



# Cultural Landscape Report: Waterfront



Eastern Michigan University  
Historic Preservation Program  
Preserving Community Character Course, Fall 2009





# Waterfront Team Members:

Susann deVries

Stephanie Staley

Kristen Young

Nathan Nietering

Anne Stevenson

Brenna Moloney

Lisa Stangis, Report Editor





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section I: General Information page 5

Section II: Statement of Significance and Periods of Significance page 6

Section III: Landscape History page 9

Section IV: Existing Conditions page 20

Section V: Analysis of Integrity page 22

Section VI: Management Philosophy & Treatment Recommendations page 27

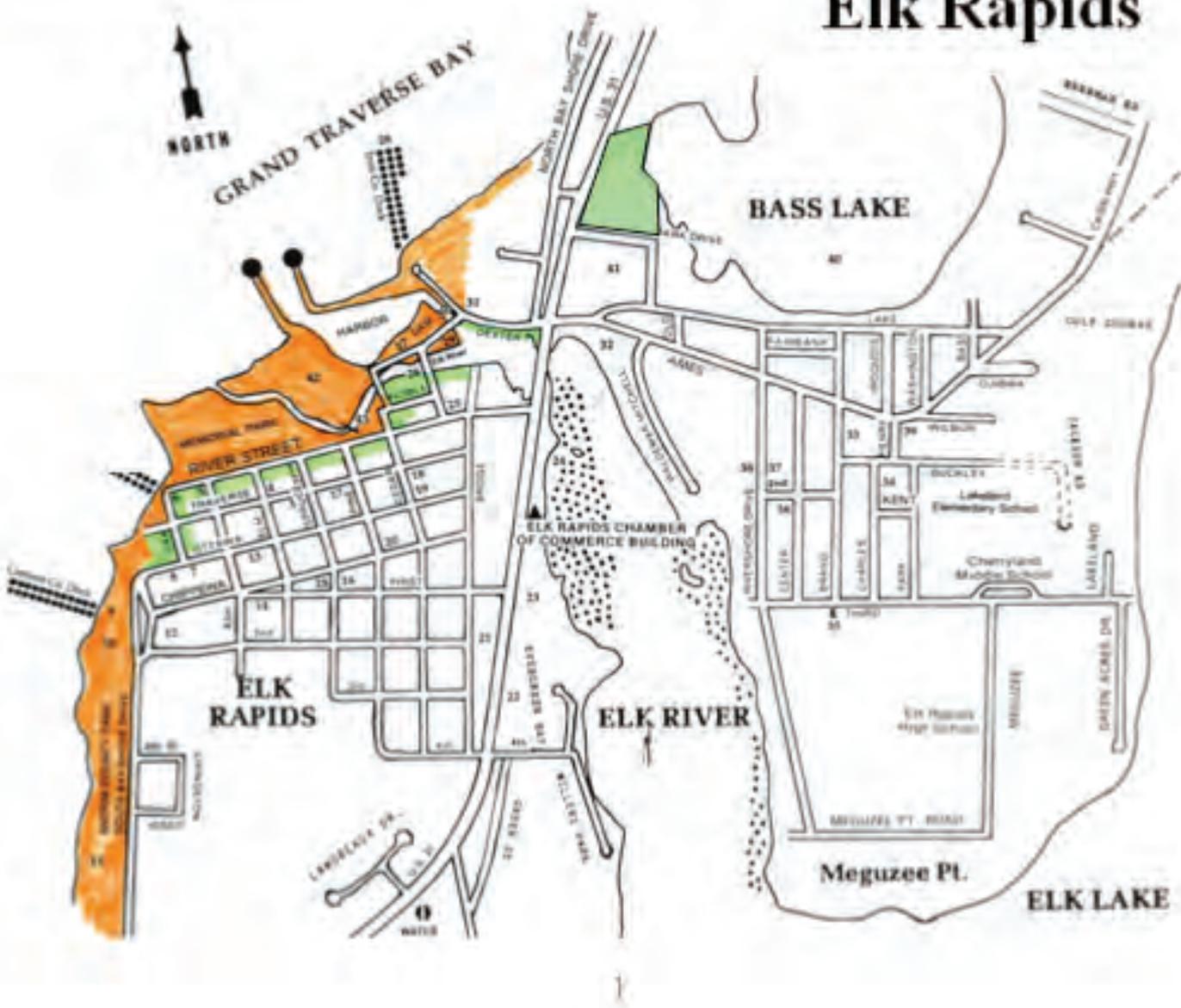
Bibliography page 31





# BOUNDARIES

Key	
	Directly Contrib.
	Related





## Section I: General Information

***Inventory Unit Name:***

Waterfront, Coastline of the Village of Elk Rapids, Michigan

***Property Level:***

Landscape

***General History:***

Elk Rapids is a community of about 1700 people on the Grand Traverse Bay in Antrim County, Michigan. It is roughly twelve miles northeast of Traverse City and is known for its outdoor recreational activities and scenery. In addition to recreation, Antrim County is also noted for its fruit farms and vineyards. In the past, Elk Rapids was a logging and industrial hub and the site of Native American settlement.







Dougherty and Reverend John Fleming. They were sent to the Elk Rapids area by the Presbyterian Board of Missionaries to evangelize the Native Americans of the Grand Traverse region in 1839 (Ruggles & Neumann, 2007). Though its location has never been discovered, Dougherty's cabin is believed to have been located on the waterfront. Shortly after their arrival, the mission was relocated to Old Mission Peninsula across the bay. Dougherty's home there is a historic site. The missionaries' arrival in Elk Rapids marked the end of a period of use and significance for the people living there.

