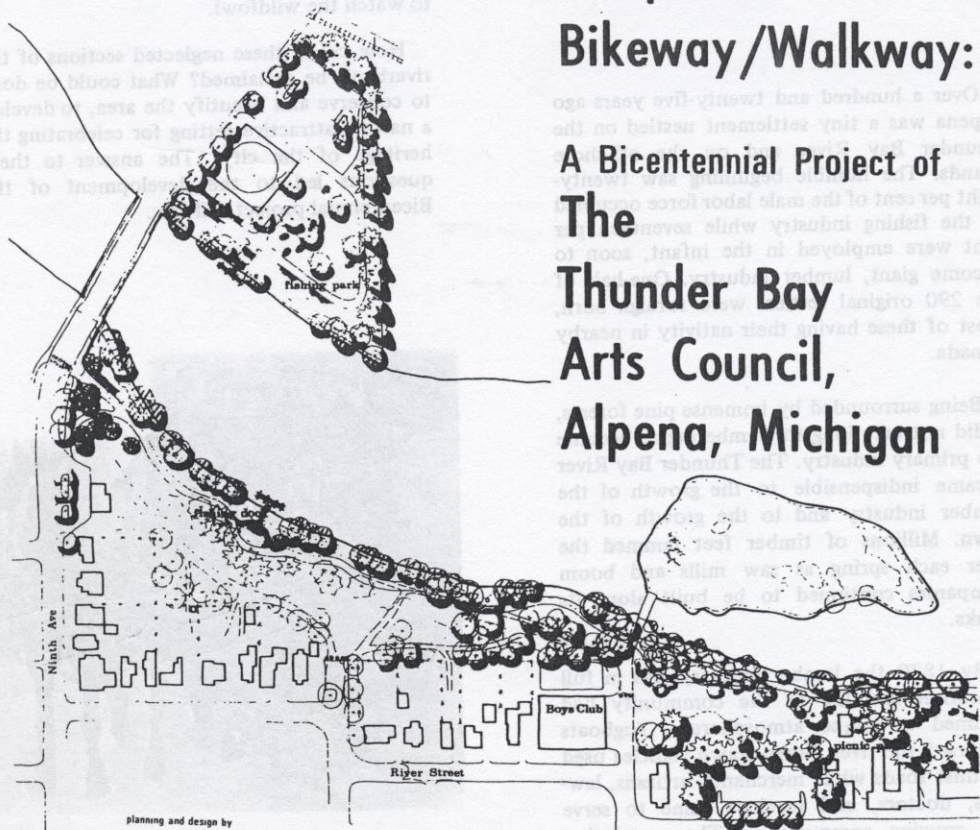


The Alpena Sculptured Bikeway/Walkway:

A Bicentennial Project of
The
Thunder Bay
Arts Council,
Alpena, Michigan



planning and design by
The
Pollack
Walker
Williams
Partnership
Ann Arbor, Michigan

A HERITAGE RECLAIMED

Over a hundred and twenty-five years ago Alpena was a tiny settlement nestled on the Thunder Bay River and on the off-shore islands. The humble beginning saw twenty-eight per cent of the male labor force occupied in the fishing industry while seventeen per cent were employed in the infant, soon to become giant, lumber industry. One-half of the 290 original settlers were foreign born, most of these having their nativity in nearby Canada.

Being surrounded by immense pine forests, it did not take long for lumbering to become the primary industry. The Thunder Bay River became indispensable to the growth of the lumber industry and to the growth of the town. Millions of timber feet jammed the river each spring as saw mills and boom companies continued to be built along its banks.

By 1870 the lumber industry was in full operation and life of the community had assumed a unique atmosphere. Tugboats traversed the river, horse-drawn vehicles used sawdust roads while merchants, artisans, lawyers, doctors, and teachers came to serve the growing community. The population swelled 800 per cent over the 1860 count, plus 144 citizens in the new settlement of Ossineke. The popular billet of the day was the boarding house. A total of thirty-one provided board and room for 640 citizens. However, almost every family had a boarder or two, a necessary provision for the needed lumber force.

As the years went by and the pine forests dwindled, other industries took over. Today the beauty and heritage of the river-centered city are preserved along only a few sections of the riverfront while the rest remains hidden beneath pavement, parking meters and neglect.

Yet the river is still the focal point of the city. People gather there to fish, to boat and to watch the wildfowl.

How could these neglected sections of the riverbank be reclaimed? What could be done to conserve and beautify the area, to develop a natural attractive setting for celebrating the heritage of the city? The answer to these questions led to the development of the Bicentennial project, BiPath .



