



# Museum Matters

*the Spring 2013 newsletter of the*

## Elk Rapids Area Historical Society

Exploring the past... Understanding the present... Envisioning the future



## *Harnessing the current*

*In addition to forever changing the footprint of Antrim County's Chain of Lakes, the Elk Rapids Dam profoundly influenced life and economic growth in the region. In this issue, we bring you a pictorial history of the dam from the research efforts of Glenn Newmann and included in his 2008 presentation for the Elk Rapids Area Historical Society, "Logging in Antrim County: 1880s-1930s."*

### **Before the dam**

**T**he first saw mill in Antrim County was built by Abram Wadsworth up stream of the little island you see in the photo above. It was a small water powered mill with out a dam. Wadsworth milled pickets from cedar and hemlock which were abundant in the immediate area. From the hemlock he peeled the bark and shipped it along with the pickets to Wisconsin. At some point Moulton Craw buys into the mill.

In December of 1853, a Tri-Co Partnership was formed with Wirt Dexter, Moulton Craw and Abram Wadsworth. At this time Wirt Dexter brought his friend Henry Noble of Dexter MI. to work for the new firm. In 1856 the Dexter and Noble Co. was formed, buying out Craw and Wadsworth.

*please turn to "Dam" on on page 5*

## **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

**T**he Elk Rapids Area Historical Museum Committee is getting excited about the May 24th 2013 Season opening.

Much work has been done to this beautiful building since we moved in. It has taken a lot of work by some dedicated persons to get this far. But, there is still much to do!

*This is your Museum and we want you and the Elk Rapids Area to be proud of it.* The more you are involved with the Museum and learn of the many Pioneer families that first settled here and how they influenced what we have today, the more interesting it will become.

Our Museum's theme is "Water." Our plan is to build our displays to interpret the influences water has made since the first settlers arrived, making our Elk Rapids Area what it is today.

Our open hours begin May 24th 2013 and run through the end of September 2013:

Friday 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Saturday 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Sunday 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

**We need three (3) volunteers for 3-hour shifts.**

Friday and Saturday will have 2 shifts:

10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

On Sunday there is one shift, 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

We also will be open on the two Monday Holidays: Memorial and Labor Day. You will get a short orientation before the opening date.

We thank all those who have been volunteering. We know your summer calendar is filling up! But, we do hope you can find a few hours for your Museum.

Please E-mail or phone any of the following:

Linda Pillsbury: [lindapillsbury@yahoo.com](mailto:lindapillsbury@yahoo.com)  
231-264-9475

Marjorie Paradis: [mparadis8405@charter.net](mailto:mparadis8405@charter.net)  
231-264-8405

Glenn Neumann: [glenn.I.neumann@gmail.com](mailto:glenn.I.neumann@gmail.com)  
231-264-6354.

# Vision Statement

The Elk Rapids Area Historical Society and Museum will be a distinguished leader in defining the unique history of the region by connecting the past, present and future through:

- Historical Preservation
- Community Collaboration
- Educational Programs
- Research Documentation

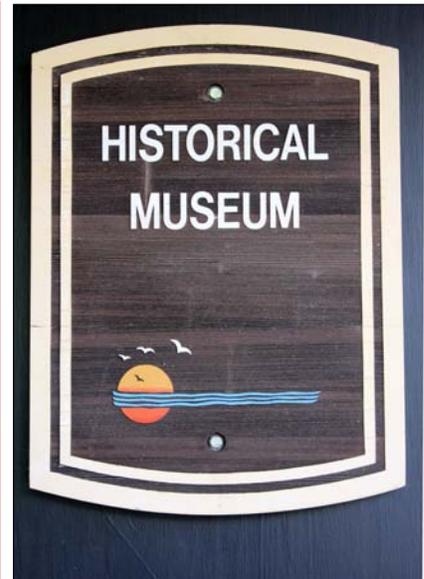
# Mission Statement

The Elk Rapids Area Historical Society and Museum is a center that inspires people to explore the past, understand the present and envision the future.