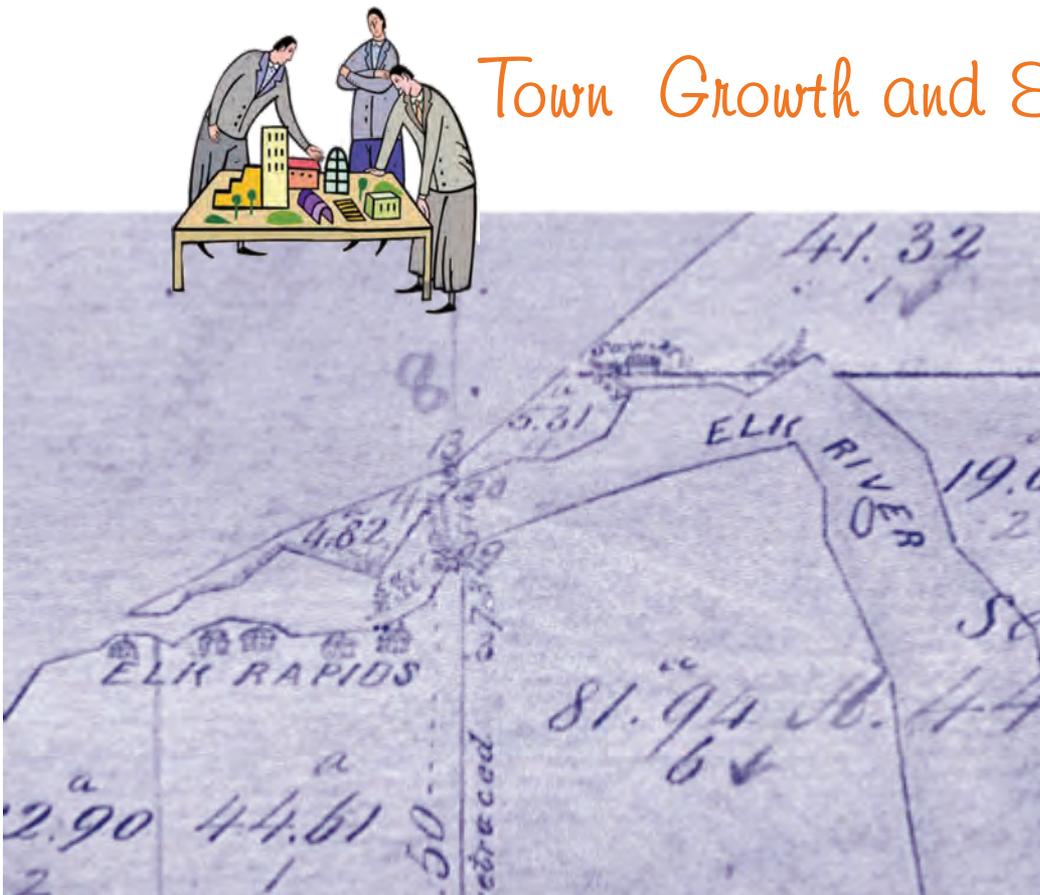
***1860~1911: A Time for Industry***

Abram Wadsworth, a millwright by trade, purchased the section of the land located on the south bank of the Elk River for the location of a lumber mill in 1846. In 1848 Abram Wadsworth and James McLaughlin, a blacksmith, constructed the first sawmill on the east side of the Elk River opposite of what is now the island. The town was platted in 1852 by Abram Wadsworth and on April 25, 1853 the town was officially established.





## Town Growth and Economic Activity



The major thrust of the town's growth and economic activity came later with the establishment of the Dexter-Noble Company, which included sawmills, a lumber yard, grist mill, flour mill, boat dock, culvert and dams. When Wirt Dexter and Henry Noble bought the M. Crow and Company and reorganized it under the name of Dexter and Noble in the late 1850s, industry and development blossomed in Elk Rapids. The town's second sawmill was built in 1864 and the Iron Dock was constructed in 1865. In 1869, Dexter and Noble purchased a four-acre sand spit north of the mouth of the Elk River. The spit was filled in and turned into a four-acre island in the middle of the river where Edwin Noble, brother of Henry, established his family home. The Dexter-Noble Co. constructed a flour mill in 1872.

In addition to iron and lumber, Elk Rapids had other successful industries during this period. From 1875 until 1895, Grammel's Brewery produced beer and operated a large icehouse on the river. O.F. Jordan, a Chicago businessman, built the Elk Rapids Portland Cement Company in 1898 just south of Elk Rapids on the shore of Grand Traverse Bay. The marl lining the bottom of Petobego Lake became the primary ingredient in Jordan's Portland cement recipe. During its peak, two shifts of workers produced more than 1,000 barrels of cement daily at the factory. In addition, a 1200-foot dock was constructed to accommodate shipping. Its closing in 1911 marked the end of the industrial era for Elk Rapids.

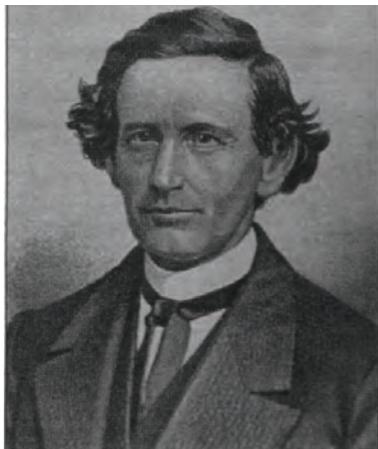




### ***1953~1994: Turning again to the water***

With the push for the establishment of a marina and the rerouting of the highway, the 1950s and 60s became a pivotal time in the development of Elk Rapids. In 1953, the Village began to plan for its future as a tourist destination with the development of the harbor. After the harbor project's completion in 1961 (conversation with C. Werth, September 28, 2009), seventy boat slips allowed more boat tourists to access and enjoy the village and its waterfront. In 1988, the number of boat slips increased to 213.

The 1994 streetscape improvement project, with its river walk plan, landscaping and increased public amenities, represented the height of development for the waterfront and a peak period in the tourist and recreational economy of Elk Rapids. The waterfront continues to be a focus of economic activity in Elk Rapids.



## Section III: Landscape History

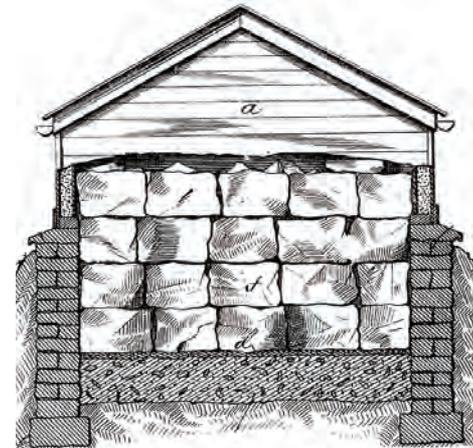
### *Landscape Chronology*

- *Pre-European arrival:* Human settlement, ceremonial mounds, and trails established in the area now encompassing the Village of Elk Rapids.
- *1839:* Missionaries arrive in the area.
- *1848:* Abram Wadsworth and McLaughlin build the first sawmill, originally a picket and lathe-mill.
- *1850s:* M. Craw and Company reorganizes under the name The Dexter and Noble Company.
- *1864:* The Dexter and Noble Company build a second sawmill along the river.
- *1865-1919:* The Dexter-Noble Company Iron Dock is constructed in 1865 and is upgraded and expanded several times through the years. The dock is demolished when the Dexter-Noble Company shuts down following WWI.





