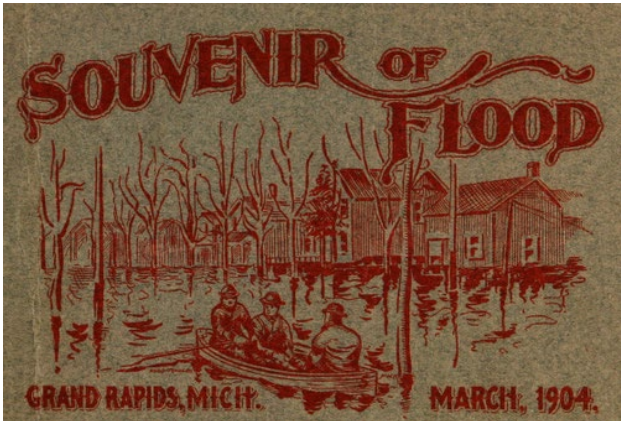


## 5.2 20th Century (1901-2000)

1

### Artifact Packet

#### 1904 Flood



**I**T is our aim to illustrate in this Souvenir the dire calamities which have befallen this city in the month of March, 1904. The first calamity, of which we show two views, was the tornado which swept over the southeastern part of the city, known as Oakdale, on the evening of March 24th. In a few moments it had demolished houses, churches and everything which happened in its path, leaving numerous families shelterless and destroying much property.

About the same time Grand River assumed such proportions as to endanger much property. On the morning of Friday, March 25th, the stage of Grand River, according to the engineer's gauge, was 14.6 feet, while the highest point recorded was on Monday, when the gauge registered 19.6 feet, showing a total rise of five feet.

The rise was much more rapid than the fall, the river remaining stationary for almost twenty-four hours. During this time the water rose to the second story of many dwellings and even to the roofs of others situated on lower ground. Row-boats and naphtha launches were used on many streets by relief parties who brought food and fuel to the imprisoned inmates.

We have also shown herein several views taken after the flood subsided, showing some of the damage resulting from the same.

REED-TANDLER ENGRAVING CO.,  
PUBLISHERS,  
85 CAMPAU ST., GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.

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ON RECEIPT OF 15 CTS.



City Lighting and Garbage Plants on the Island.



Looking south-west from Bridge Street on Winter Street.

*Souvenir of flood: Grand Rapids, Mich. March, 1904. Reed-Tandler Engraving Co. (Grand Rapids, Mich.).*