PLANNING the IDEAL PATH

In May of 1974 the Thunder Bay Arts Council met to discuss ideas for a Bicentennial project. The Council agreed that such a project should be one of permanence rather than a one-time event; combine historical significance with future insight; and be something visually beautiful for everyone to enjoy. With these criteria in mind, the Council chose from several ideas the plan to build a sculptured walkway - bicycle path along the banks of the Thunder Bay River. To begin the planning they selected a sub-committee with Sally Park, chairperson; Jack Fitzgerald, easement procurement; Dick Boyce, legal counsel; Carlita Beltz, secretary and public relations; Jerry Dault, treasurer; Nancy Souden, historian and Stan Beck, ex-officio member.

The first decision of the sub-committee was to hire a professional architect to design the path. Inquiries were sent to various universities, and the University of Michigan responded with the suggestion that the Council employ Professor Peter Pollack as the landscape architect. Professor Pollack visited the area May 1, 1975 to plan the best possible route which would utilize existing features, provide alternatives in case easement or construction problems developed and provide for future expansion.

By taking aerial photographs Professor Pollack was able to see an over-all view, which he combined with detailed photographs of each section of the proposed path to pinpoint problem areas and assess existing facilities. Careful studies showed that certain areas were natural people-gathering spots, perfect places for mini-parks with sculpture, benches and bike racks. Professor Pollack compiled the information and submitted his design to the sub-committee.

The final design, incorporating the objectives of the committee, was to be considered the ideal but subject to modification if necessary. The path would begin at the mouth of the river at Bay View Park, extend along the river for a two and a-half mile stretch and end at the Wildfowl Sanctuary.



Eight mini-parks featuring flowering trees, shrubs and sculpture would be located in areas of easy access and general use. Parking meters would be replaced with trees and pavement with grass. The winding path would be eight feet wide to permit a safe, easy flow of pedestrians and bicyclists. The canoe launch already existing behind the college would be redesigned with steps and docking facilities. Professor Pollack's main concern, recurrent in the total design, was to provide a people-oriented path incorporating the necessary features to insure maximum use. Parking spaces for autos, benches and bike racks would be at strategic places, yet not interfere with the visual beauty of the path.

CONSTRUCTION BEGINS

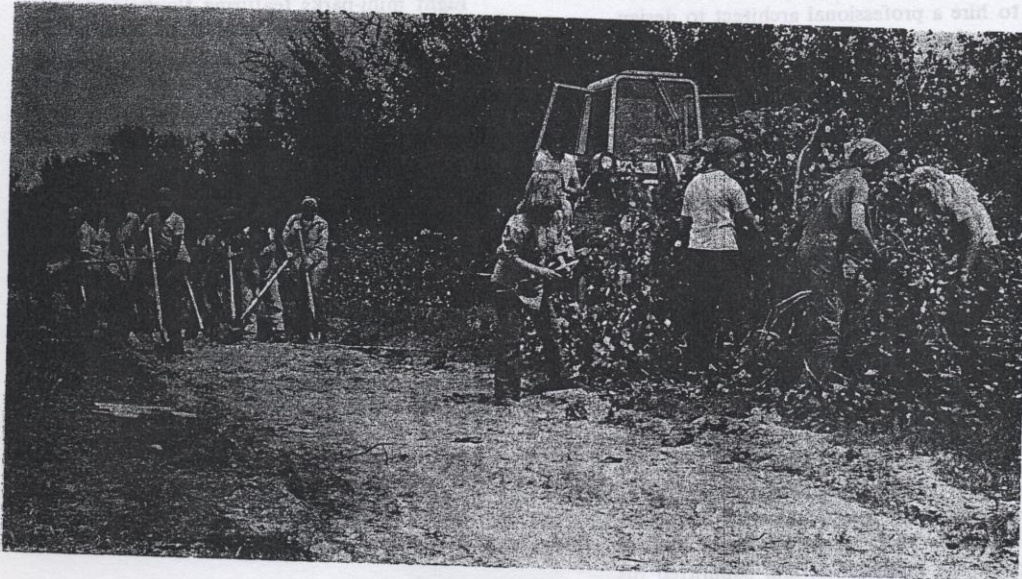
Now that the design had been submitted to and approved by the committee some immediate decisions had to be made. A realistic budget had to be worked out, funding appropriated, and easements obtained. Jack Fitzgerald and Dick Boyce contacted the property owners on the proposed route to discuss the granting of easements to the city. Beverly Bodem, chairperson of the Sculpture Committee, was chosen to obtain designs from sculptors that would be life size, durable and of historical significance. Ken Apsey, County Road Commissioner, agreed to oversee the construction of the path.

Volunteers and student workers hired under government programs undertook much of the actual construction job. Persons trained in concrete placing were asked to supervise that phase of the construction.

DEDICATING to the CITY

The granting of easements to the city brought a positive response from the majority of property owners along the route of the path. Two problems, however, did develop, both affecting the center section of the path. The senior citizens who reside in Riverview Apartments expressed concern that the planned mini-park on their property could result in noise and litter. Many senior residents said they would not oppose the path route if it went straight through their property with no stopping place for people to gather.

