

Explore the Riverfront District

The City of Grand Haven's Historic Conservation District Commission invites you to take a step back in time as you explore the Riverfront District.

Along your journey you will become acquainted with the area bound on the south by Jackson Street and Harbor Drive, on the north by the Grand River and the south channel, on the east by Second Street, and on the west by the end of the south pier head. Many of the railroad and shipping associated industries were located in this district.

Today, the district contains many of today's municipal parks, retail shops, Waterfront Stadium, the Musical Fountain and the boardwalk. Locals and visitors come in droves to Grand Haven to enjoy a host of events and activities held along the waterfront throughout the year, but summer is certainly peak season. The Grand Haven Coast Guard Festival has been an event held on the waterfront since 1924 (escalating in 1937). The City of Grand Haven was named Coast Guard City, USA in 1999.

This self-guided walking tour can begin at any point on the map. Parking and public restrooms are designated on the map.

For more information about the history of this area, visit:

Tri-Cities Historical Museum

200 Washington Avenue
Grand Haven, MI 49417
tri-citiesmuseum.org

Loutit District Library

407 Columbus Avenue
Grand Haven, MI 49417
loutitlibrary.org

Grand Haven City Hall

519 Washington Avenue
Grand Haven, MI 49417
grandhaven.org

About this Brochure

This walking tour was arranged by the Grand Haven Historic Conservation District Commission. We would appreciate your feedback. For a current listing of board members, visit grandhaven.org or you may contact a commission representative by calling the Grand Haven Building and Planning Office at 616-847-3490.

You are also welcome to attend the Grand Haven Historic Conservation District Commission meetings to ask questions or share information. Meetings take place on the third Thursday of the month at 5:00 p.m., at Grand Haven City Hall, 519 Washington Avenue, Grand Haven, MI.

Sources: In The Path Of Destiny, 2007
David H. Seibold, D.D.S.

Historic photos provided by,
Tri-Cities Historical Museum 2014©

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City of Grand Haven

Historic

RIVERFRONT DISTRICT

Historic Conservation District

Self-Guided

Walking Tour



Photo By Mary A. Snedeker

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Then & Now

See if you can match these present day photos with the numbered historic descriptions from inside this brochure.



