
FARMING ON THE EDGE IN ELK RAPIDS

By Greg Reisig

"Farming, has always been part of Elk Rapids," said historian Glenn Neumann who has been researching the area for over twenty years. "Once any of the ground was cleared, they planted potatoes, wheat, corn, beans or anything they could eat."

With the logging era at its zenith in the late 1800s, farms were created when all the trees were logged and the stumps pulled from the ground. This was before any cherry trees were planted when vegetables and other crops were grown.

"There were also a number of seed businesses operating hi Elk Rapids," Neumann explained. "One operation produced radish seeds and another clover seeds. There was a lot of experimentation with seeds going on at that time. Experimental sweet potatoes were produced at the Wandawood Farm during this period."

When the trees were all cut and the lumbering era ended around 1915, farming became a serious business and Elk Rapids became an agricultural center. The sawmill and iron works closed in 1913 as the area turned toward farming and summer resorts for a source of income.

This was about the time the Agricultural Cooperative was established at the east end of River Street. The Co-Op provided storage and found markets for agricultural goods brought to Elk Rapids by boat or by wagon. By that time the railroad had pushed north and a spur ran from Williamsburg up to Elk Rapids near Miller Park.

"The first cherry processing plant was established in 1914," Neumann said. "This became the real beginning of cherries and apples which, eventually, came to dominate agriculture in northern Michigan. Apples and cherries were often shipped by boat from Old Mission to Elk Rapids then sent south on the railroad."

In addition, many other farming-related businesses were created including blacksmith shops, foundries and farm implement stores. It was during the first half of the 1900s when farming names in the Elk Rapids area began to emerge. These included: Munro, Veliquette, Paradis, Hoopfer, Sutter, Coleman, White and many others.

Neumann, who continues to research back issues of the Elk Rapids Progress newspaper, says, "Farmers tried everything. If it didn't work they didn't do it a second time. If they needed something they figured out a way to do it. If they needed a tool they often made it themselves on the farm. They were both creative and inventive."

With Elk Rapids as a farming center, small boats were often used to bring harvested crops to town from allover Grand Traverse Bay. Farms and barns sprang up in Antrim and Grand Traverse counties as agricultural operations increased during the 1930s and 1940s. "There was a

huge pickle factory near the railroad station where cucumbers were brought in by the ton," Neumann said. "The Schuler Ice Company often provided ice for the purpose of shipping fruit to market."

The Elk Rapids Packing Company was established near Elk River in 1948. Mitch Paradis was the first farmer to ship cherries to the plant which is the present-day Burnette Foods on U.S. 31.

Back in 1943, in the middle of WWII, the local newspaper reported, "sixty members of the Women's Land Army of Michigan have come to Antrim County to help with the Cherry Harvest.

A contingent of thirty-five arrived Wednesday afternoon by Train from Lansing. Another load was expected Thursday. The Milton Town Hall at Kewadin has been converted into barracks. The Kewadin Ladies Aid are acting as the sponsoring organization for the group. The group will be fed by the Ladies Aid at their Dining Hall which is close by.

Members of the Women's Land Army will sleep on cots and wash in wash tubs. No hot showers will be their lot. Baths will consist of dunkings in Elk Lake, which is across the road from the dormitory. The Women's Land Army is a part of the Emergency Farm Labor Program which is administered in each county through the United States Department of Agriculture Extension Service."

While cherries and apples are now the main crop in the region, recent years have seen the addition of grapes and the production of northern Michigan wines sold to the ever-growing tourists who populate the area during the summer months. The crops may continue to change as farmers look to the future. Dried cherries and cherry concentrate have also emerged as the health values of cherries are being explored.

"There have been many creative and enthusiastic farmers in the Elk Rapids area since the town was founded," Neumann concluded. "We hope our agricultural heritage can be recognized and preserved in the barns and farms still surrounding Elk Rapids for many years to come."

