



1929

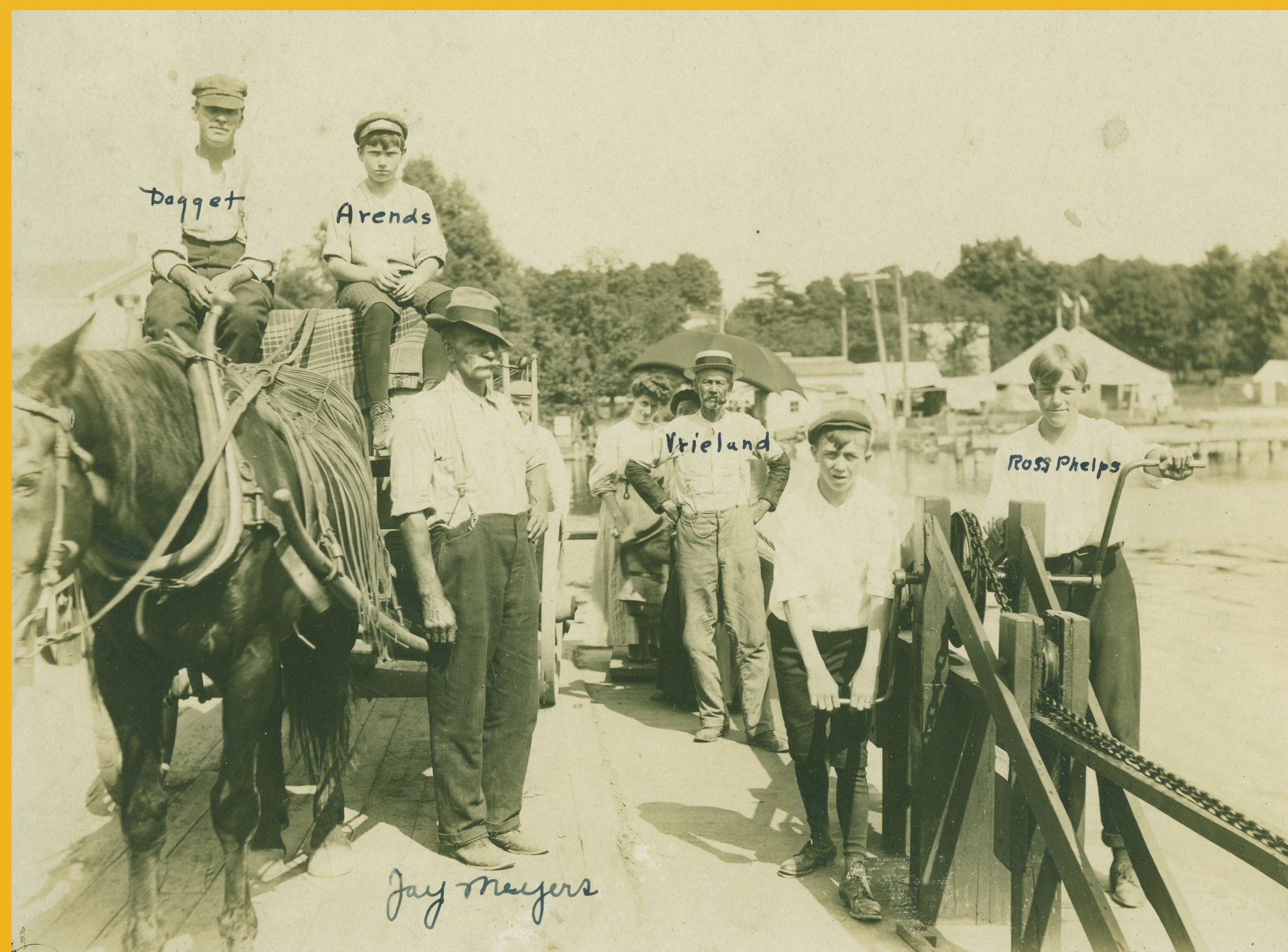
SAUGATUCK

CHAIN

Historically, the Chain Ferry transported people, horses, and automobiles. The first Chain Ferry vessel was a scow, or a flat-bottomed boat. The fare was five cents for a round trip, and children rode for free to get to school. The largest scow used by the ferry could hold four automobiles.

Many Victorian-era visitors to Saugatuck came to climb Mount Baldhead, have a picnic, and visit the beach. The Chain Ferry helped get them there. The Chain Ferry itself was a popular tourist destination, commemorated in many postcards and souvenir photos.

As automobile travel grew, and with a new bridge built to connect Saugatuck and Douglas in 1936, business for the Chain Ferry waned by the 1940s. In 1965 R.E. and R.J. Peterson restored the vessel. They saw a future in the boat transporting tourists to the other side of the river, just as had been done in its heyday. Today, the Chain Ferry is owned by the City of Saugatuck.



Ferryman Jay Myers and two boys working the crank, circa 1910-1920

Jim Sheridan cranking the ferry, 1929

FERRY



U.S. Rep. Fred Upton cuts ribbon to inaugurate the Saugatuck Chain Ferry season. Shown are (from left, front): council members Barry Johnson, Jane Verplank and Chris Peterson, Upton and mayor Ken Trester; rear: ferry worker Caiden Jones, operator Sean Steele, city manager Kirk Harrier, ferry worker Scott McGinness, R.J. Peterson and ferry worker Sean O'Malley. (Photo by Jim Hayden)

U.S. Representative Fred Upton included language in a 2018 U.S. Coast Guard bill to ensure continued operation of the Saugatuck Chain Ferry. Photo courtesy of the Commercial Record newspaper

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