Answer: #2



Answer: #1



Answer: #3



Answer: #5



Answer: #7



Answer: #4



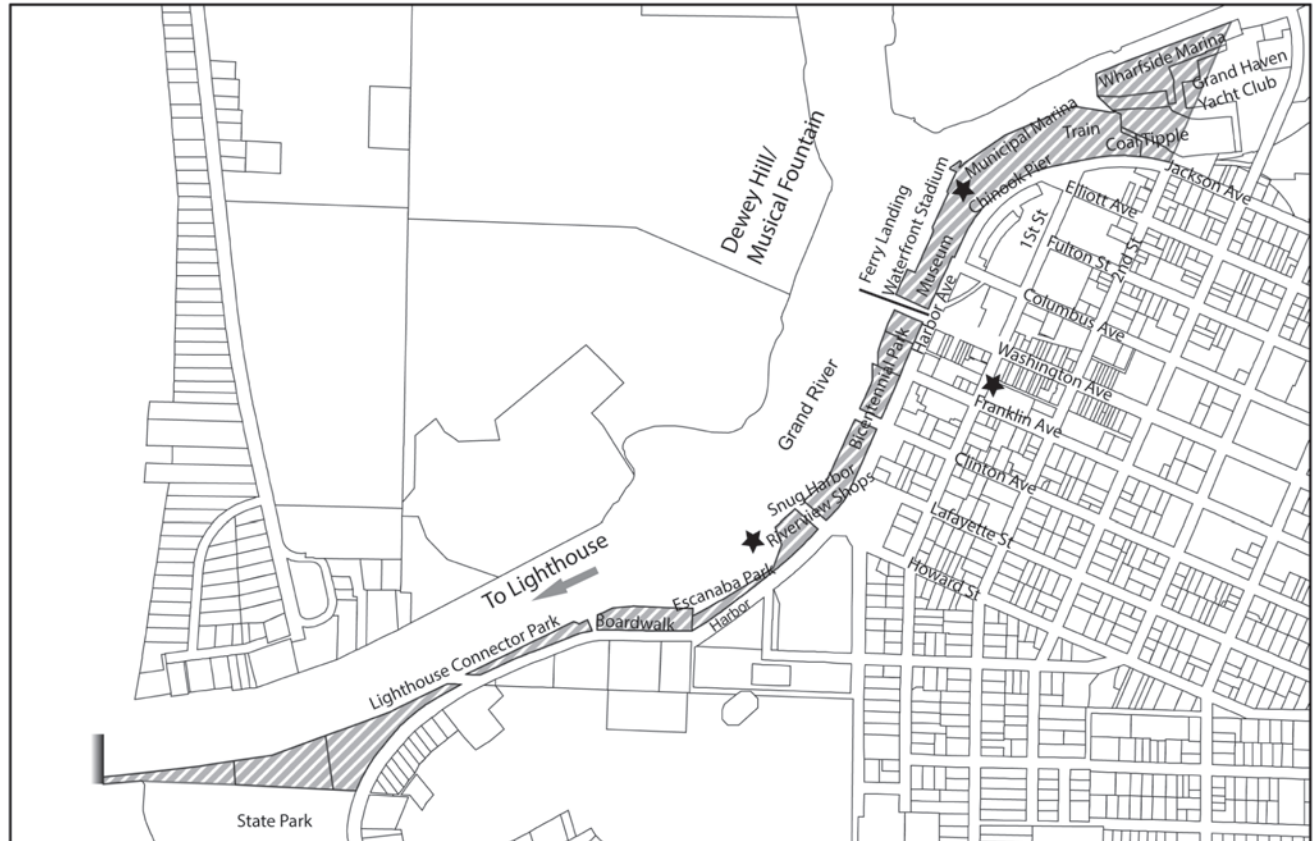
Answer: #6

HISTORIC RIVERFRONT DISTRICT

Historic Conservation District

Self-Guided Walking Tour

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Legend

- Parcel Map
- RiverFront

★ Restrooms

River Front Historic District





Wharfside Marina & Grand Haven Yacht Club

Prior to 1869 the area around what is now called the Grand Haven Yacht Club/Wharf Marina was mostly swampland. The water inlet in this area was both longer and wider until local saw mills filled this swampy area with saw dust. The Detroit-Grand Haven-Milwaukee Railroad owned seven acres around this portion of waterfront; they hauled in sand from the local dunes and utilized this area for a switching yard and transfer point.

In 1956 Roland Beyer started Beyer's Marina along the south channel and used the slogan "Close to city proper and ease to Lake Michigan."

Bill & Hardy Bedford purchased the property in 1965. They dredged out the Basin increasing the marina to 151 slips and renamed the marina "Wharf Marina."

In 1987 individual slips were sold to boat owners and today this portion of the marina is named "The Grand Haven Yacht Club."

The Wharf Marina is still in business under new ownership and offers boat sales, repairs and in/out service and storage.



Chinook Pier, Coal Tipple, Train, Museum & Waterfront Stadium

Chinook Pier Park opened in 1987 along the south channel. In the years immediately before and after the turn of the century, the railroads were a major part of life in Grand Haven. The first train line arrived in the City in 1858. In 1925, during the period when steam engines were the primary power sources for trains, the 350-ton concrete coal tipple on Harbor Avenue was used to store coal and load it into the coal bins of the trains that came to Grand Haven. There was once a turntable, engine house, freight warehouse, coal hopper, car ferry dock, an ice house and a 50,000 gallon water tower (cement footings still exist) all located in this area.

In 1994 the Coal Tipple was placed on the Grand Haven Historical Register as a landmark. In the early 1980s, the City of Grand Haven sought a steam locomotive (Pere Marquette Engine #1223) to go with the caboose display. Engine 1223 was placed near the Tipple at the former Grand Trunk Western freight yard and car-ferry terminal. This park is located along the beautiful boardwalk, close to the City marina and charter boat slips. Additional attractions now include a fish cleaning station, a Boy Scout Statue, a playground, mini-golf and picnic tables. The Grand Haven Farmer's Market also occurs in the parking lot here from May through October.



Ferry Landing & One South Harbor

Ferry Landing, located at the foot of Washington Avenue between the Depot Museum and the Chamber of Commerce, is the approximate site of Rix Robinson's original dwelling and fur trading post

(Rix Robinson 1789-1875). It is also the approximate spot where Rev. William Ferry arrived on November 2, 1834 and where his family spent the first winter of 1834-35.

A building was erected in the 1890s to serve as the ticket office for Nat Robbins's Goodrich Steamship Line. Over the years, several other businesses had an office at this address, including Harbor Industries, which was purchased in 1946 by Henry T. Parker, who saved the building that once housed the Robbins Ticket Office.

In the 1980s the Loutit Foundation bought this and other properties along the river to improve the appearance of the waterfront. In 1982 the building was turned over to the City. The City later agreed to the sale of the building but with one caveat, that the integrity of the old Robbins Ticket Office be preserved. In 1985 the Chamber of Commerce moved into the building from One Washington Avenue to One S Harbor (across the street).

