

GETTING AROUND

A CHAIN FERRY was established at about the site of the first bridge over the river and carried pedestrians, horses, carriages and later cars. A similar ferry still runs in the summertime for pedestrians and bicycles only.







THE FIRST BRIDGE between Saugatuck and Douglas was built in 1868, and the crossing included an approach, a long low stationary bridge (pictured here) which continued across an island in midstream and then a draw section (later replaced by a swing bridge) which opened to allow passage of boats upstream.

FLOATING DOWN THE RIVER IN A WAGON

The present Saugatuck Chain ferry grew out of an accident in 1857 that occurred when an old bridge at that site collapsed. This was a partially floating swing bridge that crossed the Kalamazoo River near the foot of Mary Street built in the 1840s that could be opened for large vessels. However, it was poorly built and boats kept knocking it until one day in 1857 it collapsed and dumped a wagon and oxen and two ladies into the river, all of which floated gracefully along until the driver could summon aid to the rescue.

A decade later, a more permanent bridge was constructed upriver at the site of today's Saugatuck-to-Douglas bridge. It was in sections, one of which was a tree-lined causeway, one a trestle bridge of sorts, and another was (at first) a draw bridge (later a swing bridge) to allow boats to go upriver. The present much shortened bridge was built in 1938 to convey the Blue Star Memorial Highway over the river and has been improved and widened several times.