FARMERS: THE LAST GENIUSES ON EARTH

By Greg Reisig

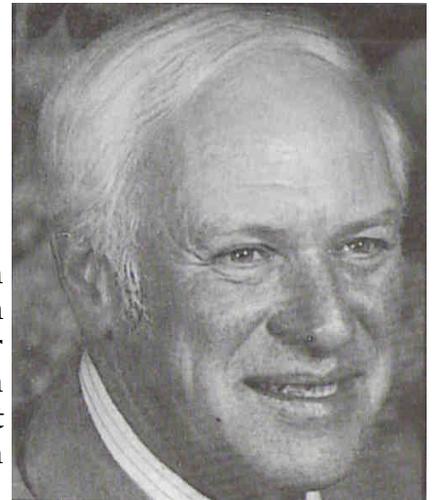
From 1938 to 1968 Walter Kirkpatrick served as the Antrim County Agricultural Agent and expressed many memories of those years in a 1997 interview with historian Glenn Ruggles featured in his book "Voices on the Water: An Oral and Pictorial History of Antrim County's Chain of Lakes." Here are some of the highlights of that interview:

"When I grew up we had "potato vacation." Every school in Antrim County and northern Michigan had from one to four weeks of "potato vacation" - or potato harvest. We had about 160 acres, had about fifteen dairy cows, had an orchard, some cherry trees - we used to ship cherries by train to the old Central Lake Canning Company."

"The old saying is "Necessity is the mother of invention." I have a hunch that I've seen more new things developed on the farm than anyone else, and then industry takes 'em over. Jay Williams of Bellaire put together what was the very first "Trashy Com Planter." Herb Reilly put together the very early mechanical tree planter."

"Farmers have got to be self-reliant. The people who get ahead are those that train themselves to do the job. That makes the difference between success and failure."

"At the time I came in (1938) we had 1,150 farms in Antrim County (there were about 150 farms in 2000). To a great extent, in 1938, farming was still, to many, many folks, very important for growing their own food, surviving. There were only two farms in the county that didn't have dairy cows - probably a few more that didn't have pigs, but almost everyone had their own chicken flock. We had 450 commercial potato growers -although they averaged about five acres per farm."



"Another genius: Bevo Veliquette"
- Walter Kirkpatrick

"Water itself is a controlling factor. We don't realize it but one pound of dry com requires seven hundred pounds of water. One pound of dry alfalfa requires twelve hundred pounds of water; it's gotta transpire up through the plant to make one pound of dry matter. So we talk about nitrogen, phosphorous, potash - really, water is far more critical than people give it credit."

"When I came here, you'd say something about conservation or saving the soil, they didn't know what you're talking about. So all the terminology for conservation, ecology - they've got a dozen words that would have been coined since that time - they never existed back then. So it's been a matter of education. If people start adopting new practices, the neighbors see them and adopt them. So indirectly, you'll affect them all."

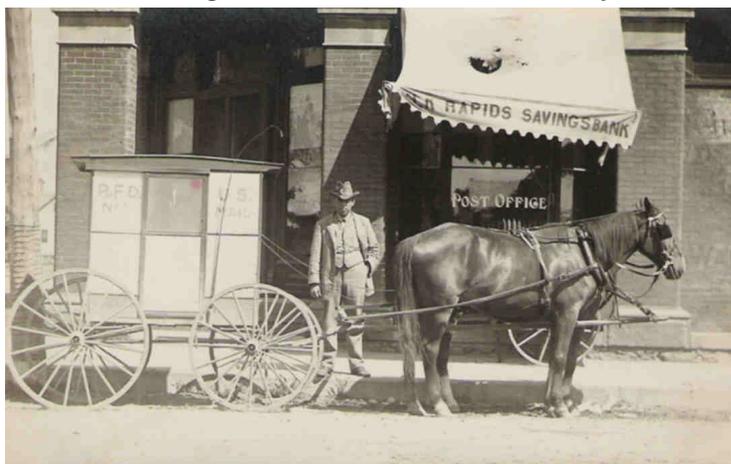
HISTORY OF THE ELK RAPIDS POST OFFICE

(Information from the *Elk Rapids Progress* and the U.S Postal Service)

March 31, 1854, a post-office was established in Antrim County by the name of Stevens. The route was established from Croton, by Cheboygan, Traverse City, Grand Traverse, Stevens and Mackinaw to Sault Ste. Marie, 280 miles and back, twice a month, from the 15th of December to 15th of April. Mr. W.M. Johnson of Mackinaw was the contractor on the route.

The earliest records available show that the Elk Rapids post-master received, for fiscal year of 1855, \$16.36 as compensation. The net receipts of the office for the same period were \$8.21.

On April 30, 1858, the name of the office was changed to Elk Rapids, Grand Traverse County. On August 30, 1858 it was changed back into Antrim County.



