

HISTORIC PROFILE

The following section provides a historical perspective of the Grand Traverse Commons from 1880 to 1968, including the construction of Building 50, the establishment of farm operations and the construction of the Arnell Engstrom Building.

1880 to 1968

The Traverse City State Hospital in its original state was a northern coastal moraine forest, typical of the region. The site falls more than 300 feet in elevation from the northwest corner to Kids Creek, along the east edge. Topography divides the site into generally four north-south zones which include a Lowland Zone, Midland Zone, a Wooded Slopes Zone and an Upland Zone (see figure 2.1).

Immediately prior to the purchase of the land for the Traverse City State Hospital, major portions of the lowland and midland zones were lumbered, while the steep slopes were left heavily wooded. Several springs originated on the site and drained to the creek on the east side of the property.

The site for the Northern Michigan Asylum (i.e., the Traverse City State Hospital) was purchased in 1882 and consisted of 339.9 acres, with two additional tracts of 45.4 and 110 acres recommended for additional purchase (see figure 2.2). According to a report of the Board of Commissioners, the advantages of the site and the rationale for the building included its proximity to town (for provisions and labor), seclusion, forests (for aesthetics and harvesting), and ample water supply.

Construction of the main facility was started in 1882 and completed in 1885. Dr. J.D. Munson was hired as the first medical superintendent for the Asylum which then had a patient population of 330. Initial activities related to the development of the site included ditching to improve drainage, stump clearing, and lumbering to prepare the areas for farm development. The framework for the development of the front lawn was started with street planting along Elmwood Avenue and Division Street.

Over the next 30 years, under the direction of Dr. Munson, the site had grown from the original 340 acres to over 600 acres and the initial building complex had grown to include 13 cottages, numerous support buildings, and an extensive working farm (see figure 2.3). The name of the facility changed

Kirkbride Plan - The design of the Traverse City State Hospital was influenced by the Kirkbride Plan. Published in 1851 by Thomas S. Kirkbride, it became the model for building hospitals for the mentally ill.

The Kirkbride approach to mental health care was based on the belief that nature and the surrounding environment was an essential part of the therapeutic process.

Kirkbride buildings are characterized by their “batwing” floor plan, Victorian architecture, and orientation to the sun and surrounding environment.

Building 50 is the last Kirkbride building standing in Michigan.



from the Northern Michigan Asylum to the Traverse City State Hospital. In 1916, a detailed map of the hospital, farm and grounds was developed. This map has served as the basis for each successive planning effort including the development of the 1994 District Plan.

The farm operations were an integral part of the hospital complex, providing therapeutic employment for able bodied patients and nourishing food for its staff and patients. Farm operations included such livestock as a large beef and dairy cattle herd, horses, hogs, and fowl. Crop operations included apple, peach and cherry orchards, vineyards and berry patches, and a full complement of garden crops, particularly potatoes which were a staple of the institution.

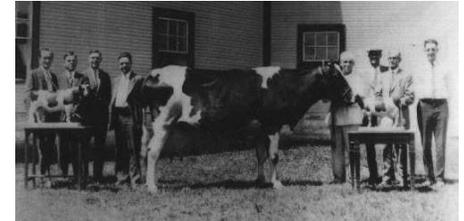
During this period, Dr. Munson paid particular attention to the development of the front lawn area for recreation and pleasure of the patients, including planting unusual tree species collected on his various travels throughout the country.

From 1916 to 1939, under the direction of Dr. Munson, the farm gardens, orchards, and fields prospered, and the champion cow herd became well renowned (see figure 2.4). In addition, his tree collection matured to adolescence and the “arboretum” image we know today began to materialize. Before his retirement in 1924, Dr. Munson helped to establish the James Decker Munson Hospital. The first building was constructed on the northern edge of the State Hospital property and leased until the hospital and the land it occupied was turned over to the City. Medical buildings 33, 35, and 39 (no longer remaining) were built on the original front lawn. These were the first depression-era buildings built on the site. Later, a dormitory for nurses was built east of Elmwood Avenue in what used to be a farm field.

