



# Museum Matters

*the Spring 2016 newsletter of the*

## Elk Rapids Area Historical Society

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

### Elk Rapids, MI

A former church, built by its Methodist congregation in 1901-02, is now recorded permanently in American history. The church, historic name, Elk Rapids First Methodist Episcopal Church, was added on December 29th, 2015 to the National Register of Historic Places. The interior was renovated in recent years to house the Elk Rapids Area Historical Society's Museum.

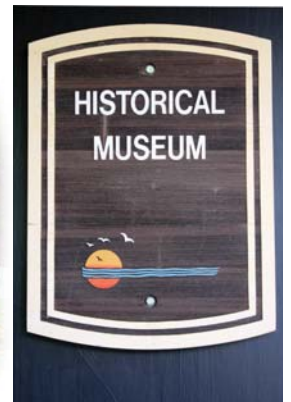
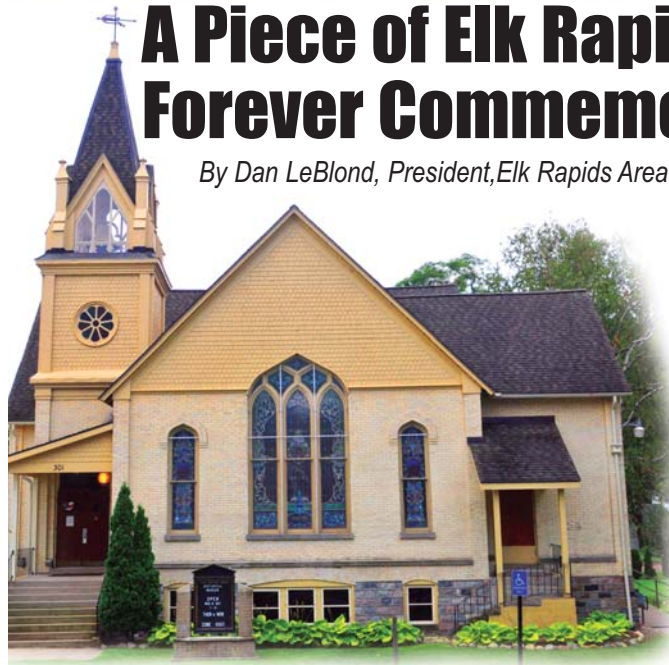
As Elk Rapids reached an economic height during the early 1900s, with lumbering, iron smelting and cement manufacturing providing job opportunities, the town's population peaked at around 1700 people. The Methodist congregation outgrew its quarters in the former courthouse. The church purchased the present site in August 1901 and on October 29, 1901, under the pastorate of the Rev. John W. Hart.



A cornerstone for the new church building was put in place in a formal ceremony. The dedication ceremony for the completed building was held August 10, 1902. The pastor reported the cost of the building to be about \$8,500.

## A Piece of Elk Rapids Forever Commemorated

*By Dan LeBlond, President, Elk Rapids Area Historical Society*



The building was retitled the First United Methodist Church following the 1971 nationwide merger of the Methodist and United Brethren denominations into the United Methodist denomination. It served as a church until 2011, when its dwindling congregation discontinued holding services there, joined other nearby First United Methodist Churches, and donated their Elk Rapids building to the Elk Rapids Area Historical Society for preservation as a historical landmark and future use as the Society's local history museum and archives.

Robert Christensen, State of Michigan Historic Preservation Office Coordinator for the National Register of Historic Places noted in his statement of significance report he compiled for the National Park Service:

- "This building served as the home for over 100 years of the Elk Rapids First Methodist Episcopal Church. The church was the pioneer religious organization at Elk Rapids, beginning with the Rev. David R. Latham's first visit to Elk Rapids as a circuit preacher in July 1857."
- "The church's 1901-02 building meets national register criterion C as a primary example of a Protestant auditorium church building of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century period when these buildings were at their height of popularity as a building type. It retains not only the basic form and character, but also the Gothic-inspired exterior finish often used for such buildings as well as important interior features such as the original pews, pressed metal ceiling, and stained glass."