Rural Farm Delivery service c. 1907

Following is a list of Post-masters and the date of their appointment and location:

Theron Bostwick	Mar. 31, 1854	
Norman C. Cowles	Apr. 30, 1858	
Henry H. Noble	Aug. 30, 1858	
Elvin L. Sprague	Feb. 5, 1866	Wadsworth Bldg. (north. side of Rive & Elm Sts.)
Sylvester W. Stacy	Jan. 28, 1873	147 River St. (Coopers wagon shop)
Dr. Hill	Jan. 16, 1874	Wadsworth Bldg. (north. side of Rive & Elm Sts.)
Cuthbert Parkinson	Apr. 21, 1874	131 River St
Elizabeth N. Parkinson	Oct. 17, 1878	131 River St
Cuthbert Parkinson	Nov. 1, 1878	131 River St
George W. Dyer	Dec. 7, 1878	151 River St. (Lake View House)
(post office moved)	May, 7, 1880	101 River St
(post office moved)	Apr. 7, 1882	147 River St
Orrin J. Holbrook	Apr. 3, 1883	215 River St
J. Ward Davis	Dec. 20, 1886	213 River St
James J. McLaughlin	June 30, 1890	

J. Ward Davis	July 22, 1893	
Archibald K. Dougherty	June 24, 1897	
(post office moved)	July 04,1907	116 River St
EdwinS. Noble	Dec. 22, 1913	116 River St
Natalie G. Noble	July 17, 1922	116 River St
Natalie G. Marker	Oct. 8,1924	Name changed by marriage
(post office moved)	Aug. 26,1941	130 River St. (old State Bank Bldg.)
(post office moved)	Aug. 1, 1957	105 River St. (new bldg .)
Arnold McFerson	Sept. 1963	OIC (officer in charge)
Vernon Elliott	Aug. 1965	
Russell Scram		
Rick Aeins	Oct. 08, 1993	OIC (officer in charge)
Constance Leutloff	Feb. 24, 1994	OIC (officer in charge)
Constance Leutloff	Nov. 12, 1994	
Roger A. Roberts	Jan. 20, 2000	OIC (officer in charge)
Charles Bell	Dec. 16, 2000	

DO YOU REMEMBER?

1930s	The Rowe Indian Shop	1947	Dr. Crow's Dentistry
1930	Ways Standard Service Station	1948	Fortor:s Laundry
1931	Bennie Klien's old Barber Shop	1948-80	Don's Grocery
1932	A.P. Wilson's Grocery		Elliott's Grocery
1924	A & P Store	1930s	Ghastin's Grocery, Gas Station & Tavern
1931	A & P Store	1949	Art's IGA Grocery Store
1935	Community Theater	1950	Charlie's Drive In
1936	Crisps Grocery	1955	The Broken Drum
1935	Alden Bank Branch on River St	1955	The Blue Ox Delicatessen
1936	Hasty Tasty Hamburgers	1951	Albert's Barber Shop
1937	Grants Economy Store	1956	Eva's Dairy Bar & Lunch
1930s	M & M Garage (Marriott & Martinek)	1952	Elk River Marine & Tire Service
1940s	Northern Cafe	1956	Dairy King
1940s	Gilbert's Resturant	1957	Vermeersch Mfg. Co.
1930s	The old Cider Mill	1955	Cleo's Drive In
1944	The Service Men Honor Roll	1930s	The Albatross Diner
1945	Davis Electric		Clegg's Cafe
1946	Oleny's Frozen Foods		Andi - Bo's
1932-38	The Hollywood Dance Hall		Wig-Warn
1938	Morrison's Cabins		Locust Tea Room
1946	Double "MM" Garage (Martin & Mac Kowlowski)		Bullwinkle

REVIEW OF 2005 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Hosted Chamber of Commerce “Business After Hours” gathering
- Clothing collection inventoried, cleaned & repaired (by Pam Yockey)
- Became member of American Association For State And Local History (AASLH)
- Commenced Long Range Planning Meetings (5 years & 10 years)
- Remodeled archive storage area (painted & purchased new shelving)
- Continued the Historic Home Plaque Program
- Members judged “Michigan History Day” projects at TC West Middle School
- Created a maintenance “To Do List” by month of year
- Revised Constitution & By-Laws - ratified at the Oct. 20th Annual Meeting
- Wrote 3 grants – 1 (intern) declined, 2 fully funded (acid free boxes & computer)
- Increased attendance at programs by 100% plus for most monthly programs.
- Created a annual budget & utilized Peachtree Software for accounting purposes
- Increased number of volunteers on various committees
- Participated in Village Market “Community Cash Program”
- Consulted with Village of Elk Rapids to refurbish Iron Company historical marker
- Produced summer newsletter (Lakes, Resorts, Big Fish) plus two others.