- *1869-1949:* The Island House is built as a residence for Edwin Noble, brother to Henry Noble, a founding member of the Dexter-Noble Company. In 1948-1949 Catherine Dexter McCormick deeds the home and property to the city of Elk Rapids.
- *1872-1912:* The Flour Mill is constructed in by the Dexter-Noble Company. In 1884, the mill is updated. By 1912, it is no longer standing.
- *1875-1895:* Grammel's Brewery is established at 607 S. Bayshore Drive and runs for twenty years. The Brewery also builds an ice house located near the current hydro-electric dam. Neither building is currently standing.
- *1898-1911:* The Elk Rapids Portland Cement Company is founded south of the village along the shore of Grand Traverse Bay in 1898. By 1911 it is no longer in business.
- *1905-1910:* The City Dock is completed in June of 1905. By 1910 it had fallen into disrepair.
- *1916:* The lumber era ends with the closing of the local mill.
- *1916-present:* The Elk Rapids Hydro-Electric plant is constructed in 1916 on the channel of the Elk River which passes along the north side of the Island. The plant is expanded to its current size in 1924 and is still active today in its original building.
- *1934:* Little sewage dam is built in the river near the Island House to prevent sewage from entering the bay proper. Used for a very short period of time, by 1940 it has fallen into disrepair. Most of the original structure can still be seen.
- *1949:* The Elk Rapids Public Library moves into the Island House.
- *1953-present:* Plans for the Edward C. Grace Memorial Harbor are initiated by the Elk Rapids Rotary Club. It is completed in 1961. Improvements to the harbor and marina have been ongoing.
- *1979:* The Island House is recognized as a Michigan Historic Site.
- *Late 1970s-Early 1980s:* The mill race chute is replaced by a modern water control culvert and Cedar Street is extended to the Island.
- *1994:* The Village completes a streetscape project to beautify the waterfront area, including installing the river walk, landscaping and other improvements.





*Aerial view of the island*



*Photo of bridge from River Street to island. The carriage house is visible on the left side of the photo. This was the home of the Noble estates caretaker and served as a stable for the family's horses.*

## "The Isle of Pines"



## Historical Narrative

### ***Lake House, also known as Lake View House***

In 1866, Henry Noble and his business partner Wirt Dexter purchased the four-acre sand spit extending north of the mouth of the Elk River into Grand Traverse Bay.

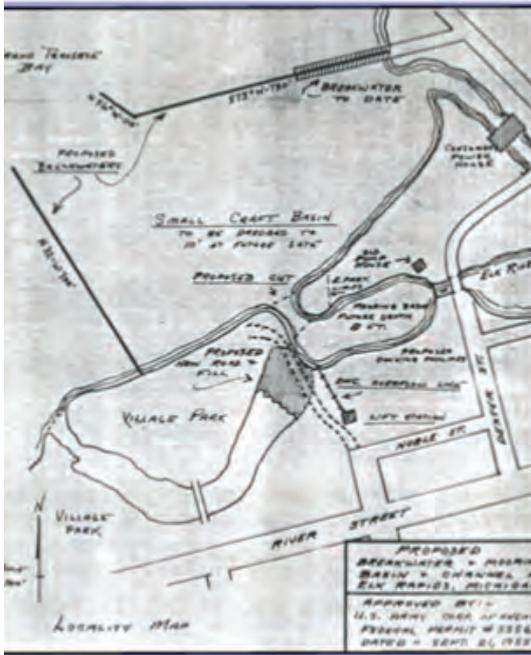
Edwin Noble, brother of Henry Noble, arrived in Elk Rapids a year later and selected the island as the building site for his family home. Edwin had the low areas filled with dirt, clay and loam and leveled an area for a house. He planted over 60 trees on the island and afterward the island became known as "The Isle of Pines" (Ruggles and Neuman, 2007). A bridge was built from downtown River Street to the island, connecting the property to town.

While under the care of the Edwin Noble family, the home became a prominent center of social life in Elk Rapids. The local newspaper, *Elk Rapids Progress*, frequently remarked on the social significance of the island and the home. A few examples listed in the paper:

*Mar. 12, 1880 - One of the pleasantest parties for some time was given at the Lake View House last Friday evening.*

*July 6, 1883 -The guests of the Lake View House, and others enjoyed the fireworks furnished by the genial manager of the house. Harry and Percy Noble fired a large number of rockets and candles from the island in the evening, and the display was enjoyed by many.*





Proposed Breakwater, Mooring Basin and Channel for the Marina -approved by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1955



Aerial view of Elk Rapids looking east, prior to the construction of the Marina and new alignment of US-31.



Edwin Noble's position in the family company eventually changed and his financial holdings waned. He sold the island and home to the Elk Rapids Iron Company in 1903. The home was then used as a vacation home for business associates of the iron company. In 1926, the property was transferred to Wirt Dexter's widow, Josephine, and was later inherited by Katherine Dexter McCormick. McCormick deeded the island to the Village of Elk Rapids for use as a community center. Rooms in the house were rented out for civic meetings and small parties prior to its development as the public library in 1949.

In 1979, the Island House and its grounds were recognized as a Michigan Historic Site. The island has been a signature piece of property in Elk Rapids and has remained an emblem for the community for over 150 years.

### ***Edward C. Grace Memorial Marina***

The marina and harbor offer access to Lake Michigan and the Chain of Lakes. In 1953, Elk Rapids Rotary members, led by Edward C. Grace, initiated the drive and plans for the harbor. After the maps and surveys were completed in 1955, the US Army Reserves used the project as a training program. They used heavy equipment to drop broken concrete from the old Elk Rapids Cement Company to form the breakwater during 1956 and 1957. The Harbor Days celebration was organized to raise funds for the harbor project, as noted in the community newspaper, *Elk Rapids Progress*.

*July 25, 1957- Elk Rapids first Harbor Days—Miss Donna Lee Greenlaw was chosen by the Harbor Day committee as Harbor Queen. Held August 3<sup>rd</sup>.*

*Aug. 13, 1959- ELK RAPIDS HARBOR PROJECT—Operations began last week at Elk Rapids on the construction of a new harbor and breakwater to serve craft of the Great Lakes as well as the Chain-'O-Lakes. The dredging in operation here will open a channel into the calm water area where a boat lift will be installed to hoist craft into Elk Lake and vice versa.*





*Aug. 20, 1959- Vill. Council ... A motion by Youman supported by Trenerry that the Village accept Frank Sobbry's offer of a parcel of his land described as: A parcel of land bounding a part of the South bank of Elk River, to be used in the construction of an inner basin as part of the Harbor project. Carried.*

The initial harbor project was completed in 1961. Over the years the number of slips in the harbor has increased from 70 to the current number of 213 in 1988 (conversation with C. Werth, September 28, 2009). The break walls were rebuilt in 1998 and laundry facilities, pavilion and a new 100-foot gas dock were added to meet the growing needs of the boating community.