The next 55 years saw the decline of the Traverse City State Hospital and the rise of other uses on the Grand Traverse Commons site. New approaches in psychiatric care, including drug therapy and family care programs returned patients back into the community. The expense of a large, antiquated and unsafe facility was no longer necessary. As the patient population decreased, so did the need for food production and the working farm was slowly cut back - ultimately ending in 1957.

During the State Hospital’s waning years some outmoded structures were replaced (see figure 2.5). The original power-plant was demolished and reconstructed south, to its present site. Most of the original barns were demolished and replaced with the present structures. Considered a fire hazard, the original administration core of Building 50 was demolished in 1963, and replaced with the current

Traverse Colantha Walker - “Colantha” was a Grand Champion cow who produced 200,114 pounds of milk and 7,525 pounds of butterfat over her lifetime at the hospital grounds. Her gravestone is located at the south end of Red Drive.



Picture Taken From: Traverse Colantha Walker Dairy Festival Facebook Page

Traverse City State Hospital - Postcard showing the original administration building which was demolished in 1963 and replaced with the current two-story building



two-story building. The Munson Medical Center complex expanded in the north to its present location. Its parking needs spilled into the Traverse City State Hospital grounds and the new parking lots expanded into the unused portions of the site, affecting portions of the old forested bluffs. The Grand Traverse Medical Care Facility, medical offices, and a drug rehabilitation center were added into areas adjacent to Munson Medical Center. The All Faiths Chapel was added on the front lawn in the 1960's.

In 1968, the Arnell Engstrom Children's Center (now the Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District facility) replaced the original special barns and orchard in the old farm area.

What was left of the original front lawn matured. Concern about maintaining the effect of the front lawn and building grounds in 1968, prompted the planting of major tree nurseries in the abandoned fields adjoining Kids Creek. These trees were planted to replace those declining on the grounds and have naturalized what originally were open fields. With the abandonment of the farm functions, wetland plant varieties took over fields and natural succession occurred along forested edges, fields and where orchards once stood.

This section provides a historical overview of the Grand Traverse Commons from 1968 to 2009, including the closing of the State Hospital, public efforts to preserve the main campus and the redevelopment of Building 50.

1968 to 2009

By 1973, the cottages and all portions of Building 50 (except the central modernized portion) were vacated. In 1978, community action resulted in the designation of a portion of the property (including 11 buildings) as a *Historic District* and placed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1980, the State of Michigan announced that it would demolish several buildings on the Commons grounds - prompting the Charter Township of Garfield and the City of Traverse City to establish *The Coalition for Logical Land Use*. The Coalition was charged with developing a strategy for the hospital's reuse and developing a lawsuit to halt the demolition of the buildings. At one point, local advocates literally forced themselves in front of the wrecking ball (stopping workers with equipment running), when the State unexpectedly sent a wrecking crew to demolish the buildings. Over the next nine years, local advocacy groups and public officials debated with the State as to the future intent and use of the site. In 1989, the entire hospital, whose patient load had once peaked at over 3,600 in 1966, but was then as low as 140, was closed by the State of Michigan.

Munson Medical Center Expansion - Parking Lot K.



Cottage Renovation - Cottage 29 undergoes renovation. Munson Medical Center is in the background.



Additional attempts by the State of Michigan to demolish the structures on the Grand Traverse Commons prompted a number of community efforts to preserve the property. In 1990, the City of Traverse City and the Charter Township of Garfield adopted the *Adaptive Reuse Feasibility Plan for the Traverse City State Hospital* (the Adaptive Reuse Plan) recommending the acquisition, preservation, restoration and redevelopment of the Grand Traverse Commons Property. After pursuing legislative changes at the State level, local officials established the Grand Traverse Commons Redevelopment Corporation (GTCRC) under Michigan's Urban Redevelopment Corporation Act (Public Act 250) to implement the plan, acquire the property and oversee its disposition and redevelopment.

In 1992, the State of Michigan agreed to sell large parcels of the property to the GTCRC for \$1.00. The GTCRC and City and Township officials also approved plans to demolish several non-historic buildings to make room for a parking deck and new long term nursing care facility (now the Pavilions). That year, the Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District (TBAISD) purchased, renovated and expanded the Arnell Engstrom Building - now home to administrative offices and a school. Grand Traverse County purchased several large parcels, including the historic barns and several non-historic houses and held the property until funds could be raised for keeping the land in public ownership.