*Please turn to page 3*

# Keep saving those receipts!

Please save your Village Market / Gas Station receipts for us again! You can hand them to a Board member, a volunteer or new this year - the drop-box located on the rear door of the Museum.

Last August 25th, 2015, the Village Market presented the Historical Society with a \$324.62 check.

39 groups and organizations participated; The Historical Society ranked 22nd on the list.

Because the program has been extremely successful and helped so many people over the last 35 years, the Village Market has decided to double the reward amount to 2% of the slip total for next year (2016)!

Thank you in advance for your receipt donations. It really does pay to shop locally!

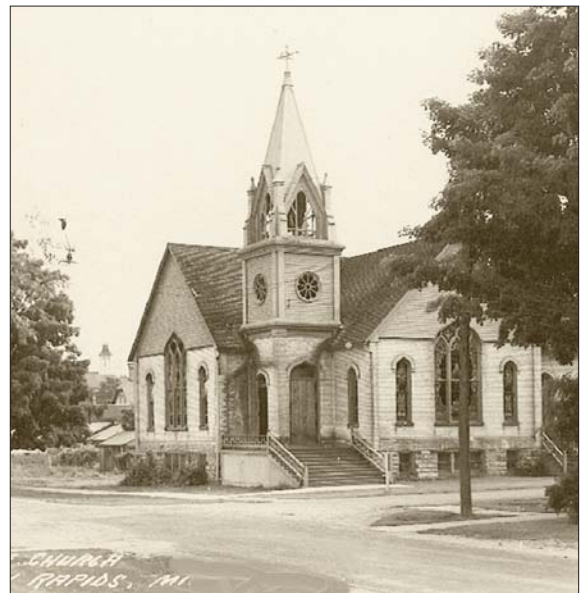


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Would you consider joining our board of Trustees?

We need your input to keep ERAHS a vibrant cultural and educational asset to our community. If you are a snow bird, don't let that stop you. We meet once a month except in the dead of winter.



*MUSEUM MATTERS* is published periodically by The Elk Rapids Area Historical Society.

All editorial and correspondence should be sent to:  
**Craig Handley, editor, Post Office Box 2, Elk Rapids, MI 49629-0002**  
**email: [president@elkrapidshistory.org](mailto:president@elkrapidshistory.org)**

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## National Register

*continued from page 1*

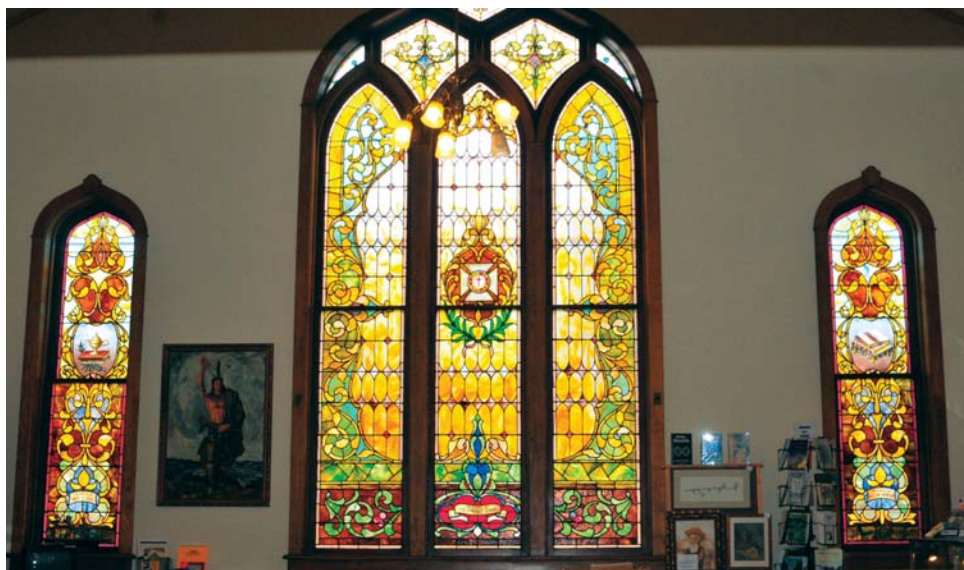
- “The church is also important in architectural terms as an example that was modeled after, and follows closely, a published church design by then New Jersey-based church plan specialists Benjamin D. and Max Charles Price. The Prices’ church plans, offered through the Methodist Episcopal Church’s Board of Church Extension and published in a series of plan books over several decades in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, served as a key design source for small-town Protestant churches built across the nation.”
- “The building is also significant in the local context for its construction using the locally produced pale yellow brick; it is one of a few remaining primary buildings in Elk Rapids constructed of that material.”
- “The building retains eight stained glass windows that, installed in 1902 when the church was built, are fine representative examples of the type of stained glass windows commonly used in evangelical Protestant churches in the later nineteenth and early twentieth characterized by religious imagery and naturalistic forms rather than figural representations of Jesus and the saints.”
- “The Elk Rapids First United Methodist Church building stands out among other known Michigan examples for following closely (much more than nearly all the other Michigan examples) the Prices’ Design 232 as to exterior design and floor plan (as originally built) and for its high degree of integrity in maintaining the original design. The Elk Rapids Area Historical Society, while removing some of the pews to provide exhibit space, has been a fine steward in maintaining the building’s historic character, including its stained glass windows and the auditorium with its gently sloping floor.”