*A view of the harbor and slips*



## Harbor Project

### ***Dexter and Noble Sawmill***

The original sawmill, located on a site along the eastside of the Elk Rapids river, was built by Abram Wadsworth and his brother-in-law, Samuel Northam, in 1850 (Powers, 198). This mill, which was originally supposed to be a grist-mill, was eventually purchased by a man name Norris in 1851. Eventually the mill would end up in the hands of John Rankin who operated it from 1853 to 1857. The structure is no longer extant and there are no known photographs or drawings of the original sawmill.

By the year 1864, the Dexter and Noble Company would have built their own sawmill, which was located where the electric power plant stands today. Their industry would be called the "lumber empire" (Ruggles and Newmann, 2007). For nearly sixty years the sawmill would operate in Elk Rapids, and would, along with the Iron Company, be one of the leading industries in this area. A great deal of rehabilitation and changes were made to the sawmill over its many years. At its peak, the Dexter-Noble sawmill could annually cut on average fifteen million board feet (Ruggles and Newmann, 2007).





A dam has been located along the north fork of the Elk River since 1874.



### ***Elk Rapids Hydro Electric Powerhouse***

A dam has been located along the north fork of the Elk River since 1874. This first water power station was constructed by the Dexter-Noble Company and provided energy to power the machinery inside the company's sawmill, located nearby. The dam also controlled water flow from Elk Lake out to the Grand Traverse Bay (O'Brien 2007).

As the fortunes of the Dexter-Noble Company waned at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the old powerhouse was demolished and replaced in 1916 with a new brick hydro plant. Put into operation in 1917, this initial facility only partially covered the North Channel. Within the plant were two electrical generating units, one each to a bay. Immediately beside (to the east of) the plant were two additional bays which could control water flow from the level of Elk Lake down to the level of Grand Traverse Bay. This facility generated electricity for Elk Rapids and the surrounding area.

Demand for electricity continued to grow, and in 1924 the brick hydro plant was expanded into its current structure and configuration, occupying all four bays and some additional space to the east and west of the channel. The two water control bays, which were now enclosed in the hydro dam structure, had additional electrical generators installed. In 1927, the facility was taken over by the Michigan Public Service Company.

Consumers Power Company acquired the Elk Rapids Hydro facility in 1950, but decommissioned it during that decade as it eliminated smaller hydro plants around the state. The facility was turned over to Antrim County in 1967 for one dollar. At this time, the generators were removed, and all four bays reverted to simply controlling the flow of water through the channel (Stockhausen and Stone, 2008).



*The Hydroelectric plant as constructed ca. 1916.*





In an interesting twist, a national energy crisis and growing environmental movement within Michigan prompted the county to reinstall two new generators in the early 1980s, which were put in operation in 1984 to generate electricity for the surrounding region. Traverse City Light and Power took over operation of the dam at this time, and purchased the power it generated over the next twenty years.

Eventually, Traverse City Power and Light decided to phase out their involvement with local hydro-electric operations. As a result, the Boardman, Sabin, and Brown Bridge dams, all south of Traverse City, were decommissioned. Power and Light indicated their interest to decommission the Elk Rapids Hydro facility as well.

In 2007, the Elk Rapids Hydro dam was transferred to Elk Rapids Hydro Electric Company. This not only ensures that the historic hydro-electric dam will be preserved, but that environmentally friendly electricity will continue to be generated from the water power the Elk River provides. In addition to the two electricity generators, which can generate up to 2400kW per year, the two other bays still allow for water flow control (O'Brien, 2007).

Today, the Elk Rapids Hydro plant is a historic point of interest and a valuable part of the Elk Rapids community along the Dexter Street Bridge over the north branch of the Elk River.



*Mouth of the Elk River*



*An iron ore boat is unloaded by clamshell bucket at the Dexter-Noble Company Iron Dock ca. 1900.*



### ***Dexter-Noble Company Iron Dock 1865-1919***

The Dexter-Noble Company Iron Dock was first constructed in 1865. Over the following decades as the fortune of the Company grew and their products expanded, the dock was also expanded. The dock extended in a generally northward direction east of the mouth of the Elk River, and during the golden era, was 1500 feet in length.

This dock was used by the Dexter-Noble Company to ship supplies for their various ventures to and from Elk Rapids. Most notably, this dock was where Great Lakes boats bringing iron ore from Escanaba were unloaded. Initially, sailing sloops were used to bring small quantities of ore across the upper lake to the Elk Rapids Iron Dock. Approaching the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, steam powered freighters were making the trek, carrying larger quantities of ore directly from Escanaba and various Lake Superior ports via the Soo Locks. This iron ore was a key ingredient in the Dexter-Noble Company's production of pig iron in Elk Rapids.

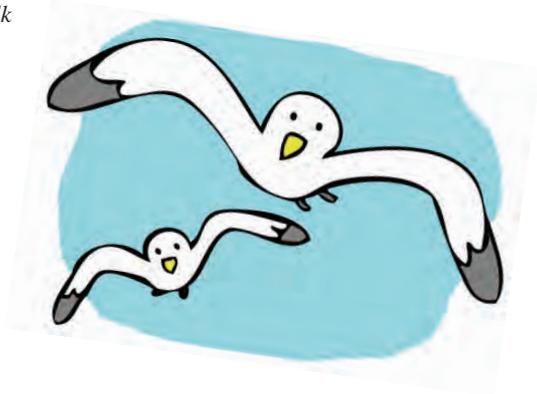
The ore was offloaded from the boats and placed directly on specially built ore jennies for the trip from the lake to the iron furnaces. Initially, horses were used as the power for this trek, and could only transport a few cars at a time. In time, small steam locomotives were used and could pull larger, heavier quantities. Known locally as "The Ore Run Limited," the loaded train would set out for the furnaces each time a boat

During the golden era, the end of the dock was wide enough to





All that remained of the Iron Dock in Elk Rapids in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century.



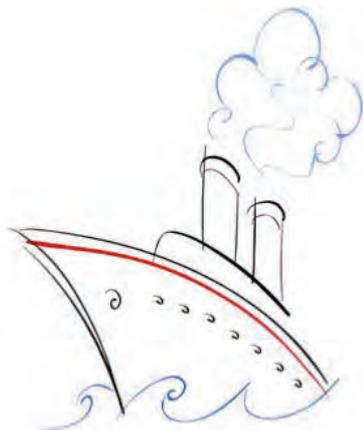
accommodate four side-by-side railroad tracks for loading, a small supply and storage building, a fairly large unloading crane with clamshell bucket, and other, smaller unloading mechanisms.