We accomplish this by:

- Serving as the authority on regional history
- Preserving artifacts pertinent to the region
- Promoting, collaborating and supporting community activities
- Providing a center for community engagement and education
- Assisting with research and learning
- Ensuring history is an integral component of community development
- Sharing our past as the foundation for the future

Visit us online at [www.elkrapidshistory.org](http://www.elkrapidshistory.org)  
and "like" us on facebook.



## ERAHS Board of Directors:

Dan LeBlond . . . . .President  
Judy Hahn . . . . .Secretary  
Adam Schuler . . . . .Treasurer  
Inez Gotts . . . . .Trustee  
Marcia Graham . . . . .Trustee  
Craig Handley . . . . .Trustee  
Jane Lund . . . . .Trustee  
Glenn Neumann . . . . .Trustee  
Daniel Wettlaufer . . . .Trustee

## Greg Reisig resigns from board

Citing a need to reduce his workload, Greg Reisig resigned from the ERAHS board earlier this year. In doing so, he stated, "Serving on the board has been a rewarding experience and I will always be supportive of ERAHS and will retain my membership. The board is a dedicated group and I feel the organization is in good hands as the new museum project moves forward."

In reluctantly accepting the resignation, President Dan LeBlond said, "we are grateful for all of Greg's effort over the years and we look forward to his continued support and advice." Greg was serving as Vice President at the time of his resignation.

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## President's Report:



Spring is here and the museum is a beehive of activity as we get ready for our grand opening. If you can stop by to help out in any way, please contact one of the volunteer coordinators listed on the cover page. Your efforts will be greatly appreciated.

The 2013 activity calendar appears in this issue. You find a wide variety of topics and events and we hope to see you here often in the coming year.

## IRA Charitable Distributions

IRA holders can still make charitable distributions to the Elk Rapids Area Historical Museum. The US Congress, in passing the tax bill at year-end, approved the continuation of the IRA charitable rollover option until December 31, 2013.

Museum members who are aged 70½ or older and have an IRA account are eligible to move up to \$100,000 from their IRAs directly to the Museum without having to pay income taxes on the money.

With the stock market strength in recent months, many donors may have gains in their IRA accounts. Qualified members can donate to the Museum without paying taxes on the gains—a “win-win” for the donor and the Museum!

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## Elk Rapids Historical Museum's Fundraiser Tennis Tournament

Come join the Elk Rapids Historical Museum's second annual tennis fundraiser tournament on August 24, 2013. Tennis tournament starts at 8:00 a.m. at the Elk Rapids High School tennis courts.

Call Jane Lund at 264-9828 for sign-up. There will be more information published at a later date. *See you on the tennis courts!*

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## Terry Wooten's *Water Under the Bridge* receives State recognition

Area poet, Terry Wooten recently learned that *Water Under the Bridge: Poems for the Elk Rapids Elders Project*, a collaboration between Terry and the students of Elk Rapids Schools, was recognized in the Volume 35, Number 4, Winter 2013 edition of *The Chronicle*, published by The Historical Society of Michigan.

Terry discussed the project at a well-attended program held at the museum during the winter of 2012.

We congratulate Terry on this well-deserved recognition. Copies of *Water Under the Bridge* can be purchased at the Elk Rapids Museum gift shop.



## Springtime cheer and charity

Brighten your day this June with a floral bouquet purchased at **Elk Lake Floral and Greenhouses**, 8628 Cairn Hwy.; and they will donate 25% of the purchase price to the Elk Rapids Area Historical Society. *This offer is good for the first 15 days of June.* Please mention the Elk Rapids Area Historical Society, when making your purchase.

## Open wide...

**All Smiles Family Dentistry** at 100 Cedar Street Suite 201 Elk Rapids will donate \$25 to the Elk Rapids Area Historical Society for each new patient appointment\* completed now through November 2013.

New patients must mention this offer when scheduling.

Our thanks to Scott Perron, D.D.S. for this generous offer.

*\* New patient appointments include a dental exam, cleaning, and any necessary x-rays. All Smiles Family Dentistry can be reached at (231) 264-6300.*

## Save those receipts!

From October 1st, 2012 through Memorial Day 2013, all Historical Society members and friends are asked to save their Village Market cash register receipts.