Another property owner whose riverfront land was up for sale felt that granting the easement could affect its saleability. Once this property is sold the new owners can be approached for approval. Both of these problems were resolved by developing a temporary alternative route using River Street.



On June 30, 1975 the City Council un-
animously voted to accept ownership of the
BiPath and to maintain the path after com-
pletion.

FUNDING the PROJECT

An itemized budget was carefully worked
out by the sub-committee. The estimated
total cost for the two and one-half mile
BiPath was \$225,000.00. Almost half of this
total would be needed for the concrete work
and labor and the rest would be used for
landscaping, sculpture and design.

Service organizations, businesses and indi-
viduals enthusiastically supported the BiPath
with donations of skill, time, labor, supplies
and funds:

BiPath Community Support

Thunder Bay Arts Council - Sponsor
Alpena City Council - Ownership and Main-
tenance
Alpena Bicentennial Commission - Recog-
nized Bicentennial Project and Publicity
Alpena County Road Commission - Resident
Engineer
Alpena Community College - Grant Prepara-
tion and Secretarial Help
Boy Scouts of America - Bridge Painting
Rotary Club - Construction of BiPath Portions
Optimist Club - Construction of BiPath Portions
Kiwans Club - Financial Contribution
Lions Club - Safety Signs
Audubon Club - Pamphlet
Besser Company - Paving Brick
6 + Landowners - Easements
Bike - A - Thon - Riders and Contributors
Phelps Collins Air Base - Heavy equipment
and Sand Fill
Michigan National Guard - Bridge Construction
Presque Isle - Aggregate
Alpena Savings Bank - Financial Contribution
First Federal - Financial Contribution
Besser Fund - Financial Contribution

The Michigan Council for the Arts granted
\$6,500.00 for the sculpture phase of the
project and the Michigan Bicentennial Com-
mission granted \$5,000.00. More than two-
thirds of the projected goal of \$225,000.00
was reached through these contributions and
grants.



COMMEMORATING the BICENTENNIAL

Police officer Russell Mainville, who was
in charge of the public schools' bicycle safety
program, sent hundreds of questionnaires to
the elementary schools in the area asking
that the students choose a name for the path
and give reasons for their choice. Over seven
hundred entries were turned in. Three stu-
dents from Lincoln School won with their
choice of "BiPath", bi representing bicenten-
nial and bicycle.



HISTORICAL SIGNS COMMITTEE

Dennis Bodem, Wes Law - Co-Chairpersons

PUBLICITY COMMITTEE

Chuck Wiesen - Chairperson
Sandy Hornyak - Newspaper
Betty Masters - Scrapbook
Marianne Moran - Bicentennial Publicity
Julie Spehar - Radio

