



WELCOME TO HISTORIC DOUGLAS

On its winding path to Lake Michigan, the Kalamazoo River separates the land of Saugatuck and Douglas. While the north bank pioneer settlements of Saugatuck and Singapore got their start in the 1830s, it was not until the 1850s that the opposite shore sprang to life. In 1851 Jonathon Wade built a small sawmill on the river. Then in 1855, William Dutcher and his extended family arrived and purchased the sawmill and much of the surrounding land south to the present Center Street. In a few years Dutcher was producing shingles, lath, and lumber. This was the beginning of the enterprise - later known as the basket factory - which would be the largest and most successful business of the town.

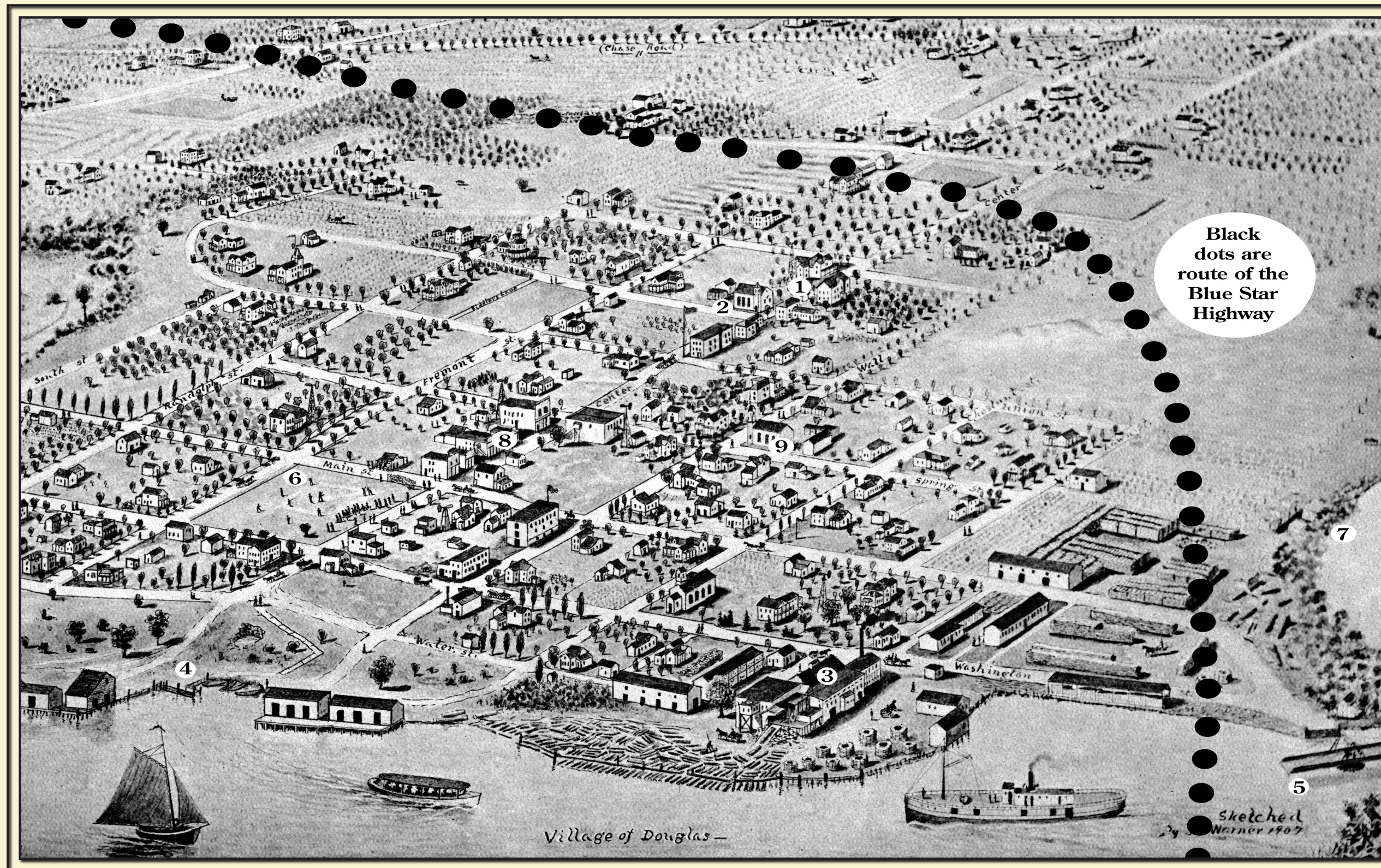
In 1869, a drawbridge, later replaced by a swing bridge, was built near the present site. In fact, the river was a critical asset that enabled the lumber mills to float logs in and ship lumber out. By 1862 a second saw mill at the east end of Center Street went into operation, and Gerber's tannery further south along the shore

was moving hides and hemlock bark by riverboat. Dan Gerber and son, Milton later became owners of other local businesses and their descendants founded the Gerber Baby Food business in Fremont, Michigan.