For the sixth year in a row, the Society is participating in the market's "Community Cash Program." Since 2007 we have received over \$920 as a result of your efforts. We look forward to another good year!

Your Community Cash receipts can be handed to Linda Pillsbury, Dan LeBlond, Glenn Neumann, any Society Board Member, or mailed to the Museum at:

Elk Rapids Area Historical Society  
P.O. Box 2  
Elk Rapids, MI 49629-0002



# 2013 ERAHS Monthly Programs

(as of 03-27-2013)

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**June 20:** (3rd Thursday of the Month) – Jim McClurg - **“Geology and Geography of Historic and Modern Day Elk Rapids”**, Jim is a geologist who the summer of 2012 visited 301 Traverse and examined the lower level’s stone wall.

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**July 18:** (3rd Thursday of the Month) – Craig Handley – **“Ask The Man Who Owns One”** A brief history of the Packard Motor Car Company from 1899 – 1958.

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**August 15:** (3rd Thursday of the Month) – Bill Jamerson - **“It's Daylight in the Swamps!”** A Musical Tribute to the Lumberjacks of the Midwest.

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**September 19:** (3rd Thursday of the Month) To be announced.

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**October 17:** (3rd Thursday of the Month) – **“Annual Meeting / Potluck Dinner.”** Dan LeBlond and Board Members conduct a “Business Program and Accomplishments” done in prior fiscal year. The location of this meeting to be determined.

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**November 8:** (2nd Friday of the Month) - **Fundraising Event: “Fish and Wild Game Dinner”** at the AMVETS Hall in Elk Rapids.

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**November 21:** (3rd Thursday of the Month) – Amanda Holmes (Fishtown Preservation Society Executive Director): **“Fishing on Lake Michigan.”**

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**December:** No program or special event planned... yet? Stay tuned!

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## Dam

*continued from page 1*

The Dexter and Noble saw mill was built on Elk River about 1856. The course of Elk River was altered to meet the needs of a much larger mill than the original mill that Abram Wadsworth built on the river near the Island. In fact the altering of Elk River formed the Island as it is.

The mill was rebuilt at least three times (1861, 1868 and 1881). It ceased operations in 1913 and was razed in 1915.



This view of the Dexter and Noble saw mill was taken about 1905, from the top of the smoke stack of the wooden ware factory - where Elk River Cove and Harbor Vista Condos are today.

The lumber yard can be seen at the site of present day "Sands" condos.



## **The Elk Rapids Iron Company Powerhouse**

The Elk Rapids Iron Company built a powerhouse on the site of what is today the spillway (below). The Iron Company generated their own electricity and pumped water through a pipe upstream in the Elk River. Water was supplied to their operations and the Village. Electrical generation ceased when the Iron Company ended business by WWI and after the new dam's electrical generation went "on-line circa 1918.



## Building and Remodeling The Dam:



The following are from the local Elk Rapids Newspaper the "Progress." Dates are when published in the paper (from the "Bay Breezes," book research by Glenn Neumann):

**June 20, 1918** A deal was closed Tuesday whereby the Elk Rapids Electric Company becomes the owner of the plant of the Kalkaska Light and Power plant and all its franchises. This Co. serves Alden and Rapid City and the resorts along Torch Lake and considerable part of the country contiguous to Kalkaska. Its rates have been considerably higher than those prevailing here, and a greater proportion of the people use electricity than is the case here. It includes nineteen miles of high tension line and franchises for three villages and several townships and the pumping service for the village of Kalkaska.

**Dec. 05, 1918** And now we are against another proposition that will not create a friendly feeling between the citizens of Elk Rapids and the Elk Electric Company. Without the knowledge of the people; without notice that any attempt would be made to advance the rates we have been paying, the company has succeeded in having its rates advanced by the railroad commission to a flat ten-cent rate; regardless of the quantity used.

**Dec. 26, 1918** It is reported that the light and power company is planning on moving its power generating system to Elk Rapids and abandoning the Rugg plant. — *Kalkaska Leader*.

