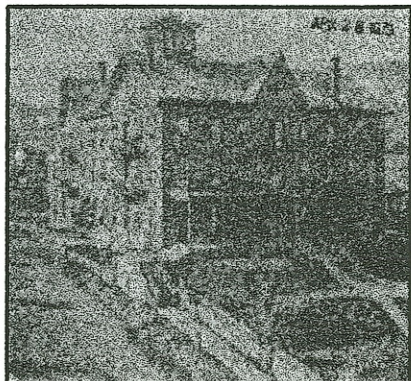


collie Houghton's Historic Douglass House

Located in the center of Houghton's historic downtown district, the Douglass House has survived for 121 years. Although passing through many owners over the years, it has remained a landmark providing food and drink and, until the early 80s, the area's preeminent hotel.

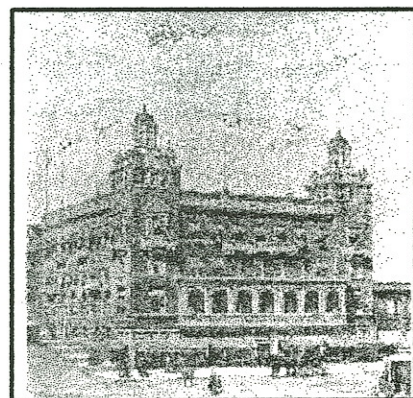


By 1860, Houghton had a population of 2,145 compared to 456 in 1850. This increase of population coincided with the development of the copper mining in the district and the resulting influx of people hoping to make their fortunes in extracting the mineral or providing needed business to serve the needs of the growing community. Since the growing number of visitors demanded decent accommodations, a group of local businessmen subscribed \$9,500 toward the construction of a modern hotel.

The result was a three story high structure erected well back of Shelden avenue with a long stairway leading from the main entrance to the street below. The building was wood frame located at what is now the rear of the present Douglass

House. It boasted fifty rooms and was well patronized by health and pleasure tourists during the warm season of summer.

Over the next quarter century the reputation of the hotel grew apace of the burgeoning and prosperous copper boom. The dining room and dance floor were the social centerpiece of the community. For years the Douglass House served a dual purpose as court chambers and many hotly contested legal issues were settled within its walls. In 1877, one year after the the first telephone was displayed at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, telephones were introduced on an experimental basis in several of Michigans larger cities. Houghton had two installed spanning Shelden Avenue. One in the Douglass House and the other directly across the street in the Northwestern Telegraph office located in the Dee Building. A newspaper story of the day reported "People came in small crowds to listen to the shouted conversations between the hotel and the telegraph company. Larger and larger crowds returned to observe the performance of of this across-the-street circuit."



By the the 1890s the old Douglass House was showing its age and in 1899 the property was purchased by John C. Mann who financed a total rebuilding program for the hotel. The new Douglas House was designed by H.L. Ottenheimer, a student of the fasmous architects Adler and Sullivan of Chicago, and constructed by Herman Gundlach Sr. who moved to Houghton in 1898 expressly for the project. The new building was attached to the older structure and extended all the way to Shelden Avenue. It cost \$125,000 excluding the \$30 to \$40,000 spent on furnishings.

On the street level, the new hotel offered a bar which remains basically unchanged today. There was also a large billiard room and two card rooms for the sporting gentlemen. As today, the remainder of this level was rented to small business concerns. On the lobby level was a telegraph office, sitting room, main desk, two lobbies and a large veranda extending the length of the front of the building. The 3rd and fourth floors contained the guest rooms. The upper floors sported large verandas as well. These were removed in later years for safety reasons. The elaborately decorated towers at each front corner have become Houghton landmarks. A fire that began in the kitchen area of the old structure completely consumed the earlier hotel building in 1901. It was reported at the time that the heroic efforts of half clad male guests using firehoses in the early morning hours prevented the loss of the entire structure. Though there was no loss of life, damage to the property amounted to \$90,00 including large amounts of silver

...niture and a \$5,000 inventory of wines and liquers. Undaunted by the tragedy, Mr. Mann opened a
...y kitchen in the new section and immediately retained Herman Gundlach Sr. to begin rebuilding sing
...rce concrete construction. Mr. Mann's ownership kept the Douglass House a viable and popular center for
...n tourists and businessmen into the mid 1920s when he sold the building and retired.



House.

Since then the fortunes of the area began a steady decline as the cost of mining copper from ever greater depths and the world economy seemed to conspire to make Keweenaw copper less profitable. The old dining room was closed and replaced by the current Armando's Restaurant in 1975. In the early 1980s, the hotel was transformed into senior citizen apartments. The street level now contains several business along with the bar and restaurant including a barbershop and real estate agency. Best of all, the charm of the Douglass House still remains as a welcoming beacon for visitors to Houghton.

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