



Schoolhouse rocks Boyne City

DIANNA STAMPFLER | THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2023



Boyne Schoolhouse Lofts

The former Second Ward School has been renovated has Boyne Schoolhouse Lofts.



One of Boyne City's aged twentieth-century buildings has recently been restored, turning the one-time place of learning into a modern place of rest and relaxation. Built in 1911,



the stately brick Second Ward School at 411 N. East St. now houses a six-unit short-term rental property called Boyne Schoolhouse Lofts.

A look at the past: Little is known about the Second Ward School beyond the year it opened; built for about \$9,800. According to the 1981 *Settlers to Sidewalks: A History of Boyne City from its Beginning of the End of the Booming Lumber Era* by Robert Mongridge, three (of four) ward schools were closed during the 1920s, meaning most students attended the Central School. Yet, discussions on social media by locals indicate the Second Ward building operated through World War II or as late as the 1960s.

For at least one year (1960), the school building was home to the Kilgen Organ Company. A front-page article in the Friday, April 1, 1960 issue of the *Petoskey News-Review*, under the headline “Boyne City to Get Pipe Organ Plant in April,” read:

The Kilgen Organ Co. of St. Louis, sold in receivership to Scott Wheeler of Jackson, Mich., will be moved to Boyne City and employ a reported 12 to 20 persons when it starts manufacturing. The Kilgen company has been making pipe organs for churches and theaters for a century, a report in the Boyne Citizen said. The dies and tools of the company were sold to pay a Small Business Administration Loan and the St. Louis plant will be sold later to help meet the loan. Plans are for the Second Ward school building to be leased for a temporary plant in Boyne City, probably through the Boyne City Industrial Development Fund. The equipment was sold to Wheeler for a reported \$20,000. Plans are to move the equipment at once.

There was no report of the company ever producing any pipe organs out of the former schoolhouse or notice when the company finally closed its doors. Locals noted that in the years that followed, the building served as a dance hall, municipal building and community center, before going into private ownership in the 1980s.

Lesla and Eddie Louch

Renovations toward the future: After sitting vacant for years, the three-story building and its three-quarter acre property were purchased in March 2021 by Eddie and Lesla Louch – who have been second homeowners in Boyne City for about 12 years – and

Eddie's downstate business partner, Dave Hendricks and his wife, Caroline.

To many, restoring the 5,772-square-foot building would take too much effort and to others, it was beyond repair. But Louch (who owns Crooked Tree Nursery in Owosso) and Henricks (who owns Elite Coatings in Morrice) had the vision, passion and skills to tackle the project head-on.

"I had driven by the property with dreams of renovating it," notes Louch. "In the last 10 years, we have acquired, remodeled, and sold or rented about four homes in Michigan. Prior to this school, we did a renovation on a farmhouse built in 1894."

Both Dave and Eddie bring construction knowledge and abilities to the project, each dedicating 14 months to completing the major repurposing with a solid team of others by their side. The building was cleaned out and stripped down to the original brick and slowly the six former classrooms, with their hardwood floors and high ceilings, were reconfigured into modern and elegant guest suites. The open floorplans feature large kitchens with granite countertops and stainless-steel appliances adjacent to the living areas, each with a gas fireplace, televisions and heated floors.

The suites feature open floor plans.

The two top-floor penthouse suites each boast two bedrooms, an open loft with a sleeper sofa and three bathrooms, making them ideal for families needing room to spread out. There is one other two-bedroom suite, along with three one-bedroom units; the two walkout main-level units are accessible. The backyard even features a grilling area and a fire pit, allowing for social gatherings among guests.

Throughout the building, décor reflects the seasonal northern Michigan connections with each of the units being named for local attractions like Bunny Hill, Double Diamond and Hemlock (a ski run at nearby Boyne Mountain). Meadow, Sunset Views and Lake Lookout are inspired by summer in the region.

Located within walking distance of downtown Boyne City shops, restaurants, parks and the east end of Lake Charlevoix – as well as events like the annual Morel Mushroom Festival, Friday Night Stroll the Streets, and Saturday Farmers Market, makes this a

prime short-term option for seasonal visitors.

Dianna Stampfler has been writing professionally since high school. She is the president of Promote Michigan and the author of Michigan’s Haunted Lighthouses and Death & Lighthouses on the Great Lakes, both from The History Press.

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