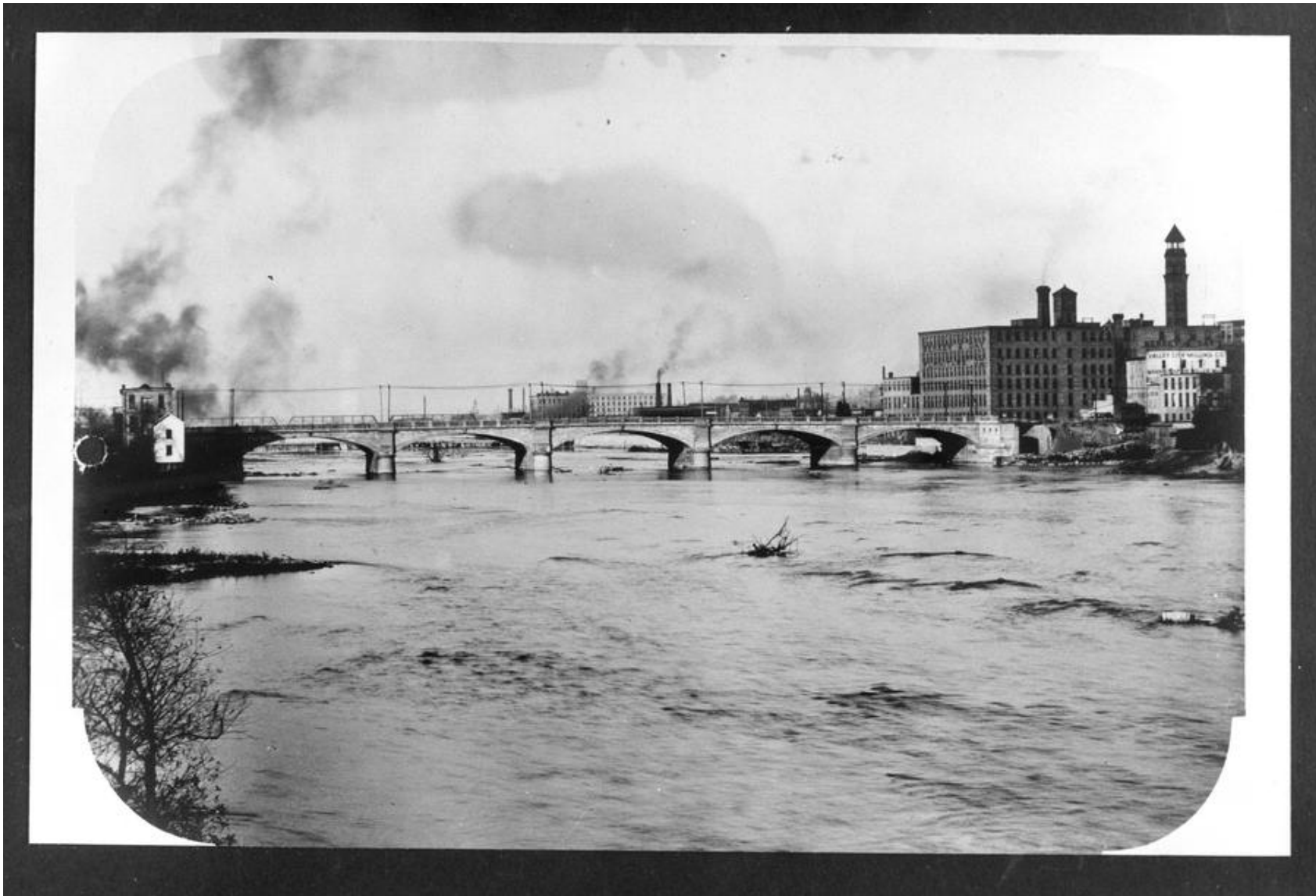
*Figure 1 Sturgeon Caught in 1906 from Grand River – 225 lbs*



*Grand Rapids History and Special Collections, Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids MI*



Figure 2 Bridge Street Bridge with factories behind it



Photocopy of photograph (original contact print in Grand Rapids Michigan City Library, Michigan Room) circa 1908, photographer unknown. VIEW NORTH - NORTHEAST, SOUTHSIDE, GENERAL VIEW. - Bridge Street Bridge, Spanning Grand River, Michigan & Bridge Streets, Grand Rapids, MI

*Figure 3 Grand River 1928 - Exposed riverbed due to dry conditions and overuse of the river.*



*Collection 43, Box 1. Grand Rapids History and Special Collections, Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids MI*