In December of 1992, the GTCRC selected Kids Creek Development Company as the master planner and developer of the Grand Traverse Commons, to undertake its rehabilitation, redevelopment and adaptive reuse. Kids Creek Development Company initiated a considerable effort to develop a new Master Plan (*Grand Traverse Commons District Plan*) for the property which was ultimately adopted by the City and Township in 1994.

In 1993, the GTCRC and the State of Michigan, Department of Management and Budget reached agreement for disposition of the entire former Traverse City State Hospital facility and grounds. In addition, acting Governor Connie Binsfield signed enabling legislation authorizing the transfer of the former State Hospital property to the GTCRC, as well as to the City of Traverse City and the Charter Township of Garfield.

The *1994 Grand Traverse Commons District Plan* created administrative subareas which overlapped the City and Township jurisdictional boundary, creating a continuing need for intergovernmental

Building 50 - Building 50 is a quarter-mile long structure containing over 11 million bricks. To this date, it is unclear why the structure was named Building 50.



cooperation in the adaptive reuse of the site. After some time, apparently the enormity of the project and the uncertain feasibility of the project plan to be implemented, as adopted, overcame the Kids Creek Company, which declared bankruptcy and exited the project later that year. Subsequently, several potential master developers were considered by the GTCRC. However, their plans proved not to be financially feasible or were not consistent with the adopted redevelopment plan.

In 2001, *The Minervini Group*, a local development group, proposed a redevelopment plan that the community found acceptable. After holding several large public meetings, the Township and City agreed to allow additional project uses to make the deteriorated buildings more marketable. After a 12-month period in which The Minervini Group conducted a broad range of feasibility studies, they began to re-roof Building 50, the Chapel, and two cottages. Over the last eight years, The Minervini Group has renovated over 300,000 square feet of space within Building 50 and the adjacent buildings into a vibrant mixed use development, complete with retail shops, professional offices, residential condos, and a restaurant. The successful redevelopment of the historic buildings was given a substantial amount of financial assistance when it received Renaissance Zone designation in 1999 and 2002.

In 2003, the City and Township formed a Recreational Authority, under the Michigan Recreational Authorities Act (Public Act 321), and obtained funding through a millage permitted by a large majority vote of the residents of the two jurisdictions. The newly created Recreational Authority took over ownership, planning and the redevelopment of the historic Barns area at the south end of the Commons.

With many successful adaptive reuse projects realized and the distribution of properties for various uses mostly complete, the GTCRC recognized there was little need or resources available to support its continued existence and disbanded in 2006. To replace the oversight role of the GTCRC, the City of Traverse City and the Charter Township of Garfield agreed to establish the Grand Traverse Commons Joint Planning Commission, under the Joint Municipal Planning Act (Public Act 226). In 2008, the Joint Planning Commission applied for and received a service grant from the *Partnerships for Change Program* to develop a new, simplified Master Plan that preserves the tenets of the 1994 District Plan and a new zoning ordinance.

Building 50 - Over 300,000 square feet within Building 50 has been renovated into a vibrant mixed use development.

