ANCHORS AWEIGH







This page, clockwise from above: Elder Piper Beer + Cider founders Eeva and Trace Redmond. The brewery, with its welcoming environment, has become a popular meeting spot. Trace has up to 400 recipes under his belt.

TASTING ROOM

Neighborly Drafts

A love of agriculture and northern Michigan makes for a perfect storybook setting at this Petoskey microbrewery

BY
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Something magical is brewing in Petoskey's Old Town Emmet neighborhood, where Eeva and Trace Redmond are taking their passion for craft beer and cider and turning it into a source of community pride at Elder Piper Beer + Cider.

A native of Petoskey, Eeva grew up in the very neighborhood where the brewery now sits. She spent her senior year of high school as an exchange student in Belgium, where she fell in love with beer and the sense of culture it provides.

Upon returning stateside, Eeva made her way to Kalamazoo College to study art history. There she met Trace, who was born and raised in Pennsylvania, and their fairy tale began to take shape. In addition to studying biology and chemistry, he was conducting academic ecological research on Lake Michigan's Beaver Island and home-brewing on the side.

After graduating in 2013, the couple made their way to Grand Rapids, where Trace launched his career at Founders Brewing and Eeva worked at the West Michigan Center for Arts + Technology. Two years later, they headed east to the upstart Roak Brewing in Detroit; from there it was off to Asheville, N.C. — a city that's often in competition with Grand Rapids for the title of "Beer City USA." Eeva ran tour operations at Sierra Nevada before joining Trace at the award-winning Highland Brewing Co.

In the wake of the pandemic, the Redmonds returned to Michigan, where Trace landed a job as head brewer at Pond Hill Farm in Harbor Springs. Back in her neck of the woods, Eeva was drawn to her childhood neighborhood, which had recently launched an aggressive revitalization campaign.

Focused on a dream of owning their own business, in 2023 they began renovating a 4,500-square-foot building at 923 Baxter St. that was constructed in 1929 by Bell Telephone. They then began the arduous process of turning the industrial building into a neighborhood gathering place.

"A good part of our success is that we're tucked into a neighborhood," Eeva admits, referencing several new residential projects nearby, as well as the expansion of the paved Downtown Greenway, which

PHOTO OF INTERIOR COURTESY OF CHUCK MARSHALL, LIFE IN MICHIGAN; PORTRAIT AND BEER PHOTO COURTESY OF ELDER PIPER

follows a former railroad corridor and allows for easy access to the city's main business district as well as the lakeshore and beyond.

The outreach and support for Elder Piper extends well beyond the neighborhood or city limits, and became apparent to a wide range of people when *USA Today* readers ranked it the No. 3 "Best New Brewery" in the U.S. earlier this year.

"It really validates what we're doing here, and to have a rural community (like Petoskey) be recognized on a national scale brings perspective and attention to our area," Eeva says proudly.

With more than 400 recipes under his belt, Trace's curiosity and confidence in blending ingredients and developing distinct flavor profiles allow his beverages to reflect the region in which they're made. Having access to locally grown agricultural products — Michigan hops, corn, barley, apples, maple syrup, honey, and more — certainly helps bring his seven-barrel brewhouse to life.

Among the more widely recognized offerings is the Yuzu Ginger Cider, which was awarded Best in Class Silver in the "Specialty Cider and Perry-Dry" category for the second year in a row at the Great Lakes International Cider and Perry competition.

Ward 4 Neighborhood Lager, honoring the brewery's second anniversary, features Michigan-grown corn malted by Great Lakes Malting in Traverse City and Mystique hops from Strasburg Farms in Monroe.

Don't let the Ghost Pipe Black Lager deceive you. Despite its rich hues, this brew — named for a mushroom-looking plant that's native to northern Michigan — offers a lighter finish than you'd expect.

Several community and business groups have found the distinctive beverages and welcoming environment at Elder Piper ideal for casual gatherings. One of those is the Northwest Lower Michigan Chapter of Wild Ones — a national organization that promotes native plants and natural landscapes for healthy ecosystems, thus restoring ecological biodiversity.

"We get together to talk about native plants, gardening challenges such as invasive plants, books we've read, hikes we've gone on, and really anything else," member Karen Pollard says. "It gives us an opportunity to talk and get to know each other, as well as to learn. One month we even had a Wingspan tutorial — one of the many games Elder Piper has available to play."

Among the most common questions the Redmonds are asked, naturally, is how they came up with the name for their company. Trace credits his mother, who, through her genealogical research, discovered a relative with the first name Elder and the middle name Piper — surnames from his ancestors, each representing a separate branch of the family tree coming together. Whimsical and poetic, it was a natural choice.

The logo boasts an illustration of a pitcher's thistle or dune thistle, a rare federally threatened species that's native to and vital to stabilizing ecosystems around the Great Lakes. Trace was introduced to this deep-rooted plant while working on Beaver Island and recognized that the way it holds together its community of other plants was symbolic of Elder Piper's business philosophy.

Elder Piper is open year-round, and offers draft beverages as well as bottled and canned products to go (complete with labels featuring designs from local artists). There's often a food truck in the beer garden, and a handful of packaged snacks are available at the bar. Guests can also bring in food or have it delivered.

Plan It!

Elder Piper Beer + Cider
elderpiperbeer.com



Right: Built in 1929 by Bell Telephone, the building is now the beautifully renovated Elder Piper Beer + Cider, a gathering spot that features indoor and outdoor seating. Nearby is the city's main business district as well as the lakeshore. The logo on the side of the building showcases a pitcher's thistle or dune thistle, a rare federally threatened Great Lakes species.

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