As the fortunes of the Dexter-Noble Company diminished, maintenance of the dock began to dwindle, and the railroad tracks, buildings, and unloading devices were all removed once the mills and furnaces shut down following World War I. All that remains today are the remnants of the support pilings which once held this wooden dock up above the water (Ruggles and Nuemann, 2007).

### ***City Dock 1905-1910***

Before 1905, the steamers that carried passengers to Elk Rapids tied at the Iron Co.'s dock north of the river. As the focus of Elk Rapids' economy changed from extraction and industry to recreation in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the need for a municipal dock became an imperative. In March of 1905, several prominent business leaders from the area wrote an open letter in the *Elk Rapids Progress* expressing their desire to have such a dock built. Though some wrote letters of opposition in subsequent issues of the paper, the idea eventually evolved in to a general plan of improvement for the village. By June of 1905, the timber dock was under construction (Elk Rapids Progress, 1905).

In its brief life, the city dock served the steamers that arrived from Chicago, Milwaukee and closer ports of call like Traverse City and Suttons Bay. The dock was built on the south beach just north of the 90 degree intersection of River and Oak streets. In 1910, the dock was deteriorating as a result of harsh winter weather, and the wash of Lake Michigan (Ruggles and Nuemann, 2007). Though it is still depicted on the plat of 1910, by 1930 it was not. Most of the dock broke up and washed away or was covered by sand. It is partially visible at the surface but further remnants could be revealed through excavation or geophysical exploration.





The flour mill was forty by sixty feet, and three and a half stories tall. It was constructed with a stone foundation, and included a ten foot high basement.

### **Flour Mill 1872-c. 1912**

In 1855, Henry Horbart Noble moved to Elk Rapids and became an employee of M. Craw & Company, which was a saw mill located in the area. However, by 1856, the mill was going out of business, and so Noble, along with Wirt Dexter, decided to purchase the company and rename it Dexter-Noble Lumber. After repairing the saw mill, they were able to produce more lumber a year, and by 1861, they built a gang saw mill which enabled them to produce about ten million feet of lumber a year. With the success of the saw mill, Dexter and Noble were able to expand their industries to include numerous acres of land. For this reason they are credited with establishing the town of Elk Rapids. By 1870, the company was producing a net worth of \$266,919 a year. Because of the rapid expansion of the Dexter and Noble Company, Elk Rapids become the county seat of Antrim County in the 1860s.



In 1869, Edwin S. Noble became part of the Dexter-Noble firm headed by Wirt Dexter and Henry Horbart Noble. Three years earlier, Dexter and Noble decided to make some improvements to the community of Elk Rapids in order to promote growth and economic stability. One of their first projects was to create a flour mill, and in 1872 it was erected. The building was situated on the water and in 1873, the Elk Rapids Iron Works, headed by Henry Noble, was established nearby.

The flour mill was forty by sixty feet, and three and a half stories tall. It was constructed with a stone foundation, and included a ten foot high basement. In 1884, the mill was upgraded to become a roller mill and was able to produce 125 barrels of flour a day. The mill continued to run successfully until the early 1900s when the industry declined dramatically. By 1912, the flour mill was no longer standing.





In 1848 surveyor Abram Scranton Wadsworth bought land on the south side of the Elk River and built a cabin where the Township Hall now stands.

### ***Mill race, also known as the chute, 1853-present***

In 1848 surveyor Abram Scranton Wadsworth bought land on the south side of the Elk River and built a cabin where the Township Hall now stands. That first winter he learned how to peel hemlock bark and in the spring sold the bark to finance a picket and lathe mill on the river. This mill began production in 1850 (Ruggles and Nuemann, 2007).

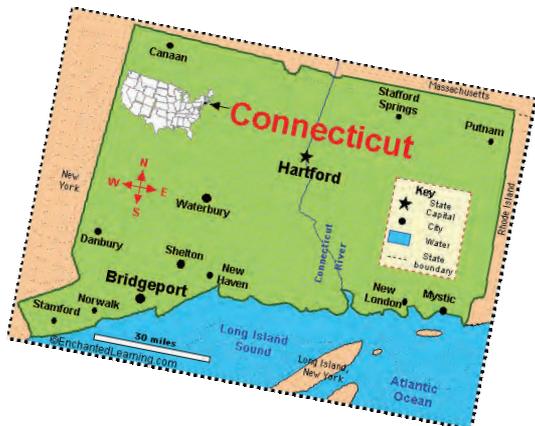
The next year Wadsworth sold the mill and returned to his native Connecticut. A few months later, ownership reverted back to Wadsworth when the purchaser lost his financing. After the mill was returned to him, Wadsworth converted it to a sawmill. In 1853 the mill was sold to James Rankin. Rankin then started another mill a hundred yards up the river at the location of a natural rapids. The undershot mill dam at this location is what became known as the chute. Before construction was complete on this mill, James Rankin sold it in 1856 to M. Crow and Co., who later reorganized under the name Dexter and Noble Co (Ruggles and Nuemann, 2007).

By 1880, the adjacent flour mill and electric power plant were processing up to 125 barrels of flour a day. The presence of a mill run dam wholly altered the Elk River and Elk Lake's levels and ecologies (Ruggles and Nuemann, 2007).

By the 1920s, need for the mill race faded. Though some remnants of the original structure may still be visible near the modern structure, most of it was removed recently and replaced with a culvert dam (Peterson, 2009).

The current structure beneath Dexter Street dates sometime before the early 1980s, as is referenced in the FERC licensing documentation for the nearby hydroelectric plant. The culvert and hydroelectric dam are part of a larger system referred to as the Elk Lake Impoundment that the Antrim County Drain Commission uses to monitor and control the level of Elk Lake (Stone, 2009).

Some cosmetic changes to the culvert occurred in 1994 when the village undertook a streetscape project and improved Dexter Street. No work has been performed on the structure since (Stone, 2009).



View of the chute and powerhouse in the early 20th century





*Elk Rapids Portland Cement co. plant and dock*



*Portland Cement Company – 1,200' dock*

### ***Elk Rapids Portland Cement Company 1898-1911***

The Elk Rapids Portland Cement Company was organized and opened in 1898 by Chicago businessman O.F. Jordan. This huge complex, located at the west end of the village of Elk Rapids and nestled on the east side of Grand Traverse Bay, sparked a rapid increase in settlement and brought great prosperity to the area. Jordan's discovery of marl lining the bottom of Petobego Lake, south of Elk Rapids, became the primary ingredient in his Portland cement recipe.

The marl was mined and brought to the plant via a three-mile tramway built specifically for this purpose. Once developed into cement and bagged, the final cement product was shipped nine miles from Elk Rapids to Williamsburg on the rail-system called the Elk Rapids Short Line. The cement was then shipped statewide on the Pere Marquette Railway. During its peak, two shifts of workers produced more than 1,000 barrels of cement daily. In addition, a 1200 foot dock was constructed to accommodate shipping.

