150,000 coffin nose Stanleys, all restored, shined up, and running perfectly, and giving out rides. These would have to come in an expensive double-axle trailer pulled by a \$85,000 dually diesel rig, and few people with those assets have the time and energy to show up here for our entertainment. And so, what we have is an ongoing series of talks, presentations, introductions, and explanations. The meet features many table displays of literature and pieces of small steam projects that people have been working on. The most important activity is visiting during the coffee breaks. In fact, I often announce that the main purpose of the formal talks is to give us all a chance to rest our feet between coffee breaks. We attempt to reserve several miles of nice roads at the fairgrounds for driving around with our parking lot steam vehicles.

Please come prepared to tell us about yourself, history of interest in steam, projects worked on, and all. Bring things to drive, fire up, make move, and generally that will provide knowledge or entertainment for the rest of us. Most find it an enjoyable useful experience.

Call for papers: Let us know if you have a **planned and prepared** presentation. We will have a digital projector available.

Ken Helmick (SACA President)
964 Highlander Street
Lake Orion, MI 48362-1927
586-214-4795 kenatgm@aol.com

We look forward to seeing you.
Twenty-second Annual Meeting at Berrien Springs, Michigan of
the Steam Automobile Club of America, Inc., Chicagoland Chapter
Friday, Saturday, Sunday— September 18, 19, 20, 2026

Schedule of Events

Events are at different places. Talks and Registration will be at the Fairgrounds this year. Addresses and places listed below. Please pay special attention to places where events take place.

Thursday September 17	5:30—9:00	Shop, open all day for early arrivals - 3867 E. Snow Rd. Reception, Tom's house - 4671 E. Hillcrest Dr., Berrien Springs
Friday September 18	7:30—9:00 9:00—1:00 1:00—2:30 2:30—5:00 5:00—9:00	Registration and coffee, Fairgrounds Talks and presentations Lunch on your own Outdoor Demonstrations Fairgrounds Evening at Steam Shop , Snow Road, light dinner, furnished. Tours of Library and Collection
Saturday September 19	7:30—9:00 9:00—1:00 1:00—2:30 2:30—4:00 4:00—5:00 5:00—9:00	Registration and coffee, Fairgrounds Talks and presentations Annual open board meeting, lunch on own Outdoor demonstrations Membership Meeting Evening at Steam Shop , Steam Shop at Snow Road, light dinner, furnished.
Sunday September 20	7:30—9:00 9:00—1:30 1:30—2:30 2:30—9:00	Registration and coffee, Fairgrounds Talks and presentations. Lunch on own, Move from Fairgrounds Tours at Steam Shop , boiler demonstrations
Registration Fee		

\$65 For three days coffee and donuts and light meals
\$25 For one day

Presentations, Talks, and/or show a component: Ken Helmick, 586-214-4795, steamautomobile@aol.com.

Camping is available on the grounds of the steam shop. There is plenty of room for campers and tents, but no hookups. Shop has two bathrooms, one shower and will be open at all times.

MapQuest Location of: <http://www.mapquest.com/us/mi/berrien-springs>
Tom Kimmel (cell) 269-208-3931
Home: 4671 E. Hillcrest Dr., Berrien Springs, MI 49103
Fairgrounds: 9122 M-139 (Old 31) Berrien Springs, MI 49103
Steam Shop: 3867 East Snow Road, Berrien Springs, MI 49103

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Dear Steam Club People:

This is another take on inviting club members and their invitees, to our annual meeting. We are trying to describe the meeting and how it is of interest and educational value to all steam people. We have attempted to describe what happens and how it feels to attend this meeting, which has happened often enough to have taken on its own life and developed its own tradition. Mainly, what I have to say is that most who attend enjoy it. Of course, most attendees are long-standing, and thus they enjoy it ... or they would not keep coming back.

Several types of people attend. Those new to steam looking for more information, old-timers who like the social aspects of meeting old friends, and those with good solid steam experience who like to share that knowledge with others. What this is not is an old car show. Very few vintage steam people trailer their vehicles here. We like them, and invite them, and for two afternoons we have the large county fairgrounds with several miles of roads snaking through for us to drive on. The real steam vehicle people are usually busy all summer with organized regional tours.

We particularly invite everyone making something steam-related. We like to see what people are doing, and sometimes we offer a little advice, based on what we have seen so far in life. We want to, above all else, make good use of people's time, which is why the program starts first thing in the morning and lasts until dark, or even longer. There is the usual coffee, donuts, granola bars, and bananas for those who did not get breakfast first. There is a reception Thursday evening for the early comers and evening meals provided on the premises Friday and Saturday. I think the most valuable display is my library and the second most valuable is the large collection of home-made steam things—burners, steam generators, engines, and vehicles. The late Art Gardiner used to tell me that I would have a good collection if I threw away 95% of it. Art was a purist who only wanted to see the most successful and thermodynamic steam things on display. On the other hand, I think that anything someone went to the effort of making is worth preserving, and also that more can be learned from really bad examples than from perfect examples.