**Dec. 25, 1919** The "juice" was turned on the Torch River — Kalkaska line Sunday. Telles DuFresne and many farmers of South Milton have their houses and buildings generally wired and fitted with lights.

**July 22, 1920** The Elk Electric company has torn down a lumber shed adjoining the office and old company store, and is erecting an addition to the power house at the concrete dam. The wheel and "unit" in the old pumping station, which has not been in use for some time, will be transferred to the new building and installed as an "emergency" or "reserve" unit.

**Dec. 30, 1920** At the last meeting of the council (a special meeting last week) a proposition was submitted by attorney F.R. Williams in behalf of the Elk Rapids Water Supply Company to sell the plant to the municipality, exclusive of power, for \$12,000. They offer to furnish electric power for its operation for \$2,500 a year. No action was taken by the council. Here's a proposition worthy of deliberate thought, and no hasty action should be taken.

**Apr. 14, 1921** Monday evening the council closed the deal by which the village of Elk Rapids into possession of the water supply plant on May 1st. By the terms of the deal as finally closed the village gets a deed of the pumping station, instead of a lease as originally planned.

**Aug. 09, 1923** The Elk Electric Co. is putting in another wheel in the wheel pit. It has now two wheels and is putting in a third, which will considerably increase its power. The new wheel has been ordered and will be here and in place and in use this fall.



ABOVE: Construction of the power plant (c. 1916).

**July 30, 1925** The Michigan Public Service Co. announces the addition to its string of power plants through northern Michigan, of the Elk Rapids plant located in Elk Rapids.

**May 06, 1926** The Elk Electric Co., is widening the mill race by about 8 feet wide, and for a distance of 150 feet.

**June 09, 1927** Announcement has been made of the consolidation of the Elk Electric Company with six other Michigan public utilities. These seven utilities which include the Michigan United Power & Light Co., White River Power Co., Boyne River Power Co., Boyne City Electric Co., Graying Electrical Co., and the Michigan Public Service Co., will form a consolidation system functioning and operating under the name of the Michigan Public Service Company.

**Oct. 27, 1927** A large "clamshell" is busy at the tail race of the electric power plant daily. It is widening the race to a distance of about ten feet and also deepening the channel. This will relieve the back pressure against the waterwheels.

**Nov. 03, 1927** Wednesday morning the widening and deepening of the tail race had been completed insofar as dredging operations are concerned and the clamshell was moved to the flume where it is at work now. The Michigan Public Service Company is making progress along lines of efficiency and preparing, also, for the winter months. Many people of this village views the operation of the dredge with interest and the skillfulness of its operation is subject to no little comment.

**Oct. 17, 1929** A big gang of men are hard at work putting in improvements in the local electric light mill, as announced in a former issue of the Progress.

**Oct. 24, 1929** The eastern portion of the local electric light mill has been razed and a modern structure is being erected to take care of the increasing business of the power company. The Michigan Public Service Company. ... The C.J. Samuelson Construction Co. of Traverse City has the contract.

**Oct. 31, 1929** The long-familiar sight of the brick power house is no longer seen as the contractor has demolished the structure in preparation to erecting a more modern and substantial, and likewise more spacious structure, to house the machinery that the company will install later.

**Dec. 18, 1930** A big wheel was unloaded from a flat car by the crew of the Michigan Public Service Company Tuesday of this week. It will be placed into service in the local plant. This Company under the local manager, Mr. J.B. Griffin has been making strides progressively and is always able to meet the demand for electricity because it keeps its equipment in shape and ahead of the demand.

**Jan. 16, 1930** Tuesday the power shovel that was being used to dredge the river and the races of the power plant of the Michigan Public Service Company, was raised from the icy depths of the tail race and placed on terra firma. A few days work in cleaning up the machinery will place it in usable condition again. The large tractor of the State was requisitioned to haul it out of the water. †



Power Plant before it was remodeled c. 1920s.



Front of Dam c. 1925.



Iron bridge front of Dam c 1925.



Back of Dam c. 1925.



# Elk Rapids Area Historical Society

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*Deliver to:*



*Here is a shot showing the front of the Elk Rapids power dam as it appeared in 1927. The dam still produces electricity after more than 90 years in service.*