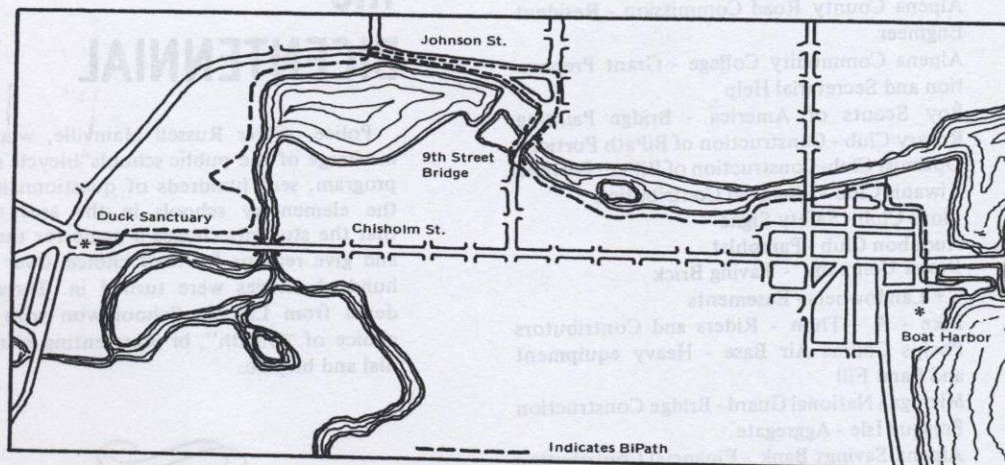
SCULPTURE COMMITTEE

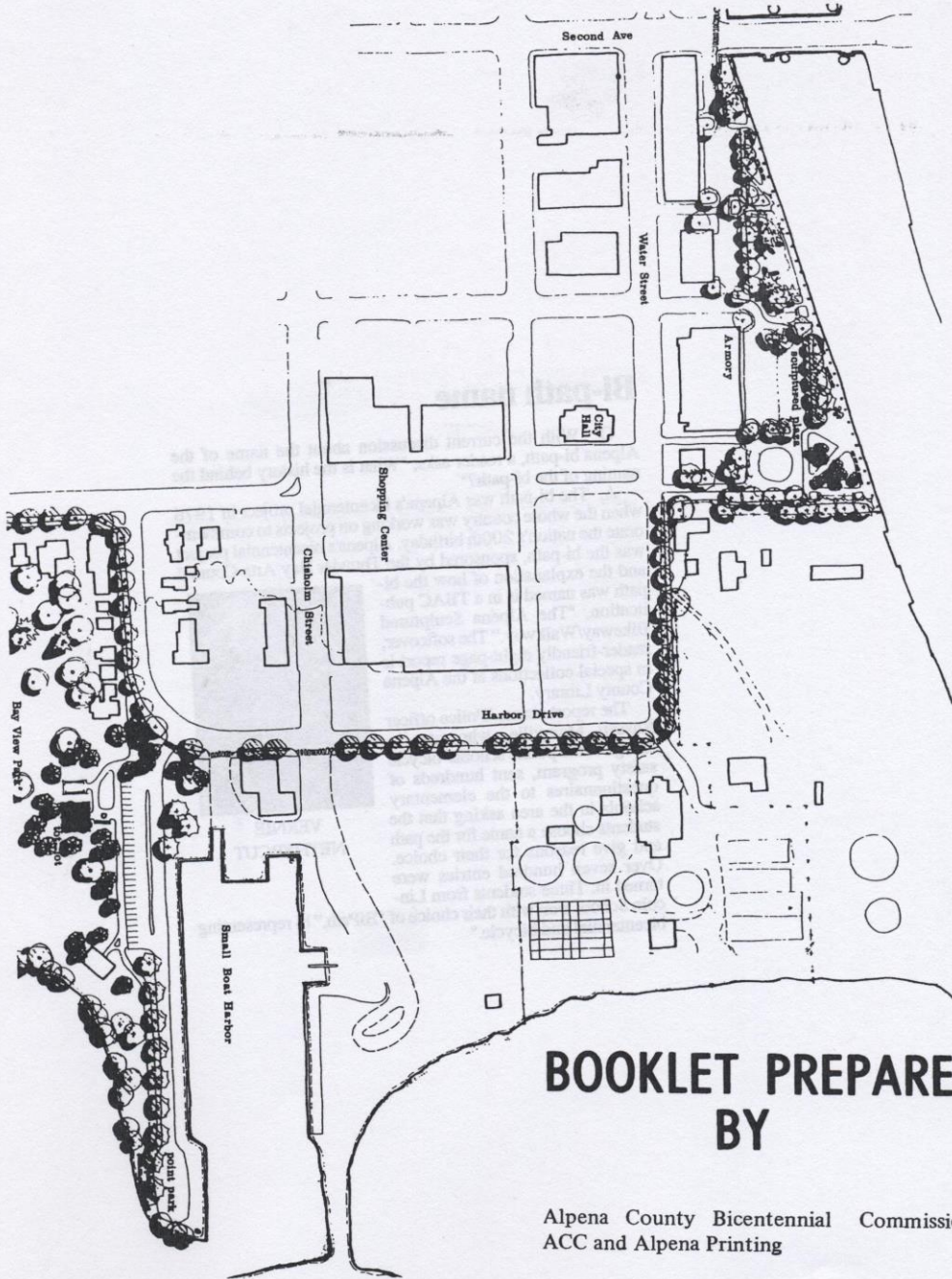
Claudia Fletcher - Chairperson
Beverly Bodem
Mary Ann Frey
Lillian Ball
Bob Lyngos
Fred O'Dell
Raymond Pilarski
Herb Stoutenburg

Dick Boyce - Legal Advisor
Jerry Dault - Bicycle Consultant
John Taber - Construction Initiator

THE BIPATH

A BEGINNING





**BOOKLET PREPARED
BY**

Alpena County Bicentennial Commission,
ACC and Alpena Printing

Bi-path name

Q. With the current discussion about the name of the Alpena bi-path, a reader asks, "What is the history behind the naming of the bi-path?"

A. The bi-path was Alpena's bicentennial project in 1976 when the whole country was working on projects to commemorate the nation's 200th birthday. Alpena's bicentennial project was the bi-path, sponsored by the Thunder Bay Arts Council and the explanation of how the bi-path was named is in a TBAC publication, "The Alpena Sculptured Bikeway/Walkway." The softcover, reader-friendly eight-page report is in special collections at the Alpena County Library.

The report states, "Police officer Russell Mainville, who was in charge of the public schools' bicycle safety program, sent hundreds of questionnaires to the elementary schools in the area asking that the students choose a name for the path and give reasons for their choice. Over seven hundred entries were turned in. Three students from Lincoln School won with their choice of "BiPath," bi representing bicentennial and bicycle."



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