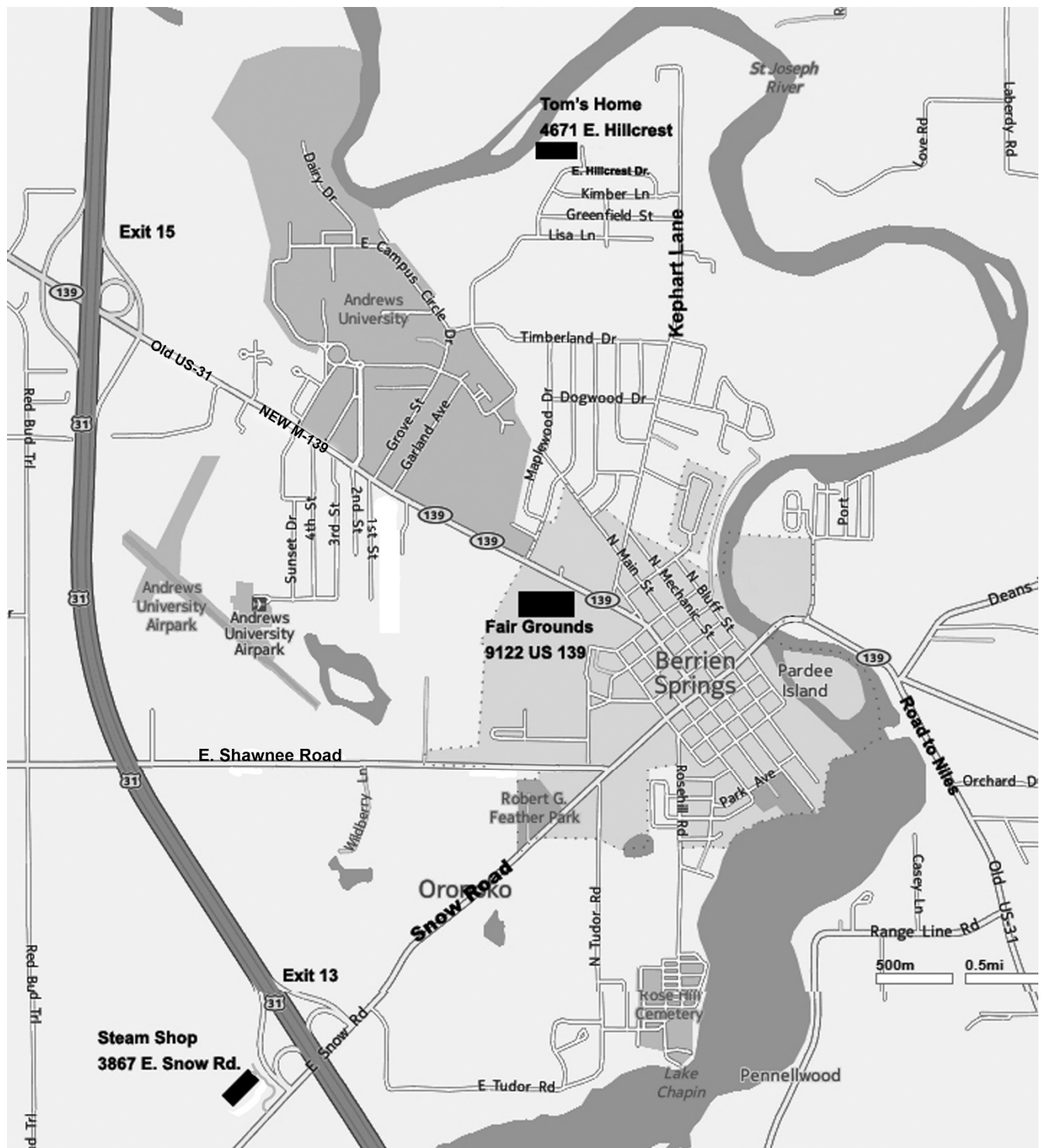
Ken wants to use our time wisely, so he is trying to avoid our usual tradition of the presenters spending the first 15 minutes of each speech with their backs to the audience while making free-hand drawings on the flip paper easel. I do not aspire to as much perfection as Ken, but I think that, at the least, the presenters should take some time early in the morning to do their freehand drawing on a table, without the rest of us having to watch the process. At least, we aim for a professional presentation whenever possible. We have AV equipment.

All new people are invited to introduce themselves, mentioning their backgrounds, interests, and knowledge. Just being here to learn is enough. These days, we are working on several projects—Tim Nye is designing a Detroit Diesel two-cycle engine converted to steam power for a land-speed record run. The design work is nearly done; now we are working on fundraising and fabrication. Ken and I think that the present emphasis on steam will be small, biomass-fired, electrical generators for off-grid and backyard use. We have had those with experience in restoring and maintaining vintage steam vehicles show up and tell of their experiences. They are the backbone of the club.

And so, we are going to walk through the vehicles and components on display, describing their history and what has, or can be, learned from studying them. This will take place in the afternoons and evenings at my 50' x 100' steel-building steam shop that contains my library and two bathrooms.

Please bring books, literature, things, and stories. It is the presence of as many people as possible that gives these meetings value.

Tom Kimmel
georgethomaskimmel@gmail.com



Directions: From Detroit, Michigan, take I-94 West to Exit 33 onto US-31 South towards South Bend. To go to my house or the Fairgrounds, take Exit 15, onto M-139, and go East. Just before McDonald's is the Fairgrounds, and just after that is Kephart Lane.

To go to my Shop: continue south on 31 to Exit 13, which dumps you onto Snow Road. Go right, West. Take an immediate right at 3867 East Snow Road onto a gravel farm road up and around past all the no trespassing signs.

From Chicago: Take I-94 East to Exit 16 Bridgeman, north on Red Arrow to the stoplight at Lake St., then turn right—Lake St. becomes Shawnee Rd. Then travel east 10 miles to Ferry Street, turn left, then make another left at the stoplight to the Fairgrounds. Just before McDonald's is Kephart Lane, and just after is the Fairgrounds.

The GPS address for Tom Kimmel's house: 4671 East Hillcrest Drive, Berrien Springs, MI 49103.