

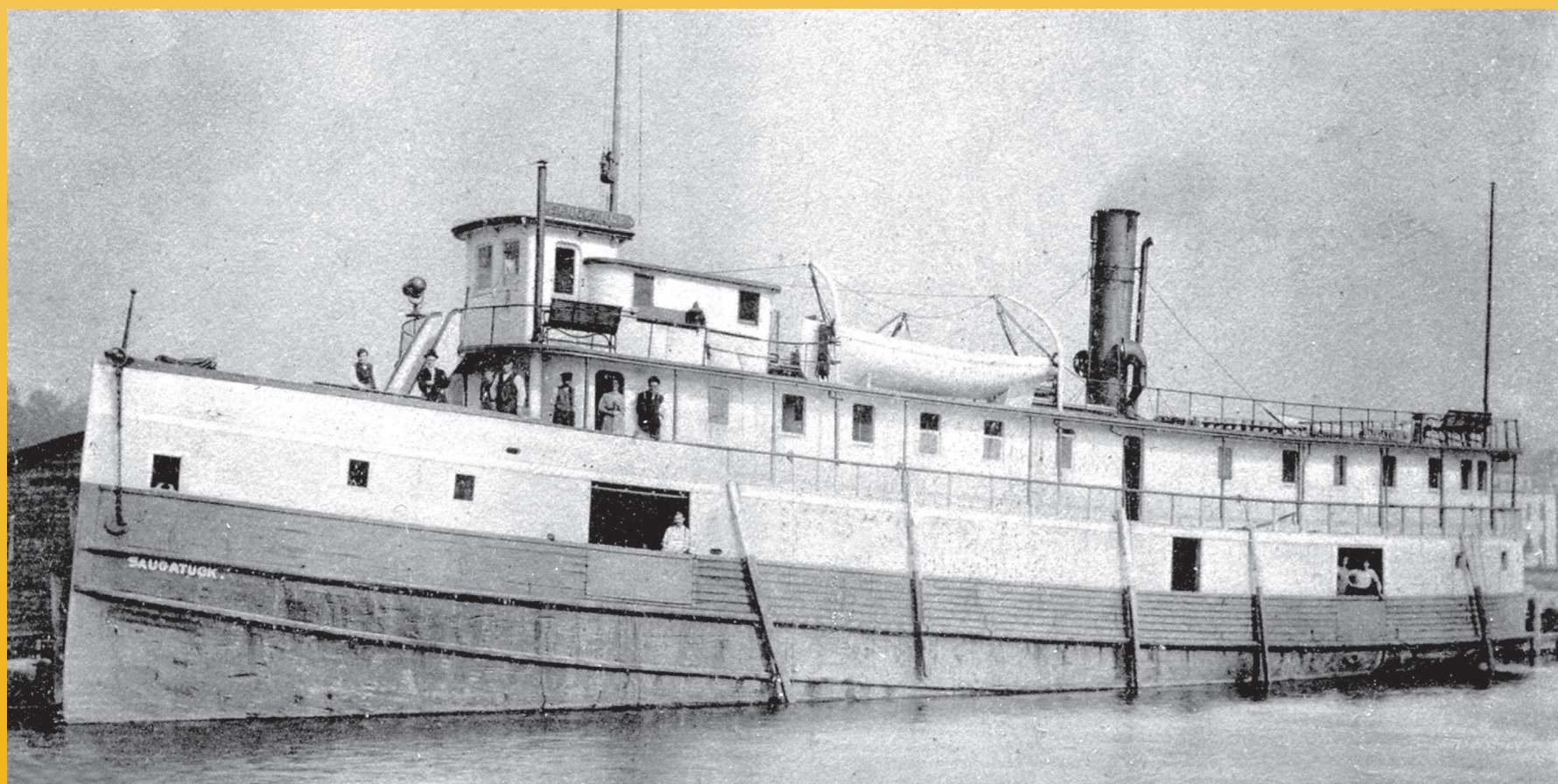


Brittain and Elliot Shipyard, as viewed from Mt. Baldhead, 1895

SHIPBUILDING

From 1860s to the 1910 here on the banks of the Kalamazoo River, Saugatuck's shipbuilding industry boomed. During this time all types of vessels, both sail and steam, were launched. Saugatuck's boat production supported other regional industries, including lumbering, fruit growing, and tourism.

Boats have always been built along the Kalamazoo River. Indigenous peoples made dugout and birchbark canoes, with fur traders later following suit. Early migrants from New England, finding lands covered with impassable forests, used Great Lakes sailing boats and flatboat rafts to move from one place to another.



The 110-foot steamer Saugatuck was built by John B. Martel in 1887 for carrying fruit, lumber as well as passengers.

