



All rise for ... The Honorable Distillery

DIANNA STAMPFLER | THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2022



Ryan Stephens Photography

Now home to The Honorable Distillery, the former theater was designed by famed architect Michael Meredith Hare, who helped with Rockefeller Center.





Two engineers walk into a bar...

No, wait ... two engineers *OPEN* a (cocktail) bar and craft distillery in downtown Marquette and call it The Honorable Distillery (THD).

Anne White and Scott Anderson, who both hold master of science degrees (hers from the University of Kansas and his from the University of Colorado), have a combined 60-plus years' experience in nuclear clean-up at the national level. White also served two years (2018-2019) as assistant energy secretary in the U.S. Department of Energy, receiving "the honorable" title after being confirmed by the U.S. Senate., thus the distillery name.



Business and life partners Anne White and Scott Anderson.

Today, White and Anderson (business and life partners) spend their time in th...



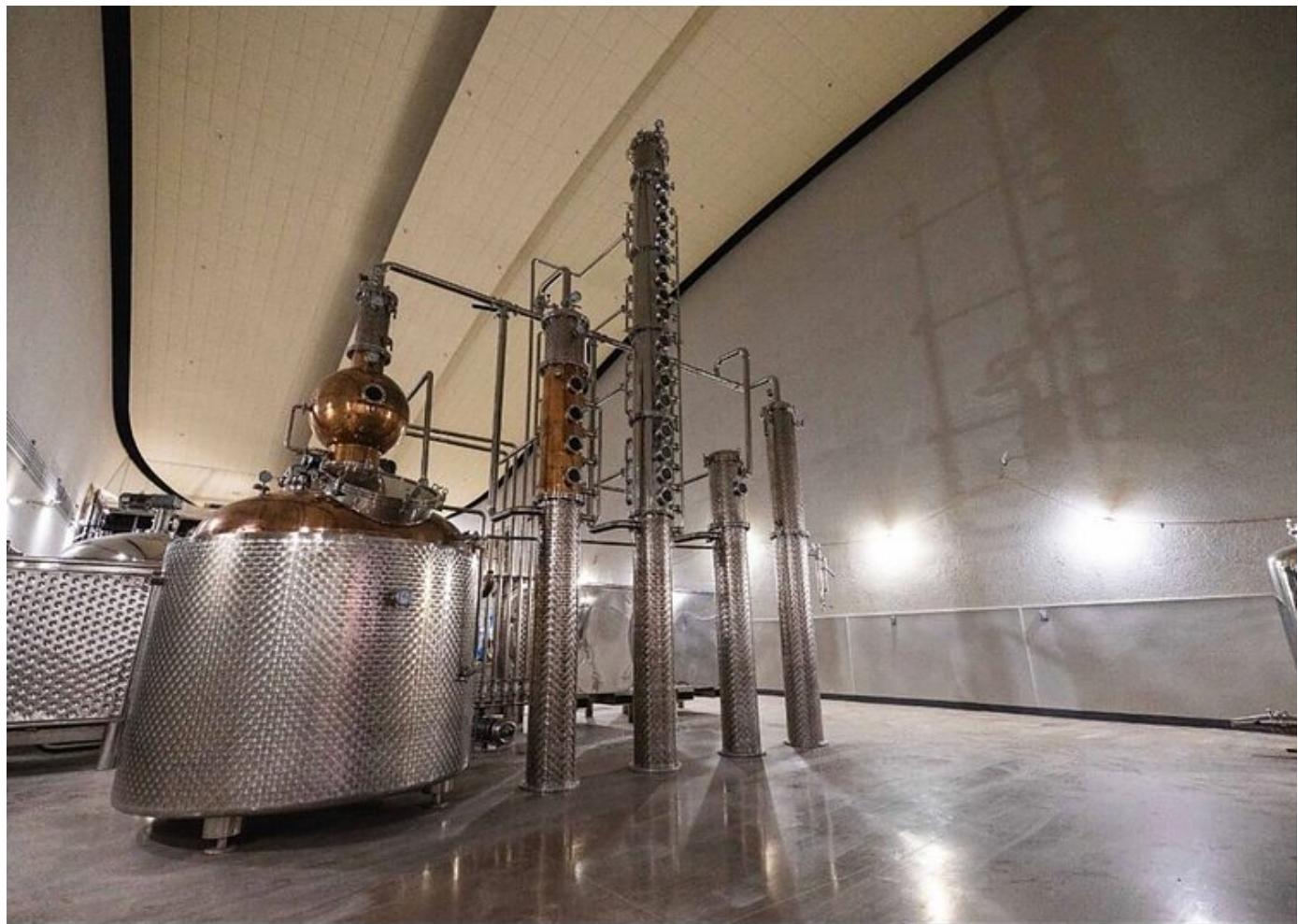
Lake Superior college town working with distillers Rob Stoll and Abby Szukalski perfecting their recipes for vodka, gin, bourbon, rye and single-malt whiskey. Stoll and Szukalski are both new to the world of distilling, but each has a solid foundation and plenty of passion to build upon. Stoll has been homebrewing for 10 years and has worked at three Midwest breweries, while Szukalski holds a degree in environmental science and interned with Takima Chief hop farms in Washington.

