GOING TO TOWN



LINEUP AT THE DOCK BAR on the lower level of the dance hall, the Big Pavilion. During the 1950s and into the 1960s the area became very popular with college-aged kids, especially during spring break and on holiday weekends.



SAUGATUCK MILL WORKERS ca. 1890. The large number of single and young men employed in hard and dangerous work in early industries and shipping meant considerable heavy drinking and rowdy behavior. This was a social issue that eventually led Miss Anthony's attack on the taverns.

THE SAUGATUCK POUCE FORCE IN 1958 Russell Collings, described by one newspaper as "the youngest and shortest police chief in Michigan" is third from left. Saugatuck police were credited with planning a campaign which closed down a motorcycle gang attempting to organize at an area bar. Initiation of new members required a demonstration of reckless driving, stealing gasoline, and a fight with a chosen victim.



HOT TIMES IN SAUGATUCK

The busy saloons during the lumbering era assured Saugatuck a reputation for fun – even after a visit from prohibitionist Susan B. Anthony put a temporary damper on things in 1879.

But the legendary days of Saugatuck as a good time place began during World War II, when it was declared a liberty port, and into the 1950s when the spirit of revelry continued. Then a national news magazine declared Saugatuck "a hot town" which didn't help. After a particularly raucous Memorial Day weekend in 1952 created a public outcry to "buy back the streets," Joe Dempski, a former big city policeman, was hired as police chief to enforce the traffic, parking and liquor ordinances. Things gradually calmed down, although there were still long lines of people waiting to get into the bars, and crowds of underage visitors getting into mischief.

One classic case was a Volkswagon, which was lifted into the Village Square in Saugatuck where it was fitted snugly between two trees. The police didn't have time to drive those they arrested to the nearest jail in Allegan, so the Justice of the Peace set up court in his house on holiday weekends where the arresting officer would take the accused "to court." If found guilty the fine could be paid on the spot.