

Hubbard's Annex Is Historic District Within Mackinac Island

A Look at History

BY FRANK STRAUS

Hubbard's Annex



Hubbard's Annex is 125 years old this year. In 1882, when Gurdon Saltonstall Hubbard platted and began to develop his "Private Claim No. 4," the old Ambrose Davenport farm west of the harbor, a new era opened on Mackinac Island. In many ways the current summertime atmosphere of our Island dates itself back to the creation of "Hubbard's Annex."

Mr. Hubbard's 1882 plat, carefully lithographed by Rand McNally for distribution to potential land purchasers, depicts winding streets, a wide boulevard, and a public park, known to this day as the "Common." A concern for open space is reflected in the binding commitment that part of the forested space between Lake View Boulevard and the Island's blufftop be set aside for the enjoyment of the Annex's "owners, occupants, and residents." The view of the Straits of Mackinac from the bluff was, from the start, a key resource of the Annex historic district.

Small sections of land at the top of the bluff were set aside for the personal use of several Annex homeowners. Francis Stockbridge, the wealthy Saugatuck lumberman and U.S. senator from Michigan, bought a blufftop parcel in 1882 for his summer residence, now the site of the Dziabis cottage.

Mr. Hubbard believed the Annex would form an attractive summer "Colony," writing:

"The view from this bluff is the finest on the Island, overlooking the entrance to Lake Michigan with its numerous Islands and Light-Houses [sic], and in full view of St. Ignace

and Mackinaw City."

The integrity of Hubbard's Annex as a historic district was further strengthened by the early cottagers' living arrangements. Mr. Hubbard's goal was the creation of a complete resort community where the residents would spend a large portion of their time together. To this end, the community land plan set aside a building lot on the Common as the "Eating House," and the early Hubbard's Annex cottagers were encouraged to form a club and hire a cook, who would supervise the preparation of meals for them. In 1883, eight new wooden houses sprouted up, circling around the half-moon-shaped "Common." Most of the cottages were built by master carpenter Charles W. Caskey.

Mr. Caskey, who would soon earn fame as the builder of Grand Hotel, favored a vernacular Carpenter Gothic style for the summer residences. This building genre took full advantage of Michigan's white pine trees being cut by Mr. Stockbridge and other lumbermen.



A turn-of-the-century postcard view of West Bluff cottages on Mackinac Island. (Photograph courtesy of Tom Pfeiffelmann)

Typically cross-gabled and furnished with a wraparound front porch, the Caskey cottages encouraged informal socializing. The cottages were built without Victorian parlors, which were a required design element of the upper-class houses in the southern Michigan towns and cities, where the earliest Annex cottagers lived most of the year. It was expected that the new Island summer people would greet each other on their front porches.

During the remainder of the 1880s, six additional cottages were built in Hubbard's Annex.

Demand for Annex property was slaked, to some extent, by the opening up of new cottage

lots on the Island's West Bluff and East Bluff. The West Bluff, * Please turn to page 23

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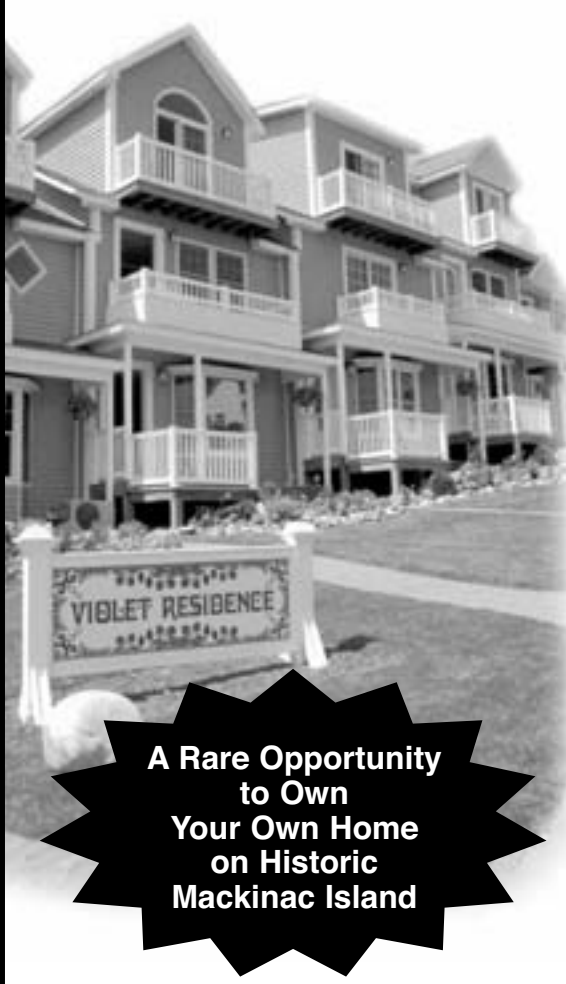
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