Over the course of thirteen years, thousand of pounds of cement were produced and dispersed to many area towns and cities for the construction of home foundations and upgrades to wooden walkways. As with any natural resource, the marl from Petobego Lake was depleted over time. By 1911 the plant closed and was moved to Petoskey. The cement plant site sat vacant for the next four years, when demolition began. Developers began to build resort homes, but not all of the cement plant remains could be removed. The foundations were set fifteen to eighteen feet deep on bedrock, making it nearly impossible to remove them. They can still be found today amongst the trees and resort homes, though almost completely obscured by the sand drift.

Today, a portion of the old cement plant property is now a public park. There are also remains of the Elk Rapids Short Line located across the street from the county park on private property.



*Portland Cement Company foundation remains, circa 1915*





## Section IV: Existing Conditions

<p>Natural Systems and Features:</p>	<p>Elk Rapids is situated on Grand Traverse Bay on the Western shore of Lake Michigan. There are significant amounts of zebra mussel shells on beach which could be considered a cultural feature. There is a small interdunal ecosystem over the primary foredune with native grasses and moss and non-extensive cobble beds (south of City Dock area). The non-landscaped portions of the waterfront area are mixed Zone 4 woodland with deciduous and coniferous trees and scrub brush. Water features include a freshwater river outlet emanating from man-made, marl-bottomed Elk Lake. The river outlet forms two primary streams between which lies a man-made island (originally a naturally occurring sand bar). Freshwater species of fish found in this area include trout, panfish, etc. Occurring animals are those typical of the Northeastern woodlands (deer, skunk, fox, black squirrel, muskrat, mink, herring gull, ring-billed gull, and other shore and songbirds.)</p>
<p>Land Use:</p>	<p>The land use of this area is mostly public (owned by Village or County) with some private residence along the lakeshore.</p>
<p>Spatial Organization:</p>	<p>The area in question forms an arc that separates the village from Lake Michigan and buffers the Village from the water both psychologically and physically. In this liminal region, various public structures and engineered features relating to transportation, water use, or recreation have been built to serve the community.</p>
<p>Cluster Arrangement:</p>	<p>Docks and water control features have been clustered near the mouth of the river, east of the island. Two clusters of recreational features can be found in the city and county parks.</p>
<p>Topography:</p>	<p>The waterfront area is generally a flat coastal plain with an elevation variation of 587 to 590 feet above sea level. The land forms a slight westerly slope to the Grand Traverse Bay. The shoreline has a small five foot elevation gain from the water's edge. While generally flat, the Library Park (or Lake House site, the location of the public library) has a man-made elevation gain of approximately 17 feet.</p>
<p>Vegetation:</p>	<p>Vegetation in this area consists largely of lawn and various flower beds planted with perennials, shrubs and some annuals. There is a mix of deciduous and pine along Lake Michigan that is set back from the shore about 50 yards. In Memorial Park, the following</p>





	<p>tree species can be found: willow, locust, cedar, and cottonwood. Throughout the area there are wild native and non-native plant species typical of interdunal and northern coastal regions including: poison ivy, Virginia creeper, grapevine, thistle, wild blueberry, golden rod, sawgrass, horsetail grass, wild rice, wormwood, wild carrot, yarrow, sweet pea, vetch, milkweed, and autumn olive. These lists are by no means exhaustive.</p>
<p>Circulation:</p>	<p>Please see Appendix A on page 28 for map and description. Features depicted in Appendix A include social trails, formal trails, parking lot, municipal streets, river way, sidewalks, river walk, beach, and Lake routes. These routes typically lead people along the edge of the water or towards it. Most circulation features in the waterfront area could be said to relate to water features. Also note that Cedar Street was built across the river in the late 1970s-early 80s to provide access to the island. This illustrates how this area has changed to accommodate an increase in automobile traffic.</p>
<p>Views and Vistas:</p>	<p>Much of this area is open beach facing Grand Traverse Bay and Lake Michigan, which offers an endless number of vistas. The views have been framed in many places by man-made structures, such as the river walk trail, which provides a view of the chute. Other vistas include the view of the water and harbor, view from water and harbor, view from bridges, along streets, view along river from river walk and the view of the downtown business district from Memorial Park.</p>
<p>Buildings and Structures:</p>	<p>See following analysis section for related photographs. This area contains many supportive structures and municipal buildings including docks, retention walls, piers, major residences situated along streets, boardwalks, and water control features.</p>
<p>Small Scale Features:</p>	<p>There are a variety of small scale features throughout the area of significance. Functional items such as signs, benches, garbage cans and light posts can be found along most of the formal circulation patterns including sidewalks and parking lots. Some of the features included in our area of significance can be grouped into memorial or ceremonial objects, such as flag poles, American flag, the WWII Memorial, the Bell and Johnny Rock, which was a significant part of Elk Rapids history. Recreationally, there are tennis courts, a playground, and picnic areas in both the city and county parks.</p>
<p>Archaeological Resources:</p>	<p>There are many potentially significant archeological sites in the waterfront area because the land use has</p>





changed so significantly over time. These include the former carriage house and icehouse on the island, the former roadbed around northwest edge of island, the Native American settlement on west shore of Bass Lake, former Cement Company ruins, the city and iron company docks, and any underwater features remaining in the river.

## Section V: Analysis of Integrity

### *Natural Systems and Features*

While much of this area retains its or has returned to a low impact use state, some features, such as those seen at right, have been added in order to stabilize the shore and prevent erosion.

### *Land Use*

Overall, the waterfront area of Elk Rapids does not retain a high level of historic integrity. Much of the industrial infrastructure from a century ago has been demolished or neglected due to lack of use. The land which was once utilized for industry and commerce has been transformed into a recreational and public place. For this reason, the built and cultural features of the landscape have been altered and much integrity lost. For example, the property once owned by the Elk Rapids Cement Company is now the site of Antrim County Park and several private beachfront residences.



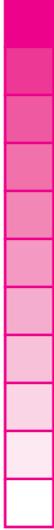
### *Spatial Organization*

As the land use of the waterfront property has changed from industrial to recreational, the spatial organization has necessarily changed as well. There is now far more public access to the waterfront. The built structures are less concentrated near the water's edge. The Island House has become a place of prominence due to its use as the public library, as has the marina. Parking lots have been built to accommodate these expanded public uses. The waterfront today is mostly a mix of manicured and natural public land.

### *Topography*

The partial hill elevation on the Island, the location of the current public library, as seen in the photo at left, retains its historic integrity.



