

How to use the map

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:

The Loutit District Library

407 Columbus Avenue
Grand Haven, MI 49417
www.loutitlibrary.org

Grand Haven City Hall

519 Washington Avenue
Grand Haven, MI 49417
www.grandhaven.org

Tri-Cities Historical Museum

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

Historic photos provided by the
Loutit District Library

This walking tour was arranged by the Grand Haven Historical Conservation Commission (GHHCC). We would appreciate your feedback.

You may contact the GHHCC representative by calling the Grand Haven Building and Planning Office at 616-847-3490

You are also welcome to attend GHHCC board meetings to ask questions or share information. GHHCC meetings take place at the Grand Haven City Hall, on the third Thursday of the month at 5:00 pm.

For a listing of current board members please visit: www.grandhaven.org



Self-Guided Historic Walking Tour of Downtown Grand Haven

Sponsored by
**The Grand Haven
Historic
Conservation
District
Commission**

1

1 South Harbor Drive: Rix Robinson Trading Post



This site, originally, was the location for Rix Robinson's fur trading post and warehouse.

Robinson was the best known fur trader on the Grand River and one of the most influential among the Indians.

In the 1890s another building was erected on this site to serve as the ticket office for Nathaniel Robbins's Goodrich Steamship Line. Ships sailed daily to Chicago, Milwaukee, and other Great Lakes ports. Throughout the years, there were many businesses at this location; such as Peel Brothers, Trucking, City Cab Company, and Harbor Industries. During the 1970s the Loutit Foundation was buying property along the river to improve the appearance of the waterfront. They purchased the building and turned it over to the city. In 1982 the city agreed to the sale of the property with one caveat, that whatever destruction or construction of the building, the integrity of the old Robbins Ticket Office was to be preserved. In 1984, the Grand Haven Chamber of Commerce moved into the old building.

2

The Brass River

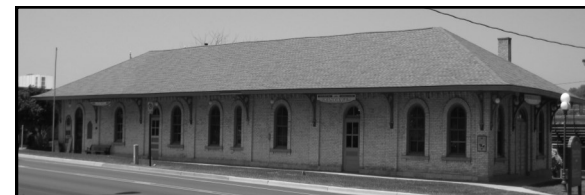
Between the Chamber of Commerce and the Tri-Cities Historical Museum, is the Brass River and Sundial. They were dedicated at the Grand Haven Sesquicentennial in 1984. The brass insets and labor was contributed by the Grand Haven Brass Company. You can track the Grand River and its tributaries from Grand Haven to the point of origin, near Jackson. The Grand River is the longest river in Michigan and measures almost 260 miles in length.



3

1 North Harbor Drive: The Grand Trunk Depot

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)



4

233-235 Washington Ave.: W.C. Sheldon Magnetic Mineral Springs

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.



5

333 Washington Av. : Loutit House

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 1959 to make room for a gas station. The service station was razed in July 1999, to make room for the Grand Haven Bank.



6

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.



7

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. When a problem arose while the doctor was away, his wife, Kate, would enter the rooftop tower with candles in hand to alert the doctor. The candles could be seen from anywhere in town.



8

20 South Fifth Street: Nathaniel Robbins House

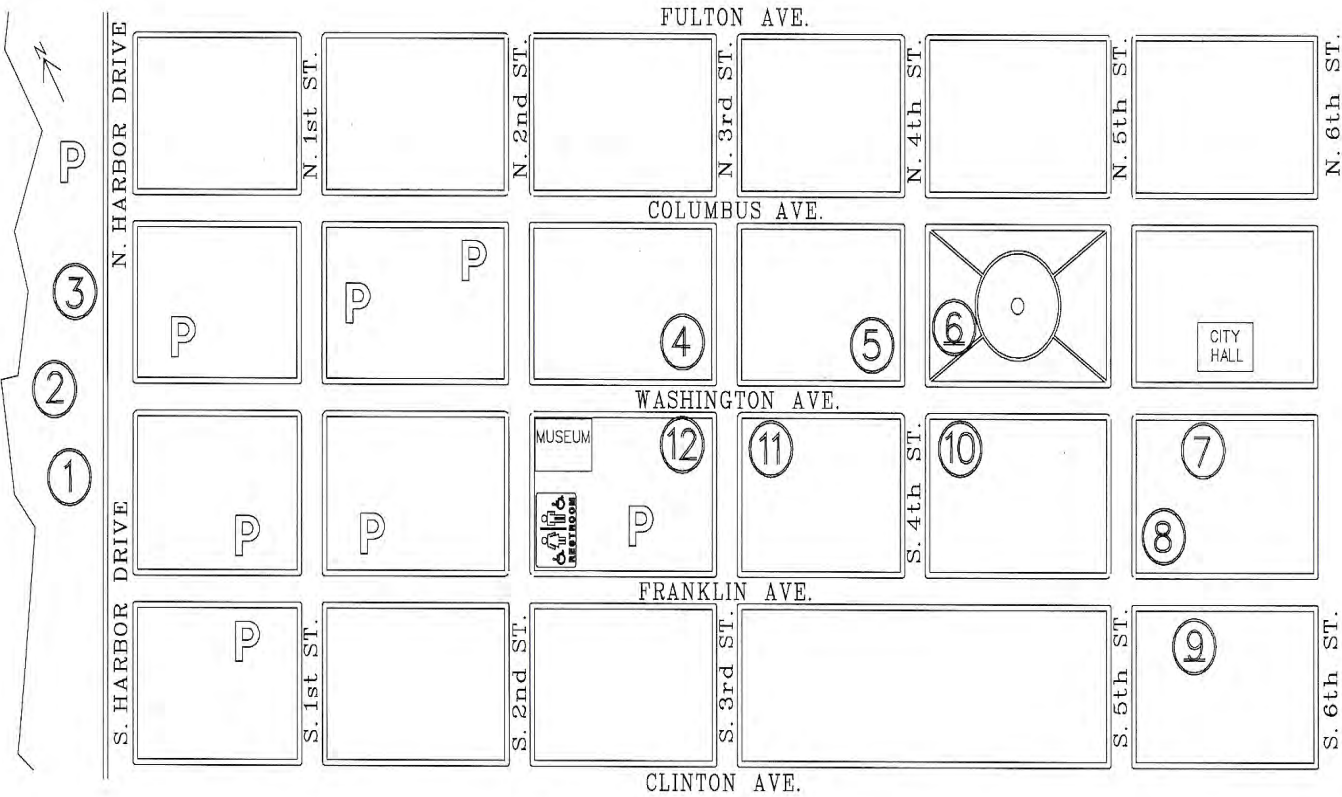
In 1900 Nathaniel and Esther (Savidge) Robbins built this house at a cost of \$25,000, an extravagant sum in those days. The home is a Classical Revival design. Roman trim and Greek symmetry are evident inside and out. Of special note are the hand-carved mahogany doors, leaded-glass windows, classic 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.



9

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. On July 4, 1954, ground was broken for a new church sanctuary. Seventeen months later, the congregation approved an expenditure of \$45,000 for a series of stained glass windows for the sanctuary. The windows represented scenes from the New and Old Testaments, worldwide religious movements, and local history. The windows are well preserved and can still be viewed outside and when you enter the church's sanctuary.



10

414 Washington Avenue: Ottawa County Courthouse

The present County Building, dedicated on September 29, 1965, was preceded by a post-bellum style structure, built in 1894. That majestic four-story Court House, 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. The Ottawa County Building was dedicated September 29, 1965.



11

224 Washington Ave: Culter House Hotel

In 1871 Dwight Cutler 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.



12

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.