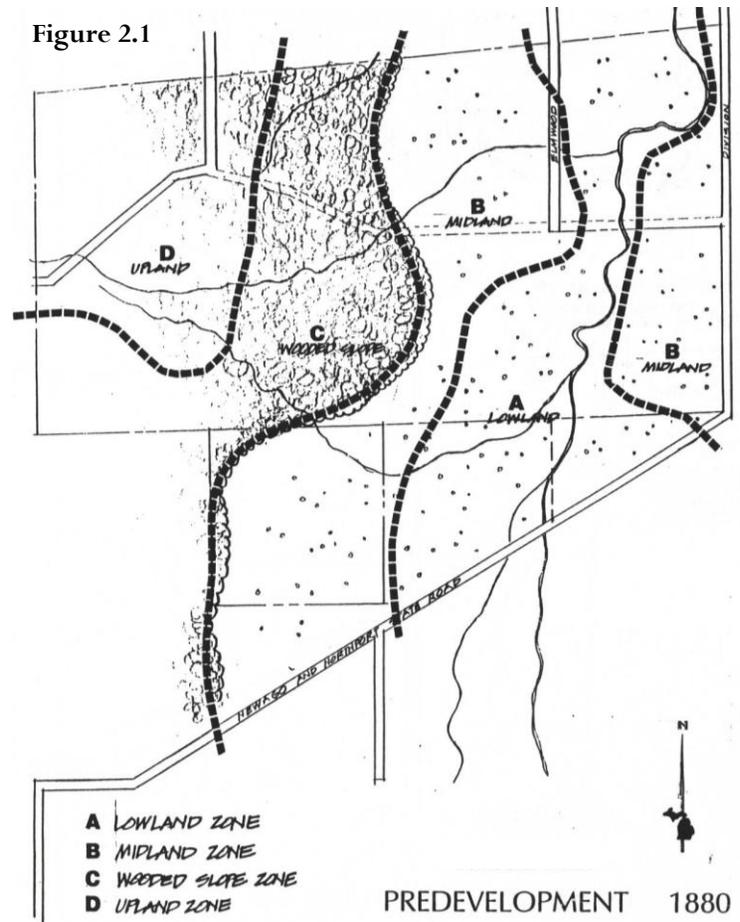


Photos provided by The Minervini Group

Historic Profile Timeline

Predevelopment - 1880

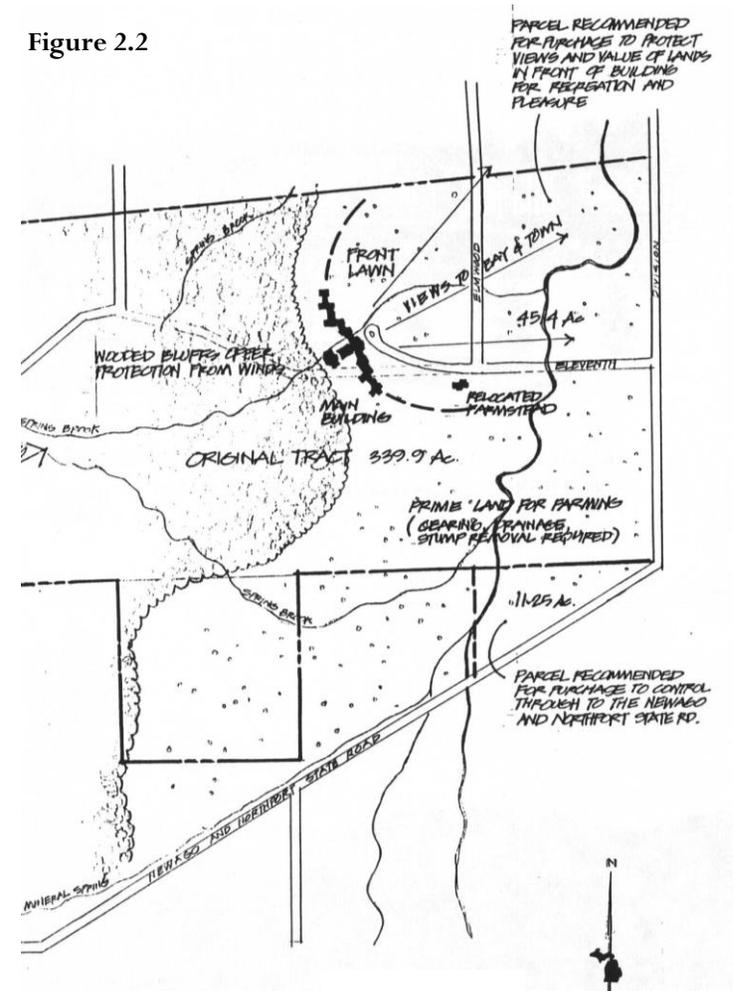
- In its original state, the site was a northern coastal moraine forest, typical for the region
- Topography divides site into four zones (A) Lowland (B) Midland (C) Wooded Slopes (D) Upland
- Major portions of the Lowland and Midland Zones were lumbered - steep slopes left alone
- 1882 - Report of the Board of Commissioners describes site as ideal location for hospital