Figure 4 Scrips Program workers grading the Grand River Bank

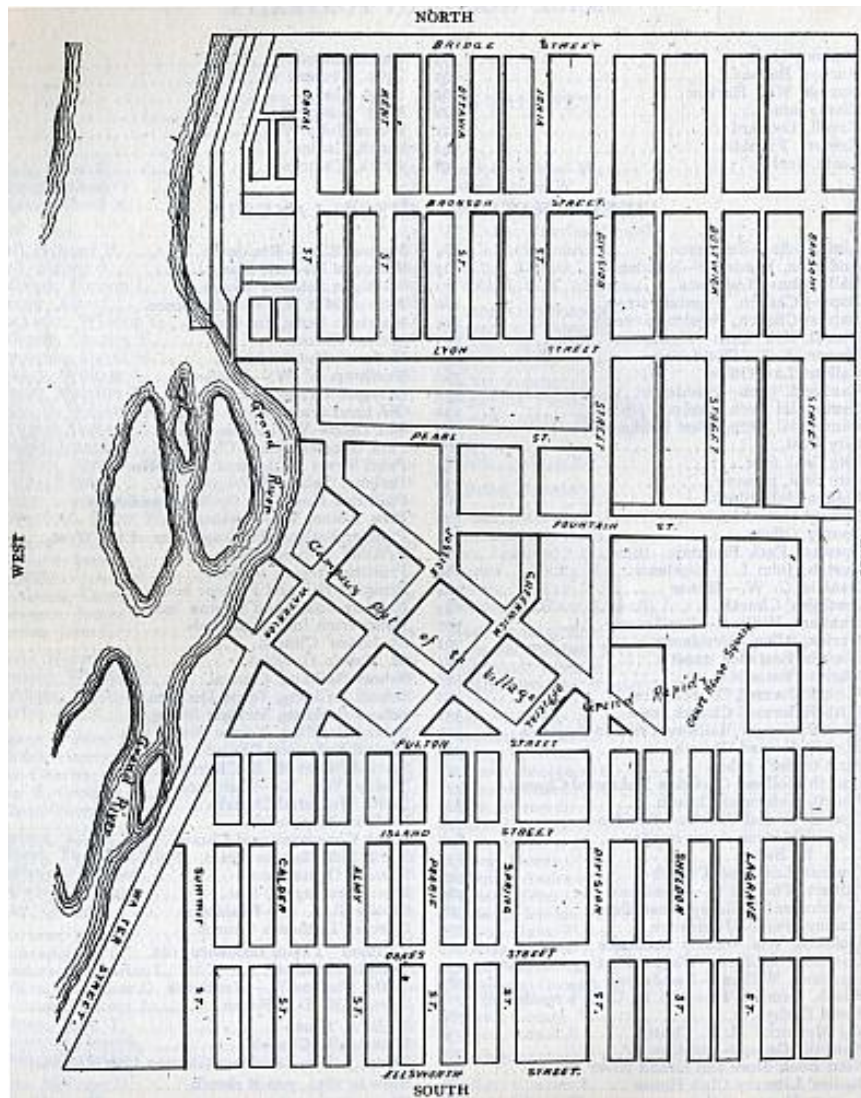


In 1929, Grand Rapids City Manager George Welsh ordered the City Welfare Department to establish a public works relief program for the poor of the city and county. This program assisted Depression Era families and the chronically poor. It won for Grand Rapids, as well as for Welsh, national recognition.

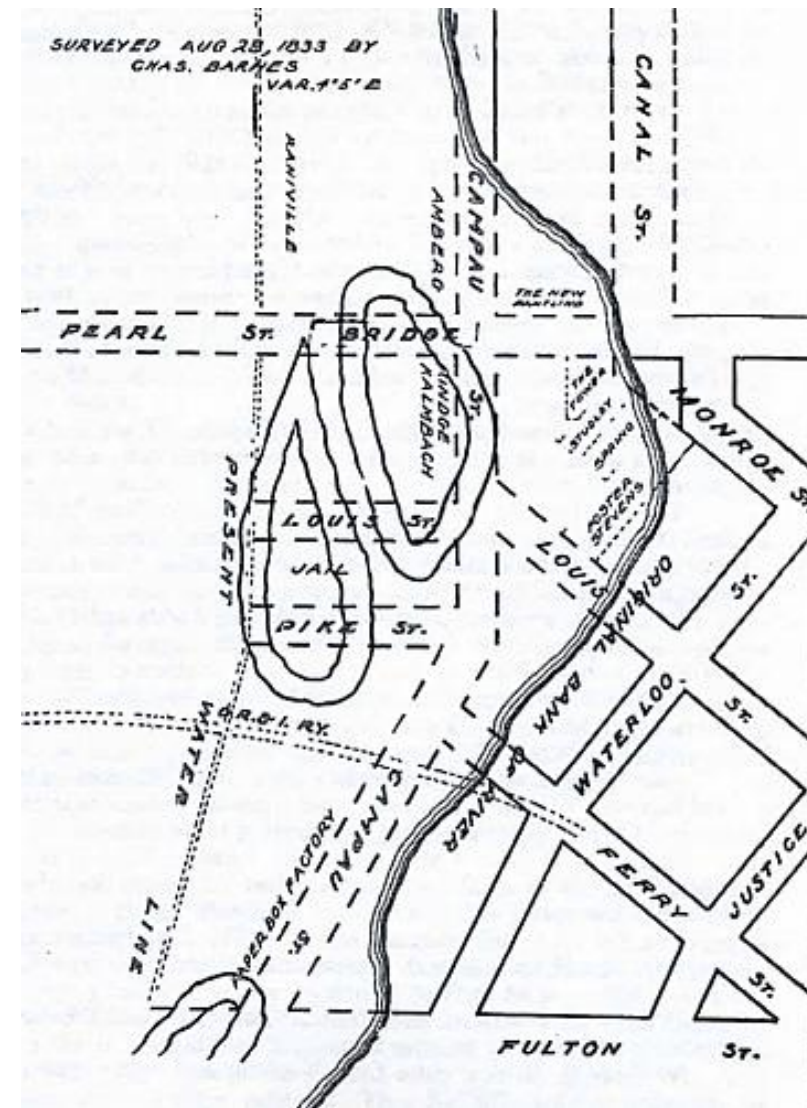
*History and Special Collections, Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids MI*