The biggest project in 2005 was the clothing conservation and remodeling of the office and storage areas. Our heartfelt thanks go out to the Elk Rapids Lions and Rotary Clubs and the Alden State Bank for their generous financial contributions. Were it not for their support this project would not have gotten off the ground. Local contractors, Norb Rooke, Don Haller, Jr., and Bruce Burry donated all or part of their services on the remodeling tasks. And last, but not least, thanks to Elk Rapids Area Historical Society members, Roberta Cornelissen, John and Rosemary Grossa, Glenn Neumann, Margaret LeBlond and Todd Tinkham for their painting skills and assistance assembling new shelving in the storage area.

In September and November 2005, Board members and Society volunteers met for the purpose of 5 and 10 year long-range planning. In 2006, six prioritized projects, coming out of the long range planning sessions, will be completed or initiated:

2006 PROJECTS

Security, Store Rooms, Collection Management Policy: Establish a “Key Roster” and inspect security devices/methods in exhibit, office and storage areas making improvements where identified. Write a Collections Policy for the Museum. Rearrange our exhibits and continue the long process of entering collection information into our Past Perfect Museum software. These ambitious tasks will require the support of many volunteers throughout 2006 and beyond.

Volunteers & Guides: Increase current volunteer participation, produce written guidelines (procedures) for volunteers to follow, explore student community service situations. Train volunteers – obtain a chairperson to schedule “work days” telling volunteers what we need time wise (work as greeter between Memorial Day & Labor Day).

Gift Shop: Rent or lease space at a local downtown Elk Rapids antique store for initially 6 months – May through October. Stock it with our books, posters, photos, CD’s Videos and DVD’s currently

offered in the Museum's lower level. Place a rack of membership applications, summer program schedules and "Museum Open Hours" there. Monitor for positive results.

Signage: Place a Double sided sign (sandwich board) in front of museum by the sidewalk and/or an "Open Flag" there or mounted on the building front facade. Continue to request the Chamber of Commerce to put our program announcements on their U.S. Highway 31 sign.

Grant Writing: Write grant requests to fund another visit by a collections conservator and purchase related storage materials. Also, pursue grant writing for honorariums to offer our summer speakers.

Education – Schools: Contact Elk Rapids School Superintendent to discuss possibly getting teacher contacts or identify retired teachers for position of "Educational Coordinator." The responsibilities would be to create programs for various grade levels in Elk Rapids as well as other school systems. The program focus would be on MEAP benchmarks and increasing school visits to the museum or museum volunteers going to the school.

An ongoing concern the Board of Directors has is that the Historical Museum is housed in the lower level of the old Elk Rapids Township Hall. We have had an ongoing problem with excessive moisture (humidity) during the months of May through October.. Three de-humidifiers are used to combat this problem. Every day during the summer, volunteers empty over five gallons of water! Some day we hope to install a commercial de-humidification system.

A recent survey on collection conditions nationwide does not surprise us:

Heritage Preservation, the country's leading conservation advocate, in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) a federal agency, conducted the first comprehensive survey ever to assess the condition of U.S. collections concluded that immediate action is needed to prevent the loss of millions of irreplaceable artifacts held in public trust. Improper storage conditions and the lack of realistic disaster planning top the list of chronic problems.

Key findings of the report include:

80% of U.S. collecting institutions do not have an emergency plan to protect collections with staff trained to carry it out.

65 % of collecting institutions have experienced, damage to collections due to improper storage.

190 million objects are in urgent need of conservation treatment.

The most urgent need at U.S. collecting institutions is environmental control.

The Elk Rapids Area Historical Society hopes to continue its efforts to properly protect its collections and artifacts pertaining to the history of the Village and Township of Elk Rapids, its people, community life and that of the surrounding Chain of Lakes Region. - Dan LeBlond

ELK RAPIDS AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2006 PROGRAM SERIES

The Elk Rapids Area Historical Society's 2006 monthly program series begins May 18th at the Old Elk Rapids Township Hall, 401 River Street, Elk Rapids (across from the tennis courts). All programs begin at 7 p.m. They will include refreshments and time to talk personally with the speaker.

