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Picturesque Weathervane shopping center and restaurant, constructed almost entirely of native stone and wood, recently completed on Charlevoix' main street by Earl A. Young, realtor and builder, as culmination of his lifelong ambition. Fronting on Michigan Ave., it is flanked on one side by Pine River, and rear windows look out upon Lake Michigan. Below, old Argo Milling Co. Mill, which was only partially razed to give way to attractive new structure. Many materials from old mill were utilized, however.

Old Mill Becomes Restaurant Picturesque Stone Structure Graces Downtown Charlevoix

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Clinging closely to the contours of the surrounding terrain and hugging the bank of the Pine River where it flows into Lake Michigan at Charlevoix, a rambling native stone structure, recently completed, is a sightly addition to the business area of that resort city.

The unique building, constructed almost entirely of native stone and of other materials obtained from the surrounding territory, is the realization of Earl A. Young's lifetime dream.

Young, Charlevoix realtor, builder and leading businessman of the community of which he is a lifelong resident, regards this attractive commercial block as perhaps his crowning achievement in the construction of numerous beautiful homes in and near Charlevoix, most of them fashioned from native stone and following no formal or recognized conventional design.

These homes, as well as the shopping center building, can best be described, perhaps, as contemporary rustic in feeling, with just a hint of Swiss cottage or chalet, with irregular shake shingle roofs.

The recently completed business block, known as the Weathervane Inn, has an intriguing history and is sort of a memorial to Charlevoix's early annals.

It is not only built on the site of the ancient Argo Milling Co. mill, one of Charlevoix' pioneer establishments, but many parts of the old structure itself, originally built in 1886, have been utilized in its transformation into an ultra modern eating place and cluster of exclusive shops.

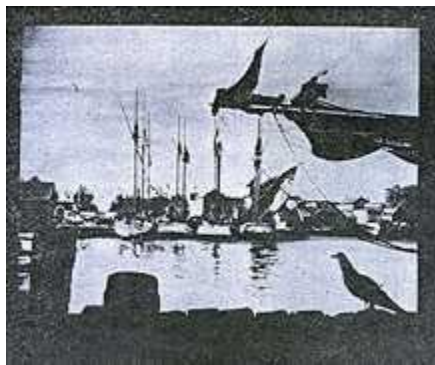


The Weathervane fronts on Michigan Ave. It is flanked on one side by Pine River Dr., on another by Pine River -- the short outlet between Lake Charlevoix and Lake Michigan -- and the rear, virtually all windows, looks out upon a harbor light on Lake Michigan.

Young had been trying for at least 10 years to acquire the property of the Argo Milling Co., but it had been tied up in an estate involving several heirs, and it was not until early in the Summer of last year that Young was able to complete negotiations.

Construction on the building began in August, 1953 and it was sufficiently completed for the restaurant and shops to open for business last July.

The top story of the old mill was razed, but the old ground floor structure was maintained largely as it had been originally, utilizing most of the sturdy, weathered maple 12 by 12-inch timbers.



At left, translighted, colored blowup of picture taken by Young in 1904 of sailing ships lying in Charlevoix Harbor is center of interest in restaurant alcove. Pictured are ships Northern Lady, Rosabelle, Jasper B., Good Squaw and jib boom of - Golden Bough (in foreground).



Enormous fireplace in Weathervane restaurant is pictured at left. Keystone is 9-ton glacial boulder of Michigan granite shaped almost exactly like map of Michigan's Lower Peninsula.



Native Stone, Wood - Utilized Effectively

Above, Earl A. Young, with old wooden, hand-fashioned grain shovel he found in one of the mill's grain bins.

Exterior is nearly all of Charlevoix stone, of which there is a great abundance close at hand. Much of the interior trim both in the top level restaurant and in the shops below, are of flat-cut Onaway stone from the vicinity of Petoskey. Effective use of the latter is made in the spiral stairway between the ground and upper levels.

The huge chimney is constructed entirely of enormous natural "hardhead" boulders, one of which, weighing 14 tons had to be split in two before it could be moved and fitted into place.

One of the most spectacular interior features of the structure is the magnificent stone fireplace in the upper restaurant.

Keystone of this fireplace is a gray glacial boulder of Michigan granite weighing 18,260 pounds. Young found this king-size boulder, which is nine feet across and 30 inches thick, while he was doing some excavating on nearby Boulder Beach 26 years ago. He had it moved to a spot about a quarter mile distant and buried again "for future reference."

When the Weathervane was built, the huge stone was lowered between uprights on the top floor, but workmen discovered it was a bit wider than they had figured, so several of the timbers had to be torn out again to make room for it.

Some of the interior trim of the restaurant and the shops is treated timbers from the old mill, and some driftwood also is effectively utilized.

Fireplace in Young's office is capped by a 20 x 22 inch timber which he unearthed on Boulder Beach. Moss still grows out of it, and it unexpectedly sprouts various plants from time to time.



Some of the interior trim of the Weathervane building is of Onaway stone, found near Petoskey. Pictured above is the stairway in the Weathervane utilizing some of this stone, laid flat.

In Young's office on the ground level is a native stone fireplace capped by a mantel made of a 20 by 22-inch timber unearth from an old shipyard on Boulder Beach. When he discovered this well-preserved timber, Young left it lying in the woods, later had it built into the fireplace.

"It's quite a showpiece," he said. "Moss is still growing on it, and we keep it well sprinkled so that it will continue to thrive. Out of the moss come an unpredictable variety of plants and flowers. We never know what will pop up next. It has sprouted wintergreen, arbutus, toad stools and several other plants. We do all we can to encourage it."

Another center of interest in the upstairs restaurant, a translight blowup picture in color, approximately six by 10 feet, reproduced from a negative of a photo taken by Young when he was a boy in 1904.

It is a scene of old sailing ships lying in Charlevoix harbor. To lend atmosphere to this translight in an alcove, Young had built as its lower frame, a replica of a dock with natural wood planks, on which stands a stuffed seagull and mooring piles such as those used in the old days of Charlevoix shipping.

Ships pictured in the enlarged photo are the Golden Bough, Northern Lady, Jasper B. and Good Squaw, all immortalized in a poem written many years ago by Sarah Teasdale.

Another dining room is being completed on the lower level of the building, which also houses the Carriage Trade Shop, a women's apparel store, Maus-Hoffman (men's wear), Shop of Gulls, a gift shop operated by Young's daughter, Virginia, and Young's downtown office.

The long, rambling structure, with large areas devoted to windows overlooking pleasing scenic vistas, is 146 feet long between Lake Michigan and Michigan Ave. It varies in width from 30 to 46 feet.

Some of the walls on the lower level are made of the pine wood which originally were the grain chutes used in the old mill. The oily grain has rubbed the soft wood to a delightfully smooth patina that glows softly and is like velvet to the touch.

Young, while delving through the old grain bins, also came upon three wooden, handmade grain shovels. He prizes these highly as relics of a bygone era which he has attempted to perpetuate in the reconstruction of one of Charlevoix's oldest buildings.