

Why do Saugatuck folks get so excited about their only stoplight?

IN YEARS PAST, Saugatuck's sole traffic light was shut off completely at Labor Day and, to better protect

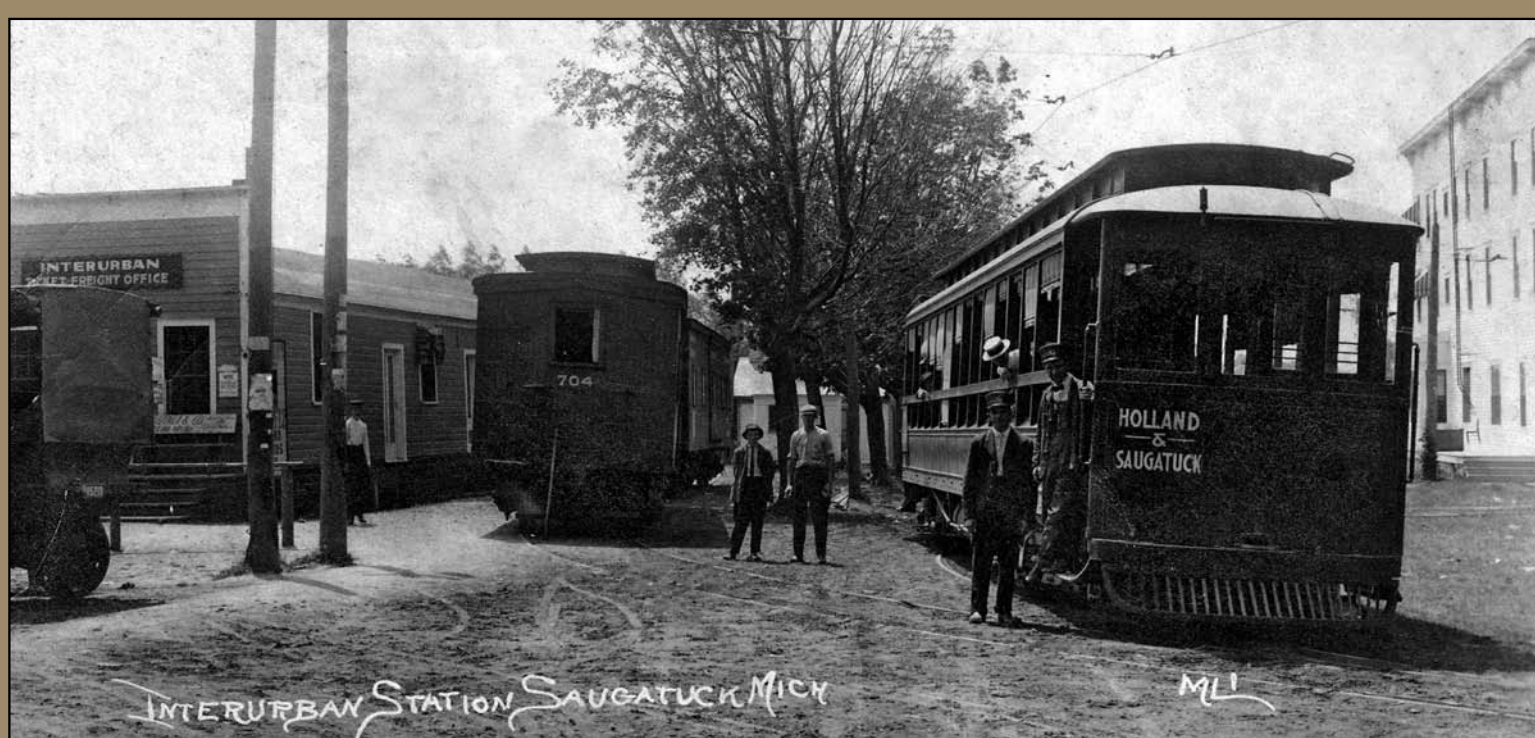


Saugatuck's only traffic light at the corner of Butler and Culver streets with the Saugatuck Village Hall in the background.

it from winter weather, it was wrapped in the raincoat belonging to the Chief of Police, who also retired for the winter. In spring residents and the high school band would gather at the corner as the turning on of the light marked the arrival of "the season." The mayor would officially switch over to red-yellow-green operation – and all would cheer.

What? A train and hot dancing brought electricity to Saugatuck?

There was never a steam train in either town, but an electric "**INTERURBAN**" arrived in **SAUGATUCK** in 1899 and ran to Holland, with connections to Grand Rapids, until 1927 with a station at the corner of Butler and Culver Streets. Although nearby towns had household electricity before the turn of the century, Saugatuck lagged behind, partially because power could be obtained by tapping the lines which ran the interurban. There were times that so much electricity was being diverted from the power line that the train could barely move. The enormous **BIG PAVILION**, a dance hall of 1909 by the river in Saugatuck, had its arches and windows, both outside and inside, outlined



Saugatuck longed for a steam railroad, but was bypassed in favor of routes farther inland. Finally an electric railroad was opened to Holland and Grand Rapids in 1899 and continued until 1927.



Called "The Brightest Spot on the Great Lakes," lights were an important part of the decoration of the Big Pavilion, a dance hall and movie theater built in 1909 at the edge of Kalamazoo Lake. Power was generated at the structure's own power plant to the south of the main building.

in thousands of electric lights. To get the power for this they built their own generator with a towering chimney just south of the building. This showcased what electricity could do, and, in 1912, a steam plant was enlarged to provide power in Saugatuck every evening from sundown to 11 pm. Later the housewives petitioned the village to turn on the power every Monday during the day so that they could use their electric irons.