

Cross Village Historic Walking Tour

Introduction

Welcome to Cross Village, one of the oldest continuously inhabited communities in Michigan. Cross Village was first known as Waganakisis, the Ottawa word for “crooked tree”. Around 1830 Cross Village name was changed to Old L’Arbre Croche; then in 1847 its name was referred to as “La Croix (French for the cross) until 1875 when it became Cross Village.

The Historic Walking tour was created to provide a brief historical account of several significant sites in the village. Use the QR code below and your smart phone to access a map of Cross Village identifying 10 historic sites. The additional code provides important historical information for sites without markers

This walking tour will also provide opportunities to imagine what it would have been like after the glaciers melted, before European settlers arrived and in the late 1880s/early 1900s when Cross Village as a bustling town. Enjoy exploring our village.

Begin your tour of Cross Village at the Historical Marker located in the grassy park with the large white cross; there are 8 historical sites.

1. Historic Marker – Cross Village

a. Our Geological Past

Looking towards Lake Michigan from the Cross, *imagine* what it would have been like during the last ice age, 12,500 years ago. Where you are standing the ice was a mile thick! After the glaciers melted, you would be on an underwater terrace in Lake Algonquin about 11,000 years ago. As the water levels receded, the nearly level land where Cross Village was built was once the sandy nearshore shallows of this ancient lake. Only gradually did the water levels fall to what we know now as Lake Michigan.

b. Original Settlers - a brief history

Now close your eyes and *imagine* what it would have been like many centuries ago, before the arrival of European and American missionaries, traders and settlers.

Imagine a forest so immense and thick that daylight could hardly touch the floor of the forest. This is how Alexis de Tocqueville, a French explorer, described his first encounters in the area.

The first known people who lived here were the Moscoutens, a Native American tribe whose name means, “The Little Prairie People”. Little is known about them, but it is thought they moved south or may have been displaced as by the end of the eighteenth century the Odawa became the dominant community in Cross Village.

The Odawa were auspicious farmers and their initial village on the shore grew steadily in numbers. A French traveller commented that one could walk along the coast 18 miles, from present day Cross Village to the north end of Little Traverse Bay, and never lose sight of at least one wigwam.

Much has been written about the Odawa people (see the Bibliography) – their lives were greatly impacted after the arrival of the French traders and Jesuit missionaries.

By 1763, after the Treaty of Paris, all lands held by the French were now in possession of the British. Around 1770, a smallpox epidemic killed almost half of the inhabitants of the Waganakisi village on the shore of Cross Village, but by 1781, the Odawa rebounded and with 750 residents, the Odawa chief moved the village from the shore to the bluff where present-day Cross Village is located.

Over the next century, many Odawa converted to Catholicism, important treaties were negotiated with the US government, the Odawa became part of the local workforce, and many bought back land previously taken. In 1994, the tribe achieved reaffirmation of its federal status and its right to self-government -they remain one of the few tribes in the US who were not displaced from their homeland and continue to be an important and vital part of the community in Emmet County.

Now walk up North Lakeshore Drive and cross the street to:

2. Redpath Memorial Presbyterian Church

The First Presbyterian Church was built on this site in 1890, but burned down in the fire that swept through Cross Village in 1918. The present church was designed by Earl Mead and rebuilt in 1921. It was renamed the Redpath Church in honor of Reverend John Redpath who preached at the church for many years until his death in 1926. Now the church has regular weekly services from Memorial Day to Labor Day each year.

Continue walking along North Lakeshore Drive.

Imagine what the village would have been like in the late 1800s/ early 1900s when Cross Village was one of the largest settlements in Northern Michigan – with booming lumber and fishing industries. There were over 50 houses, a post office, bakery, meat market, grocery and hardware stores and numerous other businesses, three hotels, three churches and two schools. Land speculators were advertising that it would be a ‘second Chicago’.

So why are there so few houses and businesses?

On September 28, 1918, disaster struck as a fire started in the Atwood Hotel. Fanned by high winds the fire destroyed the town, burning buildings on two sides of the main street to the ground. Three hundred people were made homeless. Only the Holy Cross Church survived.

Shortly after the Great Fire in Cross Village, the Flu pandemic hit Emmet County. By October 7, 1918, more than 2000 people were ill and 3 people had died. By October, 12, 1918, Petoskey set up an emergency Red Cross Hospital and soon after the Governor of Michigan closed down the State to help stop the spread of the flu. Many residents of Cross Village died in the pandemic. These tragic events in addition to the decline of the lumber industry marked the end of Cross Village as a bustling community.

3. Historic Marker - The Old School Bell for the Holy Cross Church

4. The Museum of L'Abre Croche History is located in the lower level of the marked building.

5. The Fr. Albert Langheim, OFM Parish Center. This building serves the Holy Catholic Church as a gathering place for church events and programs.

6. Historic Marker - Holy Cross Catholic Church

Retrace your steps on Lakeshore Drive, Turn Left on Oak Drive – From here a slight left will take you to one of the entrances to the Cross Village Nature Trail. [Click this text to bring up a brochure of the Nature Trail with a map.](#) You can visit the Nature Trail or:

Continue on the Walking Trail, turn right on Wadsworth Street

7. Historic Marker - Father Wykamp's Tomb

Continue on Wadsworth Street and turn Left at 3rd Street

8. Community Center (the Old Schoolhouse) 1875-1991, and Children's Play Area

The Cross Village District No 1 School served as the first public school in Emmet County with 14 students in attendance. Founder was Captain John Wagley and the first teacher was John S. Shurtleff. It was one of only 25 functioning one room schoolhouses in the country in 1979. Note the Schoolhouse Bell that was recently restored and mounted in the play area.

Continue on 3rd Street and turn left on Wadsworth Street

9. Town Hall

The Township Hall was moved from its original location in the Fr Weikamp's complex, originally serving as a schoolhouse. During Great Depression when the US faced grave economic peril, a federal relief program, the Indian Emergency Conservation Work (IECW) used the hall as a workshop for Native Americans who created beautiful arts and crafts - baskets, quill boxes and other artifacts. Today it serves an important function in the village as a center for various functions.

Continue on Wadsworth Street and turn right Brady Street

10. Historic Marker: Legs Inn

Probably the most famous landmark in Cross Village, Leg's Inn. Look at it carefully. Can you see why it might have been called Leg's Inn? Read the Historic Marker to find out more.

From Legs Inn turn right and then take the first right down Waterfront Drive to the Port of Cross Village. You will see an arrow to it in the upper lefthand corner of the map. It is a beautiful beach with boat access to the lake as well. Don't miss this wonderful part of our village.

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