Between this building and the former Grand Trunk Depot are the Brass River and sundial, dedicated at the Grand Haven Sesquicentennial in 1984. The brass insets and labor, contributed by Grand Haven Brass Company, track the Grand River and its tributaries from its mouth at Grand Haven to the point of origin, near Jackson. The Grand River itself measures almost 260 miles in length, making it the longest riverway in Michigan.



Municipal Marina, Bicentennial Park, Snug Harbor & Riverview Shops

Municipal Marina

Grand Haven is a favorite destination for boaters and sailors. The first docks with 54 slips were built along the Grand River, north of the Waterfront stadium, in the late 1950s. A Chicago publication, in 1959, referred to the Grand Haven Harbor as the "Riviera of the North," in reference to Grand Haven becoming the largest pleasure boat harbor on the Great Lakes. In 1984, the marina added 16 new slips for the charter fishing boats.

Bicentennial Park

Grand Haven grew up along the river. Bicentennial Park extends along the riverfront from Franklin to Clinton Street. The park was dedicated in the summer of 1976 during the nation's bicentennial celebration. During the dedication, a time capsule was buried in the park with a second one being buried in 1984. One of the main features of the park is the 20-foot tall, 22-foot wide stainless steel sculpture "Starboard Tack," dedicated in 1984. The park is the perfect place to watch the musical fountain, see the boats and enjoy the beautiful scenery.

Snug Harbor/Riverview Shops

311 South Harbor Drive

This building was first known as Snug Harbor Tavern in 1955, followed by Guisseppi's Pizza in 1970 and, then, a pet shop. In 1978 Lakeshore Floral began business at this address. By 1981 the Dansk Kro Restaurant opened. In 1990 Steve Loftis and Tom Haviland bought the Dansk Kro and reopened it as the Snug Harbor. The space is leased from the City of Grand Haven.



Escanaba Park

Escanaba Park is owned by the Army Corps of Engineers and is leased to the City.

Revetment work in 1857 formed what became known as the "Government Pond" or "Government Basin." These first revetment diggings were placed

to narrow and improve the channel, as well as halt the erosion at the bend in the river, known as "The Lower Diggings." The east basin was kept deep enough to moor ships, but waters in the west were shallow to the point of being unusable, so it was used as a dumping ground for dredging material, filling up more and more as years went on.

Commander John Kelly was commander of the Coast Guard Tenth District (1930-1933), which had headquarters in Grand Haven. He dreamed of turning the waste area on the west end into a landing, ideal for Coast Guard vessels. Working with the Corps of Engineers and the City, he was able to see his dream realized.

The Cutter Escanaba arrived in December of 1932, when the landing was nearly completed, but Kelly would never get to see the finished product. He died one month before the landing was completed.

The embarkment was finally finished in December of 1933. It was dedicated Kelly Memorial Park, after the man who had put so much work into creating it; the name was retained for 16 years.

During World War II, the Escanaba was called into the war on convoy duty in the North Atlantic. On June 13, 1943, she sunk following a huge explosion aboard, with the loss of 101 of the 103 person crew. News of the sinking was a great loss for the people of Grand Haven. The aftermath of this event, such as the memorial service for the Escanaba's crew, fundraising for Escanaba II, and the recovery and placement of the Escanaba's mast (in what was still Kelly Memorial Park) were some of the first occurrences that would eventually lead to the City of Grand Haven being designated as Coast Guard City U.S.A.

It was during the 1949 Coast Guard Festival Memorial Service that Mayor Martin Boon made the announcement that Kelly Memorial Park was going to be renamed Escanaba Memorial Park in commemoration of the World War II loss of the Escanaba and it's 101 crewmen.



Boardwalk

& Lighthouse Connector Park

Riverfront improvements have been continuous since the debut of the "Whitey" White Water Thrill Show in 1957 and the Musical Fountain in 1963. In 1984, our city leaders combined ambitions with the Corps of Engineers who was working on a \$3.5 million south pier and river revetment project. The Boardwalk was spontaneously supported by the public where the donor's names appear on a large metal plaque placed along the walk, which was later renamed Lighthouse Connector Park. Residents continue to support the maintenance by funding the walkway where donor's names are engraved on the individual bricks.



State Park

The Grand Haven State Park (popularly known as The Oval) was originally a 35-acre public beach owned by the City and purchased for \$1,000. In 1920, 22 acres closest to the pier was deeded from the City to the State for \$1.00 for use as a State Park, keeping the acreage south of the state park, adjacent to the historic Highland Park as City Beach. Tenting was the most popular mode of roughing it. After WW II trailers became more sophisticated and self-contained and, in time, were replaced by large, self-propelled motor homes. Perennially, Grand Haven State Park's attendance is rated second only to Holland State Park.