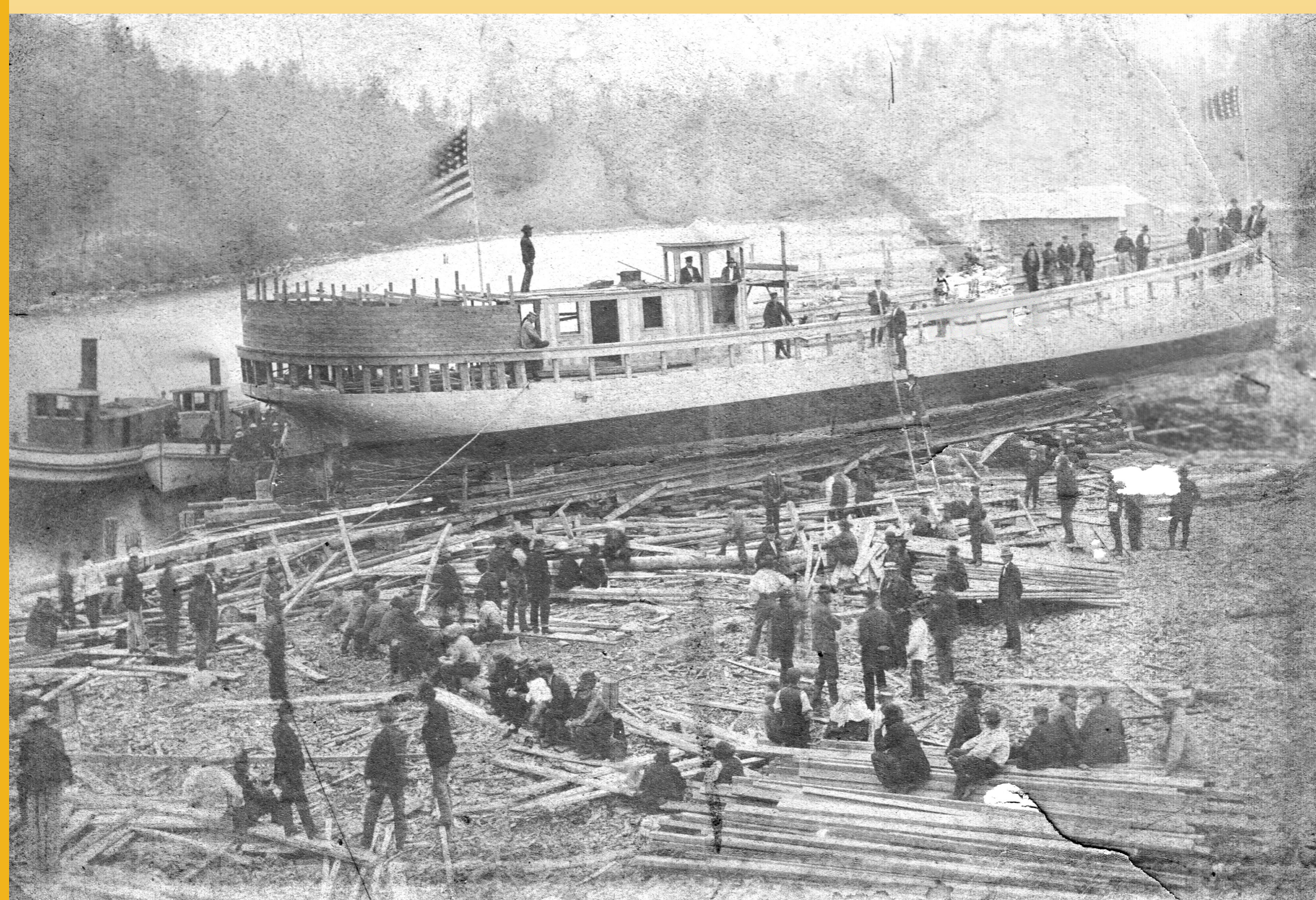
The development of steam power brought shipbuilding along the Kalamazoo River to new heights in the 1880s and 1890s, with more than 80 tugs and 32 steamers built. Several large shipbuilders were located along the river from the present-day Butler Restaurant to Wick's Park.

John B. Martel established one of the first shipyards along the river, first at Butler Street and later moving to Mason Street near present-day Coral Gables. Here over 50 sailing vessels, steamboats, and tugs were constructed.



Schooner George M. Case at the John Baptise Martel yard, circa 1874

An abundance of oak trees in the area contributed to Saugatuck's success. Local shipbuilders used oak in the hulls of schooners, tugs and steamboats. The upper parts of boats were made from white pine, another plentiful tree. Planking and frames were attached using hand-forged iron spikes and caulked with oakum-hemp soaked in pine tar.



Steamer G.P. Heath launch 1871