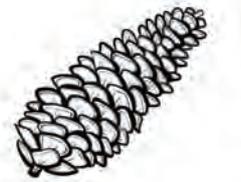


### Vegetation

The area with the most historic integrity of the vegetation is the grounds immediately surrounding the Island House. This is due to the collection of still extant deciduous and coniferous trees which were planted specifically to surround the house. These trees represent a wide variety of species and are a source of pride to the community.



Historic Integrity



Left: some of the manicured flower beds near the marina. Also notice the replica lightpost

1.

2.



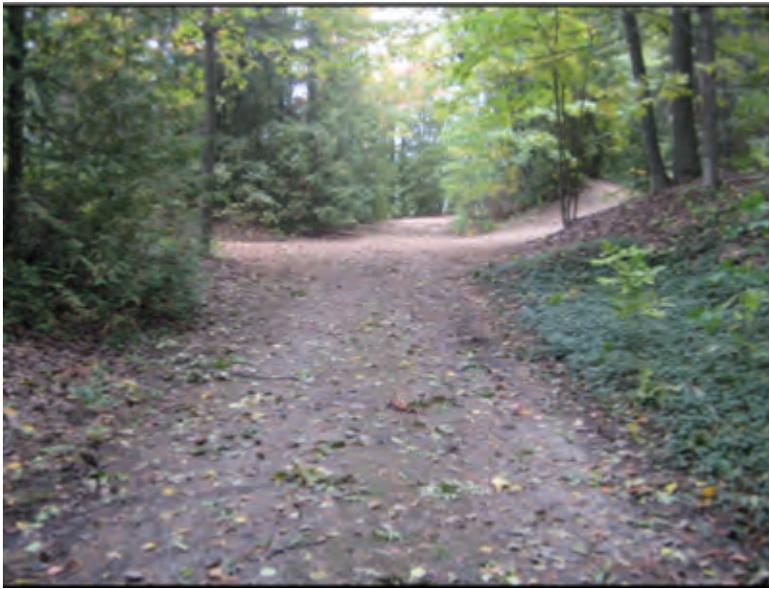
1. View of the River in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

2. Native beach grass awaits planting at Memorial Park.

3. The river as it looks today

3.





### *Patterns of Circulation*

Due to the change in land usage, historic circulation patterns have not maintained their integrity. Though many social trails may be similar to historic patterns, such as the walk along the beach, the planned circulation routes have changed over time to accommodate automobiles and increased public foot traffic. Also, the Cement Company railroad bed along the beach in Antrim Park has become a self-determined trail for recreational use and maintains none of its integrity. Please see Appendix A for further illustration.

### *Views and Vistas*

The view of Grand Traverse Bay from Elk Rapids has changed little between the periods of significance and today. However, three important docks at one time stretched several hundred feet out into the Bay for ship loading and unloading. Views from these docks have obviously been compromised as they have gradually disappeared from the landscape. A shallow sandbar remains where the city dock was located, the Cement Company dock has disappeared and the last few timber piles which once supported the Iron Ore Company dock are all that remain above the water line north of the mouth of the Elk River. From the water, the view of Elk Rapids has changed. No longer can one see smokestacks or other industrial structures along the water line. Today, one can see parkland, the marina, condominiums, and private residents.



Below are various examples of views from the river and waterfront.





### ***Buildings and Structures***

Below are the main structures of the waterfront area. On the top row, from left to right is the Powerhouse and Library. Below is the Memorial Park bathroom building and the amphitheater at Antrim County Day Park.



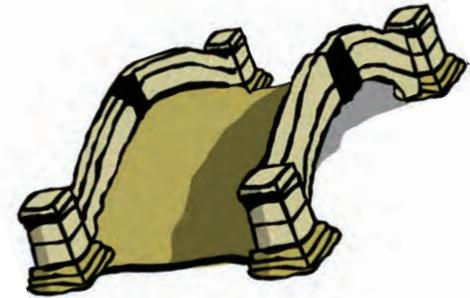


Left, War Memorial. Above, bell from Elk Rapids School. Below, Johnny Rock. Both the bell and Johnny Rock were moved to their current location in 1977 (Butler, 1977)



### Small Scale Features

An important historic feature of the Elk Rapids waterfront which has maintained its integrity over the decades is Edwin Noble's Island House bridge, which links the island with River Street just west of the downtown area. This bridge has become an important symbol and social spot in town. Over time, however, the bridge became more of a danger, as deferred maintenance and a changing river system below compromised its structural stability. With the Island House a new center of the community as the city's public library, the bridge over the river to the Island House was reconstructed as a replica of the original. While this technically is not the original structure and therefore the integrity has been lost, the fact that such research was done to accurately recreate the structure helps to maintain the character of that portion of the waterfront.



The sewage dam in the River is one example of a potential archeological site along the river.

### Archeological Resources



Aerial view with City Dock circled in red from Google Maps



There may be many remaining artifacts yet to be identified beneath the waters of Elk Rapids River.





## Section VI: Management Philosophy and Treatment Recommendations

**Overall Recommendation: Develop a historic waterfront walking tour with corresponding interpretive markers, literature and programming.**



### **Elk Rapids Short Line Area**

The Elk Rapids Short Line railroad grade (circa 1890), that still exists south of town and is located next to the Paradise Pines Motel, should be identified and interpreted for a local historic walking tour. This Walking tour would extend across South Bay Shore Drive into the Elk Rapids Day Park, owned by Antrim County. Originally the Elk Rapids Short Line extended north to the Elk Rapids Portland Cement Company plant as their transportation route for moving their product to market.

### **Elk Rapids Day Park**

The recommendation for the Elk Rapids Day Park is to remain in perpetuity as a recreational area for local residents to enjoy.

### **Grammel's Brewery**

Grammel's Brewery was located at 607 S. Bay Shore Drive (currently a private residence). Recommendation for an historic easement that would preserve the original foundation which still remains from being demolished regardless of the changes of the architectural structure of the home.

### **Elk Rapids Portland Cement Company**

The Katherine Carpenter House located at 612 S. Bay Shore Drive is the location of the original cement plant office. A preservation easement for the house is recommended to maintain its current integrity and importance to the local cultural landscape. Remnants of the original cement plant structures still can be found on private properties between 607 S. Bay Shore Drive and 612 S. Bay Shore Drive. The Cement Company dock no longer exists. Interpretive signage is recommended but may be difficult as these are now private property or otherwise inaccessible to the public. Include in literature but otherwise no further recommendations.



The recommendation for the Elk Rapids Day Park is to remain in perpetuity as a recreational area for local residents to enjoy.



We recommend an interpretive sign with pictures of what used to be there.



Example of interpretive street panels, Ann Arbor, Mi.