During the 1870s the population was about 500. The commercial activity, as reported in the Commercial Record, consisted of two lumber yards, two saw mills, two shingle mills, a grist mill, a tannery, a planing shop, a basket factory, three blacksmith shops and one wagon shop. In addition there was a school, two churches and six downtown shops. Fruit growing began to dominate the economy. It is claimed that at one time there were 10,000 peach trees within the village boundaries.

The early 1900s saw the advent of tourism and the arrival of summer residents who built cottages along the Lake Michigan shoreline. Tourism became the dominant influence for the next 100 years. Today thousands of year round and seasonal residents are proud to call Douglas their home.

Site #17



DOUGLAS BIRDS EYE VIEW 1907

This drawing provides an accurate and unique perspective of Douglas as it looked in the early 20th century. The numbered locations are featured in the photos. The large dotted black line is the route of the present day Blue Star Highway and bridge that was completed in 1936.



1 - DOUGLAS UNION SCHOOL ca 1915

The school was built in 1866 by local ships carpenters directed by Jonas Crouse. In the first year there were 112 students and three female teachers. Over the years the grades offered were from first to tenth. In 1957 the building was closed for school use. In the early 1960s the interior was converted to an apartment building. The structure was acquired by the Saugatuck-Douglas Historical Society in 2006 to be used as a historical community resource center.



2 - METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH ca 1894

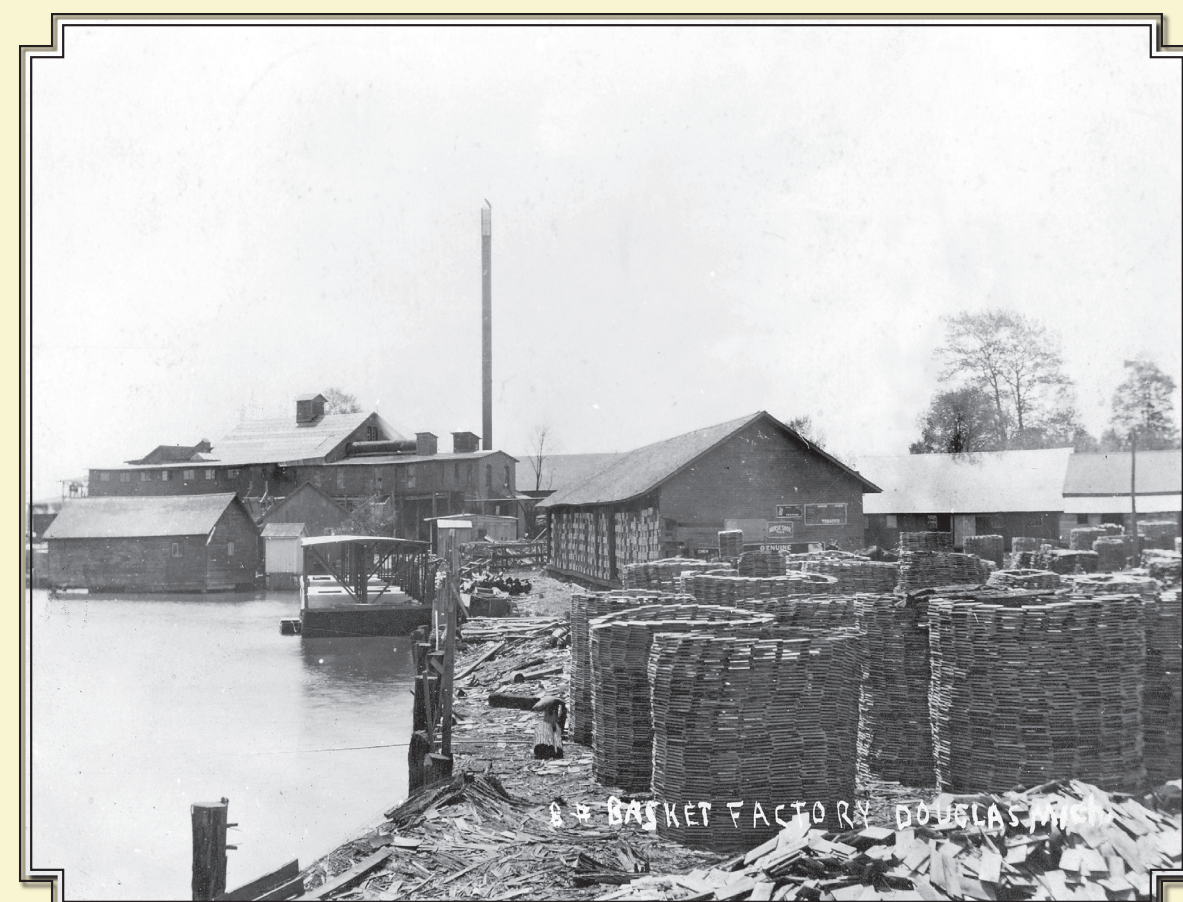
The church was built ca 1870 and active until 1894. At that time the church disbanded and the building became an Odd Fellows hall and later clubhouse of the Douglas Athletic Club. It currently is the home of the Saugatuck-Douglas District Library.