Dan LeBlond, Elk Rapids Historical Society President, said, “There are actually thirteen stained glass windows in all. In addition to Robert Christensen’s comment above about the eight original stained glass windows, my research revealed the eight were actually made by the John J. Kinsella Glass Co., a Chicago firm that was in business from 1872 to 1931. The company produced both mirror/plate glass and stained glass lines. John Kinsella helped to pioneer the “Favrite” style of glass invented by John LaFarge and L.C. Tiffany. His works, considered equal to the great masters’ landmarks, decorate many Chicago and southwest suburbs’ cathedrals. In addition to these original windows, there are three made between 1948 and 1952 by the Grand Rapids Art Glass and Mirror Works and two made in 1977 and 1980 by local artisan, James Pfeiffer, who as young man grew up in Elk Rapids and now lives in Sedona, AZ.

LeBlond added, “We are pleased to be the seventh Antrim County listing on the National Register of Historic places. Two other Elk Rapids locations are the Elk Rapids Township Hall on River Street (added 1977) and the Hughes House on Elm Street (added 1976). The other four locations are in Bellaire: the Antrim County Courthouse (added 1980), Holtz Site (added 1973), M-88 Intermediate River Bridge (added 1999) and the Henry Richardi House (added 1978).”

Now being listed on the registry makes it possible for the Historical Society to apply for grants to help maintain and refurbish the building, but LeBlond said recognizing local history is about much more than grant money.

“It gives that location a sense of place in Elk Rapids history,” he said. “In today’s world of tearing things down and building new things, it shows what can be done by repurposing old buildings.” ✝



*Three of the eight original stained glass windows, installed in 1902, were made by the John J. Kinsella Glass Co., a Chicago firm that was in business from 1872 to 1931.*

*They are titled (left to right): “Book & Oil Lamp”, “Symbols of Epworth League” and “The Open Bible.”*

# 2016 Program Lineup

Time and Location (except where noted): 7:00 p.m. at 301 Traverse St. (corner of Pine St.)

Suggested Donation for all programs (except where noted): Elk Rapids Historical Society Members - Free! Non-Members: A \$5.00 suggested donation for adults, \$2.00 suggested donation for students (under age 18) is requested at the door. Children are free. For more information go to: <http://elkrapidshistory.org>



**Thursday, May 5th, 2016 - Earl Young's "Mushroom Houses" - Part 1. Presenter: David Miles, Curator of Photographs and Documents at the Charlevoix Historical Society's museum at the Harsha House.** Unique. Unusual. Quirky. Elf cottages. Hobbit houses. Fairy houses. Gnome houses. Fairy tale houses. These are terms that are all used to describe the mushroom houses that Northern Michigan builder Earl Young created in Charlevoix. Young's homes are known world-wide and can be seen in just one place: Charlevoix MI.