Figures 5 and 6: 1838 Rivers Edge Compared to 1926 River Edge at location of Islands 1 and 2.

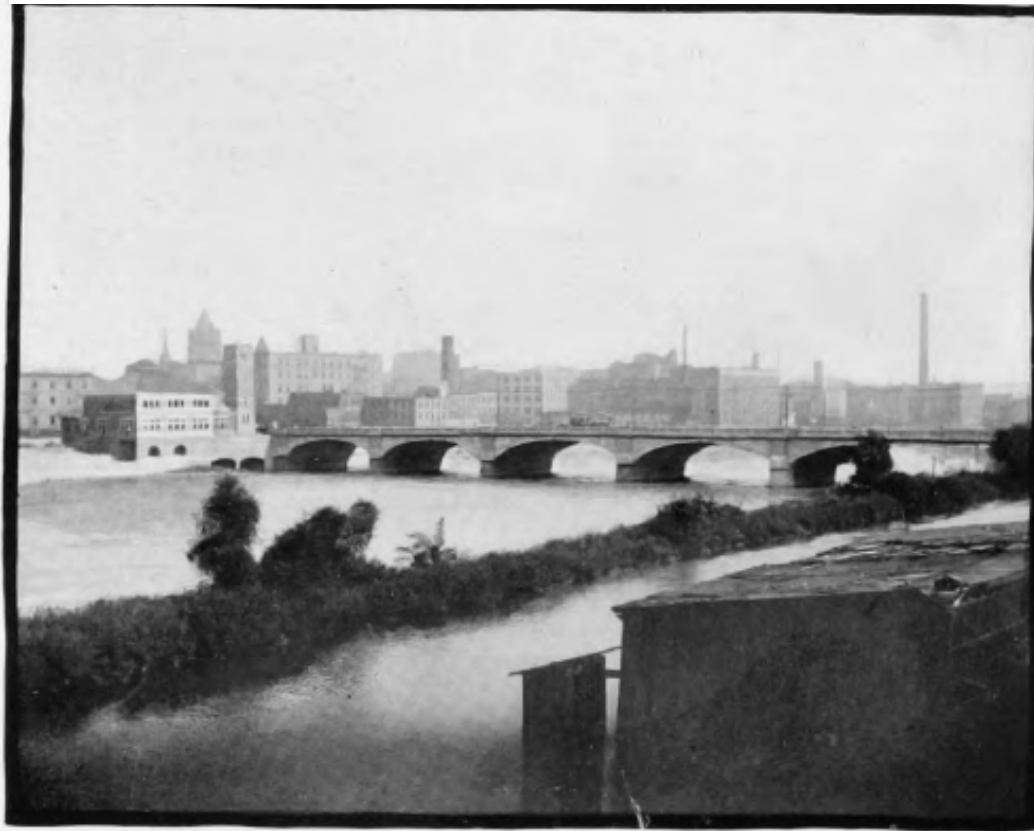


"The History of the City of Grand Rapids" by Albert Baxter, 1891



The map is from *A Citizens' History of Grand Rapids* by William J. Etten. Published in 1926 by the A.P. Johnson Co. for the Campau Centennial Committee. The original survey map was drawn by Chas. Barnes, Aug. 28, 1833.

