

Muskegon's historic Century Club revival

AS ONE OF MICHIGAN'S early lumber towns, Muskegon quickly grew up as an industrial and social center.

Community leaders, such as Charles H. Hackley and Thomas Hume, built elaborate homes and donated funds to build libraries and hospitals, laying a foundation for the future. By the late 1880s, the town's elite were looking for a place to mix and mingle.



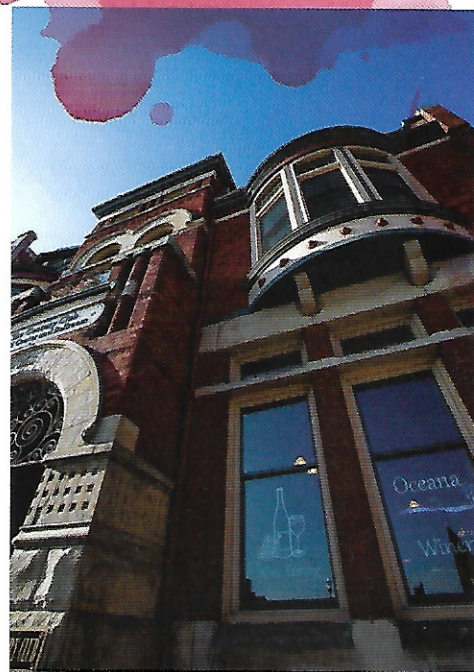
Hackley rallied business leaders and raised \$30,000 to construct the Muskegon Club. It was a first-class social club, a "gentlemen's club." Women initially weren't allowed unless accompanied by their husbands, who were members.

That club at 356 W. Western Ave. flourished even during Prohibition. It operated until 1991 when it was abandoned briefly prior to being restored as a furniture outlet. It was revitalized later by the downtown development firm Port City Construction & Development Services, which recreated a social center for residents and visitors.

Today known collectively as the Century Club Center, it reopened in 2011. Its three buildings — Russell Block Market, Century Club Shops and the former Muskegon Saving Bank — houses nearly two dozen specialty retailers, offices and a 3,000-square-foot ballroom.

One of its newest tenants, Oceana Winery & Vineyard tasting room, is tucked into

BY DIANNA
STAMPFLER
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KENDRA STANLEY MILLS



an intimate 570-square-foot main floor suite. Visitors can sit at the bar or gather in the cozy sitting area by the gas fireplace to sample a variety of red and white wines produced 30 miles north at the winery's production facility in New Era.

"I've been told that some remember our tasting room as being the library of the social club," says Renae Goralski, who bought the winery with her husband, Greg, in 2012. It was purchased from his parents. "The club's distinctive architecture has been carefully preserved and maintained; its refined and graceful geometry adds a warm charm to our tasting room."

In the 1970s, school teacher Robert Cameron planted his first grape vines in the Oceana County fruit belt, not far from the Lake Michigan shoreline. With white varietals, such as cayuga, traminette, seyval blanc, gewürztraminer and riesling, along



with red grapes like pinot noir, cabernet franc and blaufränkisch, the vineyard was part of a growing industry taking root in West Michigan.

Cameron later opened Tartan Hill Winery, a tasting room he operated until he sold the business to Paul and Beverly Goralski in 2003, who sold it nine years later to Renae and Greg. They renamed it Oceana Winery & Vineyard — specializing in wines made from French hybrid grapes. A second tasting room followed in Pentwater before moving to the historic Century Block in downtown Muskegon in June 2016.

Many of the vineyard's award-winning wines have a musical flare about them. Cayuga Jazz is a great summer sipper with a hint of raspberries; it pairs well with a Waldorf salad, fruit or cheese. The Burgundy-style Red Rhythm is sleek and smooth with a full finish, making it ideal to serve with everything from burgers to mushroom risotto to hearty stews. Summer Sonata, a blend of sauvignon blanc and seyval blanc, is a dry white with big flavors of citrus, berry and honey — perfect to enjoy with seafood dishes, salmon burgers and feta cheese. Amadeus, a limited-edition cream sherry, brings a warm spice mingled with candied apricot fruits, making it a perfect dessert wine.

Looking to nosh while you sip? A small selection of appetizers, small plates and special pairings also are offered.

Freelance writer Dianna Stampfler resides in Petoskey.

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