In 1871 Willard C. Sheldon discovered a fine flow of sparkling water charged with minerals on the northwest corner of Washington Ave. and Third St. This attracted much attention and wonderful “cures” were reported. The waters were recommended chiefly for the relief of diseases of the abdomen. It was said that the water was so heavily charged with magnetism that a common penknife held in a flowing stream for a few minutes would become sufficiently magnetized so as to attract steel. A large building with the look of a “sanitarium” was built immediately to attract people who wished to “take the waters.” The building was taken down to make way for the new post office in 1905, which was razed and replaced in 1970 by Security First Bank, now Fifth Third Bank.

In 1858 the Detroit and Milwaukee railroad came to Grand Haven and built a depot on Dewey Hill. Having the depot on the other side of the harbor made it difficult for passengers, luggage, and freight to get to Grand Haven. The people of Grand Haven voted to pay $52,000 to build a bridge from Ferrysburg to Grand Haven. The Grand Trunk depot was built and opened in 1870. In 1958, 100 years after the rail reached Grand Haven, the last passenger train left the depot. Freight trains continued to use the station until 1966. The city acquired the deserted building in 1967 and, in 1972, the Tri-Cities Historical Museum occupied the building. The building became the transportation museum when the museum moved to its present location, 200 Washington Ave. (Michigan Historic Site No. 785)

The Brass River
Between the Chamber of Commerce and the Tri-Cities Historical Museum, is the Brass River and Sundial. They were dedicated at the Grand Haven Sesquicentennial in 1984. The brass insets and labor was contributed by the Grand Haven Brass Company. You can track the Grand River and its tributaries from Grand Haven to the point of origin, near Jackson. The Grand River is the longest river in Michigan and measures almost 260 miles in length.
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The home of Great Lakes Captain William R. Loutit was built at the northwest corner of Washington Ave. and Fourth St. in 1894. It was three stories high, with large rooms, high ceilings, multiple fireplaces, a ballroom, game room, and living quarters for the servants. The property was sold to the Sun Oil Company, who tore it down around 1950 to make room for a gas station. The service station was razed in July 1999, to make room for the Grand Haven Bank.
400 Block of Washington Avenue: Central Park
Central Park was the original location of the municipal cemetery. In 1883 the bodies were relocated to the new Lake Forest Cemetery on Lake Ave. The city park board, the Grand Haven Women's Club and the Garden Club placed sod around the park, planted shrubs, and paved walkways. The park's first fountain was purchased in 1901; however, the fountain was later replaced by a fountain that was originally located at the W.C. Sheldon's Magnetic Mineral Springs.

20 South Fifth Street: Nathaniel Robbins House
In 1900 Nathaniel and Esther (Savidge) Robbins built this house at a cost of $25,000, an extravagant sum in those days. The home is a Classical Revival design. Roman trim and Greek symmetry are evident inside and out. Of special note are the hand-carved mahogany doors, leaded-glass windows, classic columns, and other fine details. The three-story residence was built from the finest lumber available—not too difficult to come by, since Mrs. Robbins belonged to a Spring Lake family well established in the lumber business.

414 Washington Avenue: Ottawa County Courthouse
The present County Building, dedicated on September 29, 1965, was preceded by a post-beaux style structure, built in 1884. That majestic four-story Courthouse, with a lofty, crowning cupola, was an immediate landmark. The bold stone and brick architecture with large stone steps leading up to the entry lent a commanding presence. In its stately dignity the Court House was one of the most photographed buildings in Ottawa County. In the early 1960s the County Board of Supervisors made plans to build a new County Court House. The regal veteran met the wreckers' ball in 1964.

224 Washington Ave: Culter House Hotel
In 1871 Dwight Culter built the Culter House Hotel on this site. This majestic five-story building, done in the Second Empire Style was one of the finest around, ranking among the most popular in the state. It had steam heat, a steam-driven elevator, hot and cold running water, and gaslights. The disastrous fire of October 1, 1889 completely destroyed the hotel along with 50 other business and homes in the downtown area. Culter lost both his home and the hotel. A second, smaller, less ornate Culter House Hotel rose from the ashes in 1890, parts of which are still visible today.

508 Washington Avenue: Dr. Arend VanderVeen House
Dr. Arend VanderVeen and his family were the first residents of this early 1870s Italian Villa-style home. Dr. VanderVeen was nicknamed the “boy surgeon” for his service as a young man in the Civil War; he continued to practice medicine in Grand Haven after the war. The woodwork throughout the house was white pine. In line with the steps leading to the porch, was an imposing front entrance of glass-paneled double doors. These opened into a central hall and a magnificent stairway. The balustrade and newel post were made of black walnut. Originally, there were two living rooms separated by folding doors, which permitted expansion into one large room for festive occasions.

508 Franklin Street: First Presbyterian Church
The First Presbyterian Church was incorporated on May 10, 1849 with the Rev. William Ferry as the first president. Church leaders in 1855 laid a cornerstone for the first church at approximately 212-216 Washington St. In 1872 members of the church approved the purchase of the southeast corner of Franklin Ave. and Fifth St. In the fall of 1885 the church edifice moved from Washington St. to the new site. The church was completely remodeled in 1911 with the removal of a tower and an added vestibule.

300 Washington Avenue: Bank Robbery
On Friday, August 18, 1933, the Grand Haven Peoples Bank (now Chase Bank) was robbed by Jimmy “Baby Face” Nelson, Edward Bentz, Chuck Fisher, Earle Doyle, Tommy Carrol, and the getaway driver, Freddy. The five men entered the bank and demanded money. The bank teller triggered the alarm, which rang at the police station and at Ed Kinkema’s furniture store. Kinkema grabbed a shotgun and ran outside. When the getaway driver saw Kinkema, he raced out of town. As the robbers were exiting the bank and using employees as shields, a gun fight ensued. In the confusion, Ted Bolt, bank vice-president, and Kinkema grabbed one of the gunmen, Earle Doyle, who was the only member of the gang to be positively identified. Doyle stood trial in Ottawa County and was given a life sentence. Ed Bentz, was apprehended in New York in 1936 for another robbery, and during his stay in prison he identified the other five men involved in the robbery.