Figure 7: Factories on River, Showing Canals



ALL SORTS OF FACTORIES



A NEST OF FACTORIES

Dickinson Brothers, G. Rapids. (1911). *Grand Rapids: beautiful, industrial, commercial*. Grand Rapids, Mich: [Grand Rapids Board of Trade.



men were killed.

# Knowledge of Pollution Is Revealed

## GR Officials Aware Raw Sewage Being Dumped Into River

By E. W. MURPHY  
Herald Staff Writer

Raw sewage is being dumped into the Grand River at Comstock-Riverside Park in Grand Rapids with knowledge of Grand Rapids officials, The Herald learned Friday.

This pollution of the river has been going on "for years" despite an outlay of \$5 million by Grand Rapids taxpayers for improved treatment of city sewage to keep the river clean, City Engineer Raymond Bruggink Jr., admitted.

A 15-inch discharge pipe serves as an outlet for the Monroe NW trunk sewer when it becomes overloaded, Bruggink said.

The resulting pollution can be seen by anyone walking along the river bank at the park.

Bruggink spoke of an "inadequate sewage collection system" in the North End, making it necessary, he said, to divert overflow sewage into the river.

"It is that or have basements flooded with sewage in that part of town," Bruggink explained.

Bruggink said he does not know whether the State Water Resources Commission is aware of this situation.

Nothing could be done to correct it without a big outlay for sewer construction, Bruggink asserted.

The Water Resources Commission in 1952 went to court to force Grand Rapids to build a secondary sewage disposal plant costing \$5 million. This plant was placed in use last year but it is still under construction.

An incinerator building, last phase of the construction, is due for completion next fall.

Bruggink said he is going to

See Pollution, Page 2

### Lake Michigan

Continued from Page 1

call to the attention of the City Commission the need for enlarging the sewage collection system.

A report, containing the first comprehensive survey of the city sewage system since the 1920s, will be ready for City Manager Donald M. Oakes and the Commission soon, Bruggink stated. He has been working on the survey a year, Bruggink said.

Bruggink did not indicate what he will say in the forthcoming report but it is expected to amplify findings of Greater Grand Rapids Civic Study Committee which last year urged spending \$5 million to recondition the existing sewage collection system.

Voters in the special election last June turned down a proposal for a \$3 million bond issue for an immediate start on this program.

Some of the proceeds of a city sewage tax, in force since 1953, should also be used for the construction program, the committee advised.

The committee report, prepared by Willfred B. Williams, a civil engineer, said the Monroe NW trunk sewer is inadequate and there is need for relief sewer lines north and south of Knapp NE to serve new areas east of Plainfield NE.

A number of other sewer construction projects was also recommended by this group.

Williams said Friday trunk sewers in the North End must serve North Park and the Michigan Veterans Facility as well as the large residential area there. These sewers were never designed for their present use, Williams declared.