**Thursday, May 12th, 2016 - Earl Young's "Mushroom Houses" - Part 2. Presenter: David Miles, Curator of Photographs and Documents at the Charlevoix Historical Society's museum at the Harsha House.** Continue to explore Northern Michigan builder Earl Young's unique houses in Charlevoix.

**Thursday, June 2nd, 2016 - "The History and Mystery of South Fox Island Light Station." Presenter: Catherine Allchin, FILA Vice President.** The First Fox Island Light Station was built in November, 1867 and the second one in 1934. It was decommissioned in 1969 and transferred to the State of Michigan in 1971. It was permanently shut down in 1984. Since 2000, the Fox Island Lighthouse Association (FILA) has worked to stabilize, restore and preserve it. Come see the progress and hear about the future plans for this not so forgotten jewel of Lake Michigan.

**Thursday, July 7th, 2016 - "101 Things That Happened On The Mackinac Bridge." Presenter: Mike Fornes, Author, Musician and resident of Mackinac City.** Michigan's iconic five-mile span has seen historic, tragic, and hilarious events. Since construction began in 1954, the Mackinac Bridge has withstood gale-force winds, the pressure of crushing ice flows and blinding snowstorms. Since opening in 1957, it has been struck by lightning and hit by an airplane and a ship - yet still stands as perhaps the safest five miles of I-75. Hear the stories, see the photos and meet the people who have made this engineering wonder a symbol of the State of Michigan.

**Thursday, August 11th, 2016 - "The Magic of Millers Park." Presenter: Susan Hall & Emily Musgrave, residents of Millers Park.** Susan Hall & Emily Musgrave will give a presentation of Millers Park, which observed

its 100th anniversary in June 2014. Millers Park is located on the west side of Elk River flowing from Elk Lake. This serene area was purchased by Earl & Eliza Miller for a fishing camp, and has evolved into cottages and beautiful permanent homes

**Saturday, August 13th, 2016 - time, place, and ticket price to be announced - "1st Annual Founders Day BBQ Fundraiser"** A long time ago, local government declared August 13th to be "Abram Wadsworth Day" or "Founder's Day." This year the Elk Rapids Area Historical Society (ERAHS) and the Historic Elk Rapids Town Hall Association (HERTHA) are teaming-up to make this an annual event for the whole community to enjoy. Net proceeds will be divided between our two organizations for their building's preservation.

**Thursday, September 1st, 2016 - "Murder In Antrim County, 1870: A Family Story." Presenter: Norton Bretz, lives in Eastport, MI, Former Senior Research Physicist at Princeton University.** This is a story that has echoes throughout our long history of race relations. The victim, a 46 year old black family man from Charlevoix, William Swan, was walking to Traverse City on June 10, 1870 to guide a relative to his homestead. He was harassed and later shot dead, just north of Eastport. The presenter's family never spoke of these events despite being first cousins with the defendants and having a long history of family interactions both before and after the murder.

**Thursday, October 6th, 2016 - "Annual Meeting & Program" (time and place to be announced). Presenter: Dan LeBlond, President, Elk Rapids Area Historical Society.** Society members and the general public are invited to attend. Officers will be elected and a PowerPoint slide show will show the many improvements done to the building during the last year and plans for the new fiscal year. A program (also to be announced) will follow the brief business meeting. Admission: to be announced.

## Program Suggestions for 2017:

If you have an idea for a program in 2017, or you have heard speaker who has a presentation you think would be of interest to our membership, please contact our President, Dan LeBlond: phone 231-264-8984 or e-mail [president@elkrapidshistory.org](mailto:president@elkrapidshistory.org).

He'll be happy to contact the individual and see if arrangements can be made. Many of our programs in past years have been "referrals." Dan could use some help obtaining speakers and getting presenter's information for press releases. A "referral" would be greatly appreciated.

