



OVAL BEACH

Residents and visitors of Saugatuck have always enjoyed the beautiful beaches around them, even when accessing the lakeshore was difficult by today's standards. Before the creation of Oval Beach in 1936, bathers would travel by excursion boat down the Kalamazoo River to the opening of the harbor to reach the shoreline.

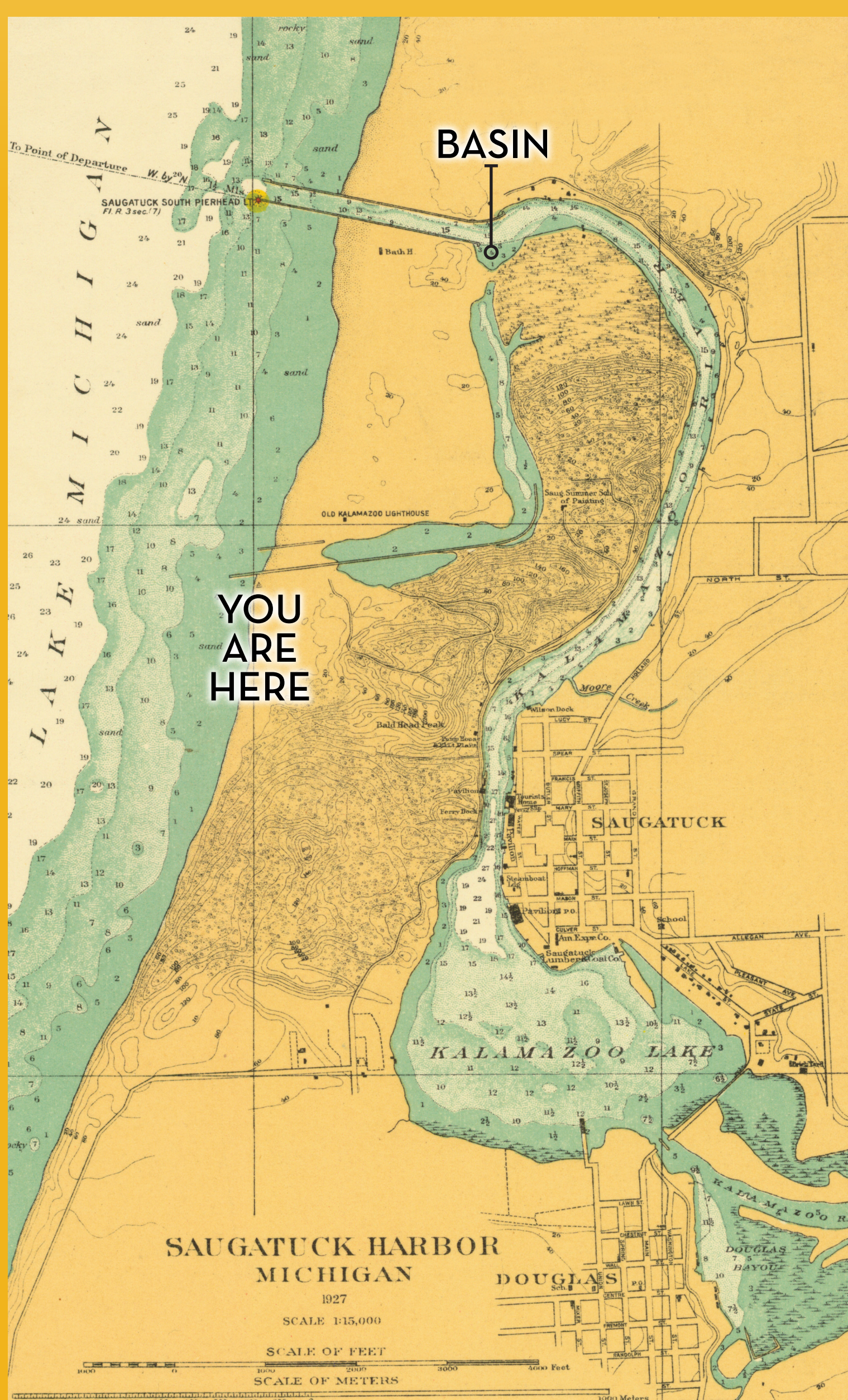
Early beachgoers often preferred to swim at the mouth of the river, in an area called the "basin" instead of in the waters of Lake Michigan. In 1906, when a new river mouth was cut for the harbor, a large area was left open just before the entrance for this purpose.



Swimming at the Basin

With the rising popularity of the automobile by the 1920s, the desire for a road connecting Saugatuck to the lakeshore was first discussed. It took nearly a decade, but through the help of public employment programs of the Great Depression, and community support bonds, Oval Beach was finally opened in 1936.

Oval Beach was named after the shape of its parking lot. A parking fee was first instituted in 1950, at the rate of 10 cents for an hour, and 5 cents for additional hours after that.



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NOAA Office of Coast Survey, 1927