A \$3.00 donation for adults, \$1.00 donation for students is requested at the door for these programs. Children are free. All proceeds benefit the Elk Rapids Area Historical Society.

Scheduled speakers are:

May 18th (Thur.)- Dr. Charles Cleland presents "*Life in the Time Before Written History: The Anishnabeg of Northern Michigan.*"

Dr. Cleland, is a retired Professor of Anthropology and Ethno-History, Michigan State University. He has done many archeological digs in northern Michigan. Among his most notable digs was the work he and his students did at Skegemog Point where they identified over 10,000 artifacts from three separate Native American cultures dating back to B.C.

June 7th (Wed.)- Dr. Ted Ligibel presents "*Preserving Community Character: What's Up With That?*"

Dr. Ted Ligibel is the Director of Eastern Michigan University's award-winning Historic Preservation Program. He is a frequent lecturer throughout the nation, and has been active in a variety of local, state, and national preservation and conservation organizations.

July 20th (Thur.)- Steve Stier presents "*Preserving Michigan Barns.*"

Steve is one of the founders of the Michigan Barn Preservation Network. He will tell the story of the Network's current efforts to survey and preserve Michigan barns; including recent efforts to save the Maple Bay Farm (barn and house), located just a few miles south of Elk Rapids.

August 24th (Thur.)- Glenn Ruggles, historian and filmmaker, presents "*The River's the Same.*"

2006 is the 30th anniversary of the making of Glenn's award winning film - made for the 1976 Bicentennial. The film will be shown in its entirety. Viewers will be amazed at how downtown Elk Rapids has changed! Glenn will tell some amusing anecdotes concerning the making of the film.

September 21st (Thur.)- Dr. Martin Brosnan presents "*The Abraham Lincoln Assassination.*"

Last year Martin "filled the house" with his program "*You Oughta Have An Auto.*" He returns to tell the story of the first presidential assassination in U.S. history. Rare slides of Abraham Lincoln, Ford's Theatre, John Wilkes Booth and his conspirators will be shown. 2009 is the bi-centennial of Lincoln's birth. Celebrations and commemorations are going to be held nation wide. Speakers like Dr. Brosnan are already "booked." Join us for this "pre-Lincoln Bicentennial" presentation!

October 26th (Thur.)- Karen Siekas presents "*Samels Family Heritage Farm: An Update.*"

The Frank and Mary Samels Farm, located on Skegemog Point in Whitewater Township, is a unique site both in terms of its historic significance as a well preserved example of early 20th century agriculture and its archaeological significance as the location of prehistoric activity. Karen Siekas, Board member of the Samels Family Heritage Society, will discuss current projects to preserve the farm's open-space, woodlands, waterfront, buildings and physical effects. Her Society is dedicated to providing the community, especially disabled children, an educational experience based on the prehistoric and historical settlement of the area.

WISH LIST

The Elk Rapids Area Historical Society Exhibit Committee could use the following items added to our exhibits to humanize displays and make them child friendly.

IF YOU HAVE ANY OF THE ITEMS LISTED BELOW TO DONATE OR HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT: MARGARET LEBLOND, PHONE: (231) 264-8984 or E_MAIL: president@elkrapidshistory.org

Donations are tax deductible; a form will be provided upon request. The Museum's Exhibits Committee is grateful for all donations received!

EXHIBIT WISH LIST:

Desk or mantle clock (in working order please)

Life size fake food (plastic or wax only)

Pieces of heavy scrap leather (not strips)

1940's or earlier small camping items

Large rag rug

Men and boy's clothing circa 1880 – 1920

Swimming shoes circa 1900 – 1920

Old fishing reel and a few old lures

½ inch diameter china buttons (for children's clothing)

Indian trade blanket

Old bait box

Mannequins (especially children)

Museum Gift Shop "Annex" - Opens May 1, 2006 - 7 Days A Week



Visit our booth in the Harbor Antique Mall
151 River St, Elk Rapids, MI 49629
In Historic Downtown Elk Rapids
(Corner of River and Cedar Streets)

Featuring: Local History Books, Vintage Photographs & Newspapers, Cards, CD's, and Cemetery Records

The Museum Gift Shop: "Where The Perfect Present Is The Past!"