## Call for Volunteers

Our volunteers have made the Elk Rapids Area Historical Society a vibrant force in the Elk Rapids community. Can you spare a few hours to help us keep the momentum going?

We can always use volunteer to be greeters at the Museum, three hours once a week on Wednesday or Saturday, June through August, whenever you are available. Contact Inez Gotts at [tigotts@icloud.com](mailto:tigotts@icloud.com).

Our Museum Committee needs volunteers to help organize, care for, or preserve our artifact collections; year-round or seasonal, in the summer or winter. Contact Glenn Neumann at [glenn.l.neumann@gmail.com](mailto:glenn.l.neumann@gmail.com) or phone: 231-264-6354.

Volunteers are also needed to work with computer presentations of monthly Museum programs, April through September. Training provided. Contact Dan LeBlond at [president@elkrapidshistory.org](mailto:president@elkrapidshistory.org) or (231) 264-5692.

Education is an important part of our mission and we can use volunteers to work with the presentations to Elk Rapids students in the fall and spring. Contact Dan LeBlond at [president@elkrapidshistory.org](mailto:president@elkrapidshistory.org) or (231) 264-5692.

## Major Building Upgrades Underway

Over the winter, work has been conducted to make the ERAHS Museum more accessible by installing a new power chair between the upper and lower levels and a fully rebuilt handicap bathroom on the lower level. These capital projects are being funded by generous grants from Rotary Charities and matching gifts from an anonymous donor. If you would like to make a contribution, please use the donation form on page 7.

## Looking for Donations

Do you have any hidden treasures in your attic and basement that need a new home? You can donate them to ERAHS for resale at our Antique Mall booth #82. All proceeds go to help support our museum and the many ongoing programs that help keep Elk Rapids history alive. Call Marcia Graham at (248) 542-4208 or e-mail: [rdmagraham@gmail.com](mailto:rdmagraham@gmail.com).



## We get letters

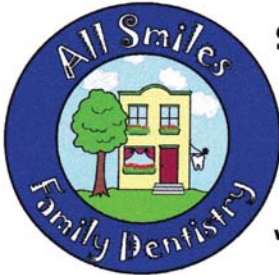
Shortly after last newsletter was sent out, President LeBlond received the following e-mail note:

*I wanted to say as well that I admire the success of your organization and the many activities you have completed and the many plans for the future. I became involved with your organization several years ago when I inquired about Camp Fourway Lodge and Camp Fairway Lodge, that were, in the 1940s, situated on Torch Lake.*

*My brother and sister and I were sent from Cincinnati by train to Bellaire, Mi, then bused to the camps on Torch Lake. WWII was raging elsewhere but we were at peace in a serene part of Michigan for a month each summer for several years. It was there I learned to swim and dive and ride horses. What grand summer memories!*

*Dorothy Soper*

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## Didjano?

After the high wind storm last August 2nd, **Michael Conlan** a.k.a. "Tree Top Mike," cut down a dangerously leaning birch tree on our property. It could have fallen on the neighbor's house on the west side of our building.

We are fortunate that Michael donated his services for this expensive removal. Thank You Mike!



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*It costs \$82.19 per day to operate the Museum,  
 whether open to the public or closed!*



***Yes! I want to support The Elk Rapids Historical Museum!***

Gift Amount:  \$50  \$100  \$200  \$500  \$1,000  \$2,500  Other

I have enclosed a check payable to ERAHS

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 extent allowed by law.*

*Thank you for your support!*  
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**Mail to: ERAHS, P.O. Box 2, Elk Rapids MI 49629-0002**



# Elk Rapids Area Historical Society

Post Office Box 2, Elk Rapids, Michigan 49629-0002

Contact: Dan LeBlond, President (231) 264-5692 or (231) 264-8984, Email: [president@elkrapidshistory.org](mailto:president@elkrapidshistory.org), Web site: [www.elkrapidshistory.org](http://www.elkrapidshistory.org)

*Deliver to:*



An historic view of Elk Rapids from atop the old school house.

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