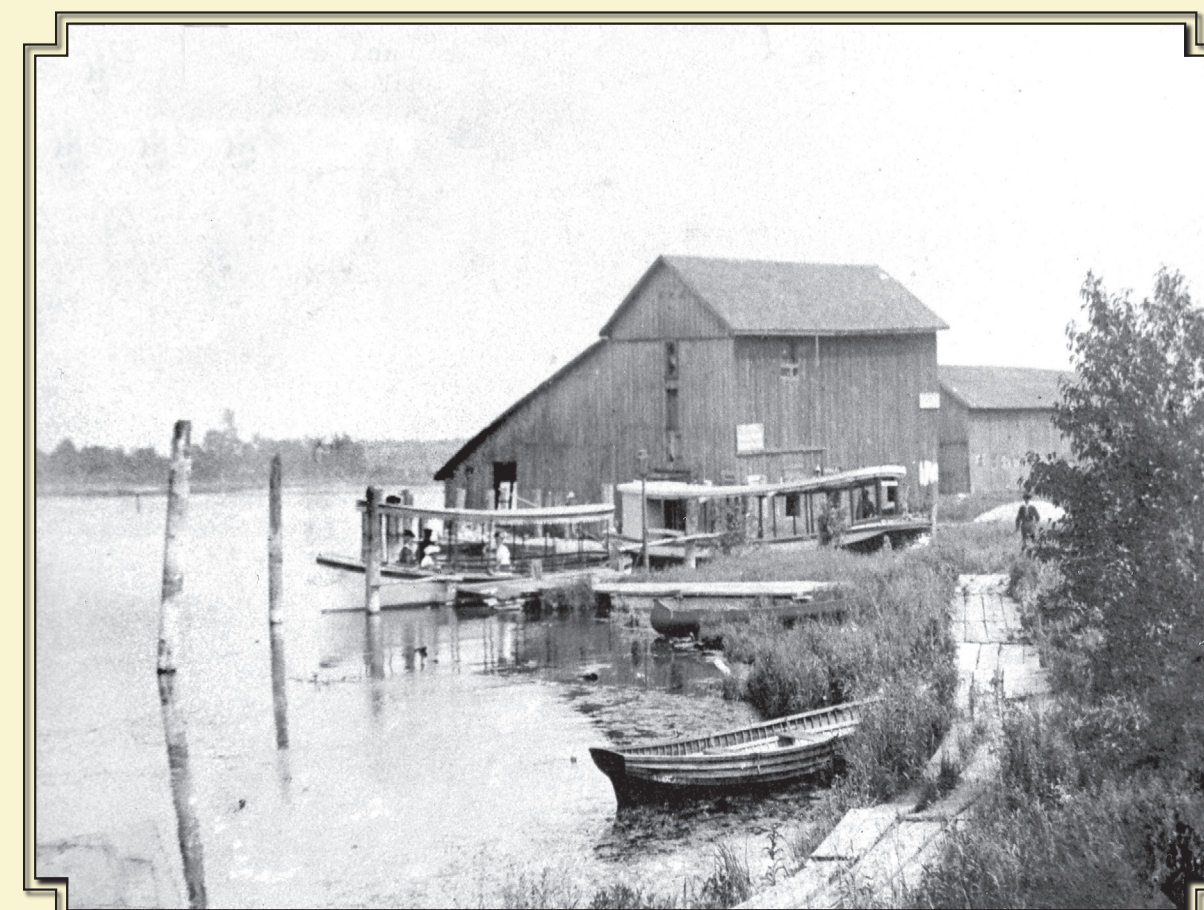
The photo was taken from the roof of Dutcher Lodge, now the site of the Douglas City offices and the view is to the northeast. The church in the foreground is the Congregational Church on the corner of Spring and Wall Streets. It was built in 1883 and exists today as the Douglas Congregational -United Church of Christ.