Initial Development - 1882 to 1885

- 1882 - Site is purchased, consisting of 339.9 acres - Two additional tracts recommended for purchase
- 1882 - Construction of the main facility begins
- 1885 - Construction of main facility completed
- 1885 - Dr. J. D. Munson hired as first medical superintendent for Northern Michigan Asylum - patient population 330

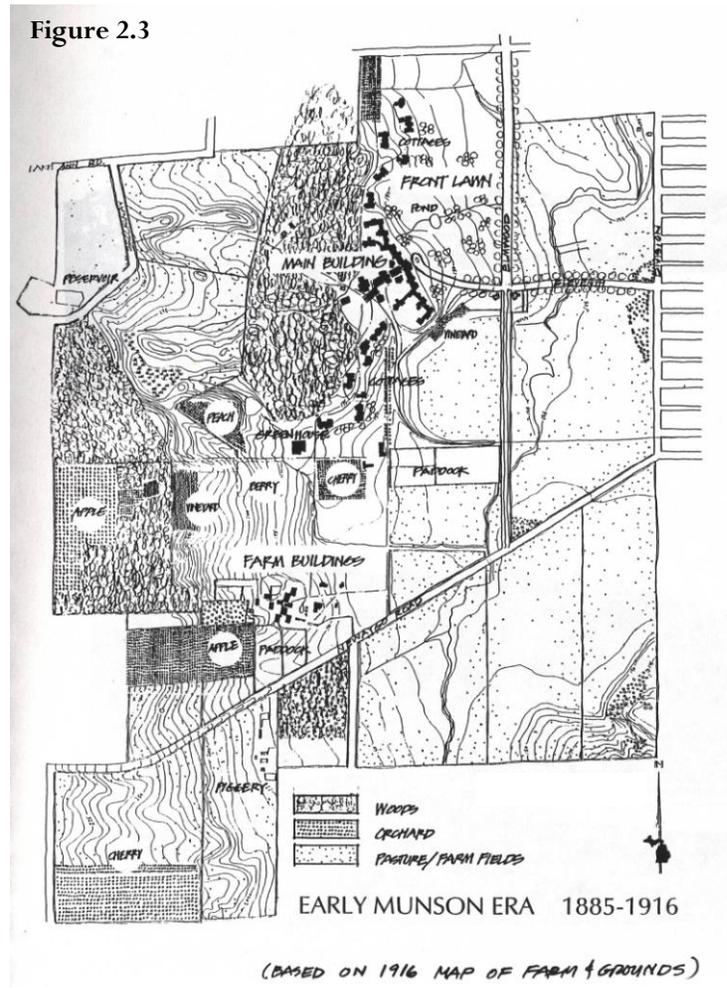
Figure 2.2



INITIAL DEVELOPMENT 1882-1885

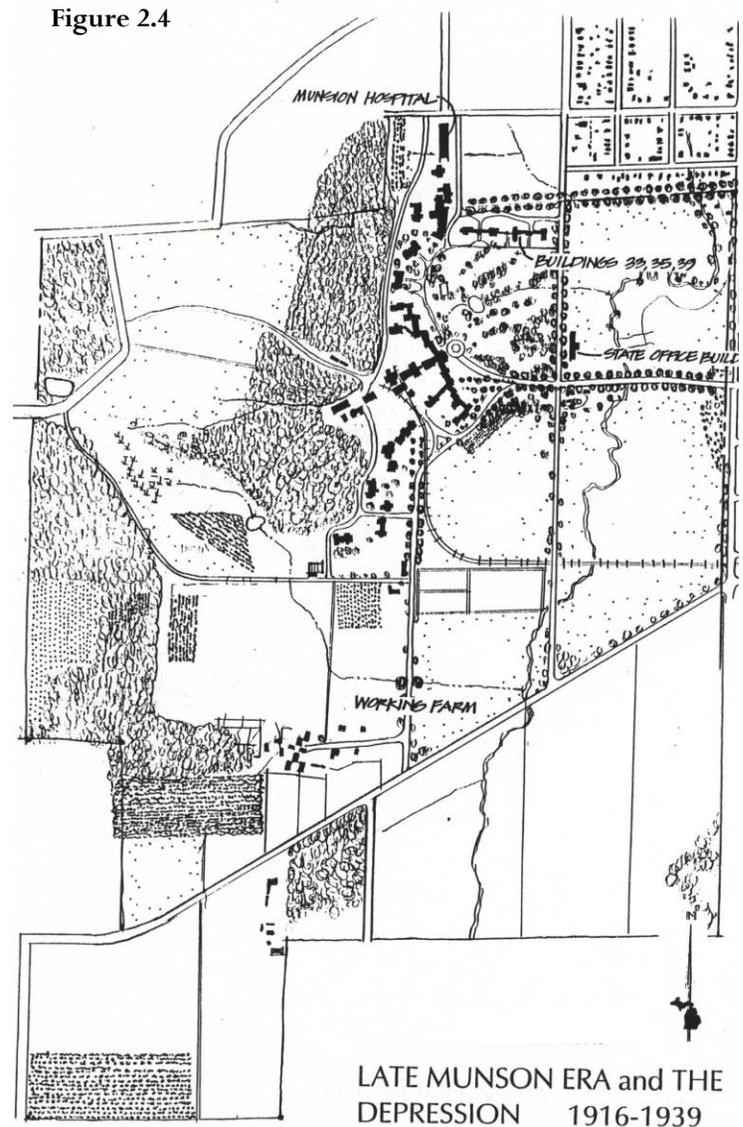
Early Munson Era - 1885 to 1916

- Initial building complex grows to include 13 cottages, numerous support buildings and working farm
- Initial site enlarged to 650 acres
- Name of facility changed from Northern Michigan Asylum to Traverse City State Hospital
- Front lawn begins to take shape - Dr. Munson plants unusual trees on front lawn and builds artificial lake
- 1916 - Benchmark year, detailed map of the hospital, farm and grounds developed



Late Munson Era and the Depression - 1916 to 1939

- 1924 - Dr. Munson retired
- Munson Hospital was established – first buildings constructed on northern edge of property and on portions of the original front lawn
- Dormitory for nurses (now the State Office Building) built on Elmwood Avenue
- Unique collection of trees planted by Dr. Munson mature and “arboretum” emerges



Post Munson Era - 1939 to 1980

- Decline of the Traverse City State Hospital and the rise of other uses
- 1957 - Working farm ended
- 1973 - Building 50 and adjacent cottages abandoned
- Original power-plant demolished and reconstructed at its present site
- New utility building was added