Images Courtesy of Bentley Historical Library.

### City Dock

A few pilings still exist where the original city dock was from 1905 to 1916. We recommend an interpretive sign with pictures of what used to be there.

### Memorial Park

The Memorial Park on the water's edge is to remain a recreational area. Interpretive signage should be installed at significant points, such as at Johnny Rock.

### Island House

The Island House is currently the location of the Elk Rapids Public Library. Our recommendation is to keep the footprint of the building as is. If any other building on the property is deemed necessary, the reconstruction of the old carriage house on the far western part of the island would be recommended. A tree survey should be completed to identify type and species of trees on the property. If new trees need to be planted for the beautification of the island, the types of trees that were planted in 1869 (pine, oak, beech, elm, balsam and cedar) are recommended. The tree species planted in 1900 (sugar maple, silver leaf maple and willow trees) could also be considered. Existing groomed trails should be maintained with no further groomed trails created. The bridge to the island from River Street should be maintained as is for public use.

### Edward C. Grace Memorial Marina

As this is a recent feature to the cultural landscape, an interpretive sign should be placed here detailing its history and development. A historic photo showing what the area looked like before construction would be ideal.

### Sewage Dam

Reconstruct and rehabilitate the broken pieces of the 1934 dam, such as retaining walls, cement barriers and decorative wall. An addition of an interpretive sign describing the original use of the dam should be installed.





### ***First Saw Mill***

No treatment recommendations but a marker placed to note the original location of the 1848 Saw Mill.

### ***Power House***

No further development without archeological investigation. Interpretive sign or historical marker indicating location and contribution to the village is recommended.

### ***Water Chute***

Maintain the integrity of the culvert located at the original chute location. Interpretive sign or historical marker indicating location and contribution to the village is recommended.

### ***Flour Mill***

Interpretive sign or historical marker indicating location and contribution to the village is recommended.

### ***Second Saw Mill***

Interpretive sign or historical marker indicating location and contribution to the village is recommended.

### ***Elk Rapids Hydro Electric Plant***

Facade stabilization should be initiated for the exterior of the building and a historic structure report prepared. An interpretive sign or historical marker indicating its contribution to the village is recommended. Opening the building for occasional historic tours is also recommended.

### ***Dexter-Noble Company Iron Dock***

Interpretive sign or historical marker indicating location and contribution to the village is recommended. A photograph of the original structure should be included on the sign if possible.

### ***Native American Sites***

Oral history interviews should be completed with remaining members of the local tribe. In addition, archeological research is necessary to determine location of possible burial sites and mounds located within the village area. Reconstruction of these sites should be considered if feasible. Any remains found should be returned to the tribe in compliance with NAGPRA. Interpretive sign or historical markers indicating location of village, mound and enclosure is recommended. Special programming should be developed to tell this aspect of the story of Elk Rapids, including literature, tours, etc. Tribal members should be engaged throughout the planning process. All materials should be reviewed by an affiliated tribal council before distribution.



Oral history interviews should be completed with remaining local tribe.





## School Groups



## Tourists

### *General recommendation*

All interpretive signage should draw on the rich pictorial and oral historic resources available at the Elk Rapids Historical Society. Accompanying literature and brochures should be prepared and distributed to various outlets throughout the county such as the Chamber of Commerce, and local hotels and resorts. An effort should also be made to include local schools, perhaps developing curriculum that uses generated material and the interpretive trail as teaching tools. Weekend programming for local scout troops, school groups, and tourists by the Historical Society is also recommended. Adult programming, such as a local history lecture series, community archeological digs, tours, etc. would also be a productive use of the cultural resources delineated herein.

## Scout Troops



## Community Archaeological Digs





## Bibliography:

- An overview of early history: Village of Elk Rapids & Elk Rapids Township.* (n.d.)  
Retrieved from <http://www.elkrapids.com/township/EARLYHISTORY/History-Home.htm>
- Butler, William Thomas and son. (1977). *Homespun Poetry*. Elk Rapids, Michigan.
- Elk Rapids Area Historical Society. (1998, June 17). *The Town Meeting: Elk Rapids Sesquicentennial Scrapbook*.
- Elk Rapids Chamber of Commerce. (n.d.). Retrieved from  
[www.elkrapidschamber.org/index.php?option=com\\_frontpage&Itemid=1](http://www.elkrapidschamber.org/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1)
- Elk Rapids Progress. (March and June 1905). *Public Opinion: Views of Ours Citizens on Matters of Vital Importance*.
- Hinsdale, W.B. (1931). *Archeological Map of Michigan*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Michigan Historical Center. (2009). *Snapshots of Elk Rapids*, Michigan History Online,  
[http://www.michiganhistorymagazine.com/extra/elk\\_rapids/index.html](http://www.michiganhistorymagazine.com/extra/elk_rapids/index.html).
- Neumann, G. (2000). *Bay Breezes: Excerpts from the Elk Rapids Progress*, Davison, MI: Elk Rapids Area Historical Society.
- O'Brien, B. (2007, September 3). *Family-owned company runs Elk Rapids dam*.  
Traverse City Record-Eagle. Retrieved from  
[http://www.recordeagle.com/local/local\\_story\\_245094555.html](http://www.recordeagle.com/local/local_story_245094555.html)
- Peterson, Bob. (October 2, 2009). Personal interview with Village Manager conducted by Brenna Moloney.
- Powers, Perry and Harry Cutler. (1912), *History of Northern Michigan and Its People*. Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company.
- Ruggles, G. and Neumann, G. (2007). *Elk Rapids: The first hundred years 1850-1950*, Commerce Township, MI: Blue Huron Press.
- Shockhausen, B. & Stone, M. (2008, October 30) *Hydroelectric Power*, North West Michigan Council of Governments. Retrieved from  
<http://www.nwmsbf.org/presentations/Hydro%20Power%20Bill%20Stockhausen.pdf>
- Stone, M. (2008, December). *Re-licensing the ER dam: A true grass roots effort*. Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association. Retrieved from  
<http://www.elkskegemog.org/pdf/Dec08Newsletter.pdf>
- Stone, Mark. (October 2, 2009). Personal Interview with Antrim County Drain Commissioner conducted by Brenna Moloney.
- U. S. Geological Survey. Elk Rapids Quadrangle, Michigan [map]. 7.5 minute series (Topographic). Version 1:25,000. Reston, VA: United States Department of the Interior, USGS, 1983.
- All historic photos courtesy of the Elk Rapids Area Historical Society.





Modern and current photos were taken by members of the Waterfront Documentation Team.

Map image adapted from the *Celebrating Elk Rapids' Sesquicentennial* Map, prepared by the Elk Rapids Historical Society in 1998.