The block between Main and Spring Streets has always been the heart of downtown Douglas.



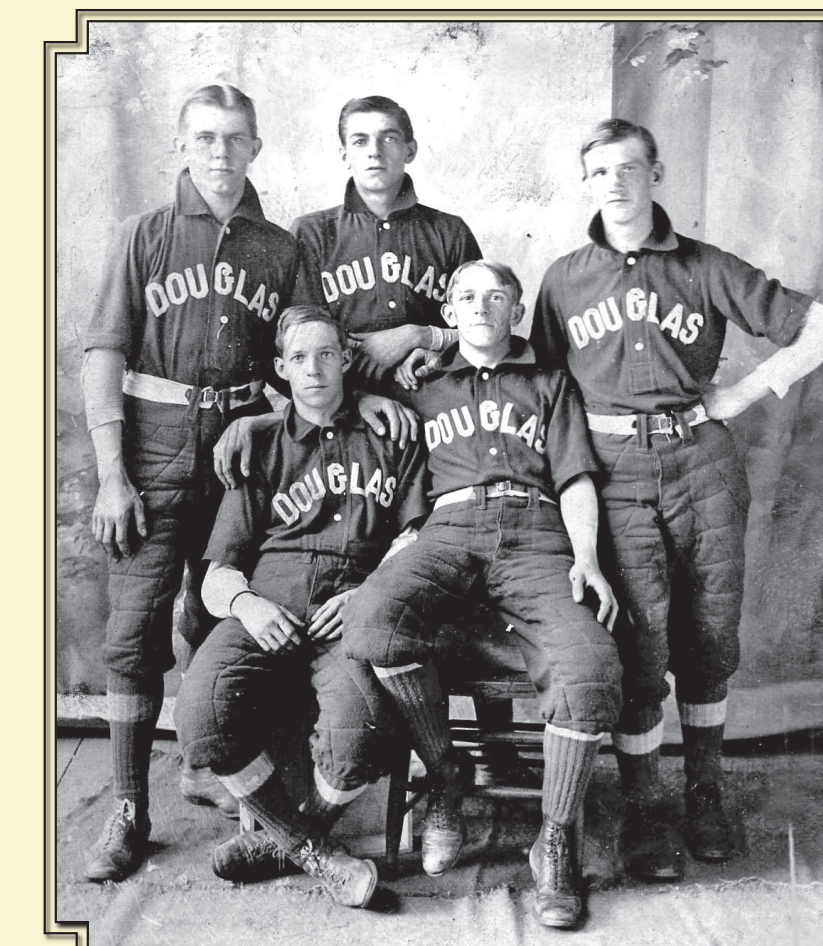
The first mill at this location was a saw mill established by Jonathon Wade in 1851. It was acquired by the Dutcher family, then by William Weed and finally by his son Elmer E. Weed who had partners D. Milton Gerber and James G. Wark. The business evolved from a sawmill to a woodwork mill to basket manufacturing and was a very successful business. The facility was destroyed by fire in the spring of 1927.



The ferry landing dock at the east end of Center Street was used by small passenger ferries that ran between downtown Saugatuck and Douglas.



In 1902 a swing bridge replaced the 1870 drawbridge at that location. A keeper minded the bridge during the navigation season. In 1936 the Blue Star Highway was opened and it included a huge causeway leading to a fixed span of the type in use today.



The game of baseball has a long history of great success in Douglas and Beery Field has been the home of many successful teams for over a hundred years.



The Keewatin is seen here as she arrived from Canada on her way to a permanent berth at the foot of Union Street. The vessel was purchased by R. J. Peterson from the Canadian Pacific Railroad to become a marine museum. Built in 1907, the Keewatin was a veteran of service on the Great Lakes carrying passengers and freight.