THD is located in one of downtown Marquette's historic buildings at 136 W. Washington Street, which opened in 1936 as the Nordic Theater. Built by famed architect Michael Meredith Hare — who helped design New York's Rockefeller Center and Radio City Music Hall — the theater operated until 1994. It then became Book World, which closed in 2018. White and Anderson acquired the building in 2019 and initiated their retirement dream of running a distillery, which has been open since August 1 (with the official Grand Opening / Light the Marquee Party on October 8).

"Opening a distillery, especially in the midst of the supply chain issues we faced during construction was epic ... not an easy thing to do in the best of times," Anderson says. "We had a great contractor, Gundlach Champion, to help us through."

The three-year project represents over \$2.7 million in total capital investment, along with a grant of \$432,824 by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) from its Michigan Strategic Fund (MSF). Created in 1984, the MSF has broad authority to contribute to projects that promote economic development and create jobs around the state as part of the Michigan Community Revitalization Program. This initiative is designed to accelerate private investment in Michigan's communities through the redevelopment of functionally obsolete properties, reduction of blight, and the reuse of brownfield and historic properties.





The 7,500-square-foot building comprises the distillery, tasting room, mezzanines and future event space on the second floor. Visible from the street-side tasting room, the distillery is outfitted with a 1,000-gallon mash ton, six 300-gallon fermenters and a 300-gallon still, all manufactured in the United States.

“Our still is a classic multi-purpose still in that we can make single malt (Scotch), whiskey, vodka and gin using the same still,” says Anderson. “There are multiple bypass valves that allow for this to happen. The really tall column is the vodka column. While vodka is pretty ‘nondescript’ in terms of flavor, it is the most difficult spirit to distill because from a legal definition perspective it must be distilled to greater than 95 percent alcohol.”



THD's current spirit list includes Nordic Gin, crafted from grain and infused with juniper and local botanicals, redistilled and bottled in Marquette; and OPW Rye Whiskey and OPW Straight Bourbon Whiskey (OPW stands for Other People's Whiskey), both distilled and aged in Virginia then bottled in Marquette. THD's locally distilled whiskeys are aging, with the rye expected to be released in two or three years, while the single malt may take as long as eight years to reach perfection. Yet, it is The Honorable Vodka, distilled from grain and bottled in Marquette, which sets THD apart from other small distillers.

"We choose to make our own vodka fresh from grain for many reasons," White notes. "It differentiates us and is a really great way for us—as a very green team of owners and distillers—to learn a whole bunch. Once we have our own grain mill and can use exclusively U.P. grown grains, it will be a great win-win-win for the farmers, THD and our community at large."

The attention to local is important to all at THD, with ingredients sourced from U.P. growers like Traunik Farm (herbs), Rock River Farms (fresh flowers), Shady Grove Farm (strawberries), Olson Brothers Sugar Bush (maple syrup) and Grandbees (honey) which are then used to create house-made fruit purees, mixers and other ingredients for the seasonal cocktail menu. Current offerings include the Finnish-inspired Fall Long Drink (THD gin, grapefruit, cranberry and lemon), Falernum Martini (THD vodka, house falernum (a Caribbean style liqueur), pe word and lime) or a Fig Rye Collins (fig-infused OPW Rye (sourced from Virginia), lime,