- Original barns were demolished and replaced with present structures
- 1963 - Original administration core tower of Building 50 was demolished and replaced with two-story building
- Munson Medical Center expanded
- All Faiths Chapel added
- 1968 - Arnell Engstrom Children's Center (now the Traverse Bay Intermediate School District Building) replaced the original barns and orchard in the old farm area
- 1980 - Traverse City State Hospital officially closes

Figure 2.5



THE MODERN ERA 1939-1994

Modern Era - 1981 to 2009

- 1989 - Formation of a redevelopment corporation under the Redevelopment Corporation Act (Act 250) to acquire the property and oversee its disposition and redevelopment
- 1990 - Adopted the Adaptive Reuse Feasibility Plan for the Traverse City State Hospital
- 1991 - Grand Traverse Commons Redevelopment Corporation was incorporated into the City of Traverse City and the Charter Township of Garfield
- 1992 - GTCRC selects Kids Creek Partners Limited Partnership as the master planner and developer
- 1993 - GTCRC and the State of Michigan, Department of Management and Budget reach agreement for disposition of the entire facility and grounds
- 1993 - Acting governor signed enabling legislation authorizing transfer of the former hospital property to the GTCRC, as well as the city and township
- 1994 - District plan developed
- 2001 - The Minervini Group, a local development group, proposes new redevelopment scheme
- 2003 - City and Township form joint recreation authority to redevelop the barns
- 2007 - Joint Planning Commission developed
- 2008 - Joint Planning Commission worked to draft new plan