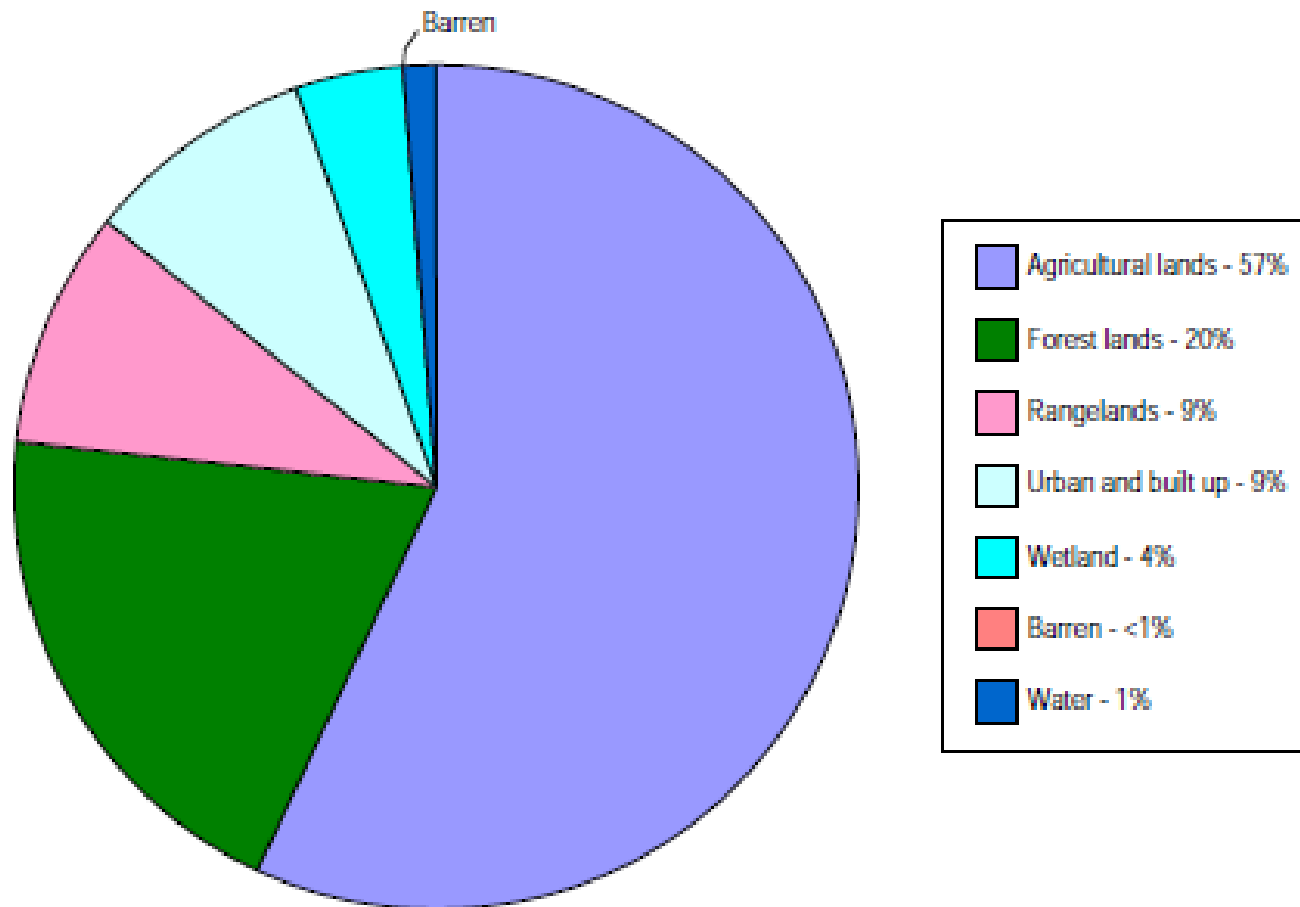
City Manager Oakes could not be reached Friday night for comment on the river pollution.

Mayor Stanley J. Davis likewise could not be reached. He was in Mackinaw City for the Mackinac Bridge dedication.

Grand Rapids Herald. June, 28, 1958, pg 1



Figure 8: Land Use and Cover 1978 in Grand River Watershed



Hanshue, S. K., and A. H. Harrington. 2017. Grand River assessment. Michigan Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Report 20, Lansing.

*Figure 9: Population Data*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Grand Rapids Population</b>
1900	87565
1910	112571
1920	137634
1930	168592
1940	164292
1950	176515
1960	177313
1970	197649
1980	181843
1990	189126

United States Census Data