

# Welcome to Escanaba

## Historic Downtown Walking Tour

Image courtesy Hurley Marine

### A Little Background

The Escanaba area of Delta County is the home of the Chippewa and Potawatomie. The name “Escanaba” is derived from the Chippewa word for the Escanaba River meaning “Flat Rock.” The first permanent European descent resident in this area dates back to 1830 when fur trader Louis Roberts settled here. Platted by surveyor Eli Royce for the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad, Escanaba was incorporated as a village in 1863, and as a city in 1883. The area was initially famous for shipping lumber, then iron ore. Escanaba is the Upper Peninsula’s third largest city with a 2020 population of 12,450.

Iron ore was mined from the Marquette Iron Range beginning in the 1840’s, and shipped by rail to Marquette and Escanaba. When the Menominee Range began producing in the 1860’s, ore was shipped by rail to Escanaba. Several large wooden docks were used to load ships with lumber, iron ore, and coal along with a commercial dock. As shipping increased, a lighthouse was needed to warn of the sand shoals in Little Bay de Noc. The United States Lighthouse Service approved construction of the Sand Point Lighthouse which became operational in 1867.

Escanaba lies in a humid continental climate typified by significant temperature differences. This area is often called the “banana belt” of the Upper Peninsula due to its location on the windward Lake Michigan shoreline, well south of the Lake Superior lake-effect snow zone. The average high is 51 degrees, average low is 33 degrees. Average rainfall is 29” with annual average snowfall at 50.”

Current industry includes Billerud Paper, EMP Corporation, North Shore Marine, Besse Forest Products, Upper Hand Brewery and Bay College. Escanaba is home of the annual August Upper Peninsula State Fair.

### 328 N 10th St. - North Shore Marine Terminal

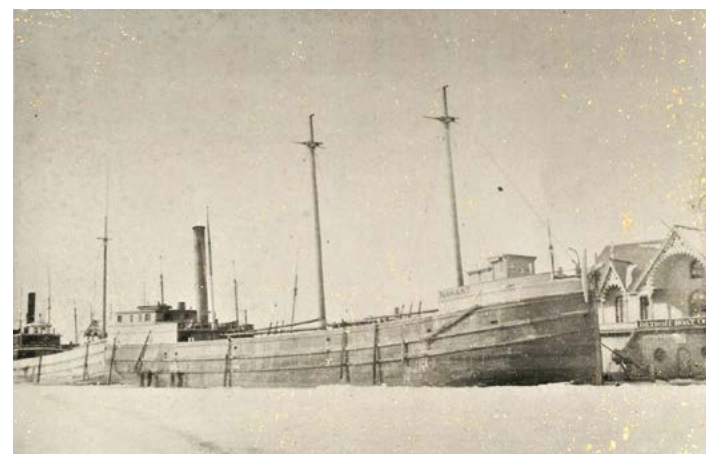
North Shore Marine operates a full-service marine construction and repair facility and dredging company. Operations began in 2014 from the former Basic Marine dating from 1979. North Shore’s fully-equipped fabrication shop includes a 1,000-ton Cincinnati brake and a plasma cutting table, fitting, welding, forming, rolling, surface preparation, coating, and installation of electrical, mechanical and safety systems. The facility features a 160’ x 65’ certified floating drydock. North Shore has more than 2,000 feet of dockside space and a 1,200-foot pier averaging 24 feet deep. North Shore has recently hosted repair and fitting out of U.S. Navy Littoral Combat Ships. Basic Towing, a sister company of North Shore Marine, has extensive experience with ice breaking, launch assistance and specialty hauls.



### The Nahant Wreck Buoy

Just east of the Municipal Dock lies the submerged wreck of the steamer Nahant which is marked in Little Bay de Noc by a green can buoy. Remains of the ship lie in 16’– 20’, of water. Items found on the boat are exhibited in the Sand Point Lighthouse and featured in interpretive media.

The Nahant was a wooden cargo steamer that burned to the waterline in late November 1897. Two people died in the tragedy. The boat was tied to the ore dock when it caught fire. The boat was cut loose from the docks while afire and sank with the stern toward the lighthouse. A large oil painting of the Nahant graces the north wall in the Public Library. The ship’s bell is displayed in the historical society lighthouse.



## Sand Point Lighthouse & Delta County Historical Museum

Escanaba was a busy harbor with six ore docks at one time. Mackinac boats, schooners, steamers and whalebacks frequented the port. In the 1890s Escanaba led the world in shipment of iron ore. Established in 1867 by the U.S. Lighthouse Service, the Sand Point light was built for \$11,000. The lighthouse was rebuilt after an 1886 fire destroyed the structure. After decommissioning by the Coast Guard in 1939 it was used for U.S.C.G. crew quarters. Today red light and reproduction 4th order Fresnel lens shine continuously over the lake.

Keeper Mary Terry was appointed in 1868 and stood watch for 18 years - one of the first women lighthouse keepers on the Great Lakes. She died in the fire that destroyed the lighthouse.

When the lighthouse was built, it was at the waters edge, warning ships off Sand Point and the sand reef that reaches out into the bay. The harbor was drastically changed by dredging and filling and the sand point and reef hazard became part of Ludington Park which left the lighthouse some distance from the water. The current green and white harbor crib light was constructed in 1938.

The boathouse was brought to Sand Point from the Squaw Point on the Stonington Peninsula in 1914. It houses a restored wooden Coast Guard surfboat.



## 100 Ludington – Former Hansen/Jensen Fishery

North and east of the Delta County Courthouse was the site of an important local fishery business. Peter Jensen and Hans Hansen both immigrated from Denmark in 1881, bringing experience gained on the North Atlantic. Hansen and Jensen purchased the former Booth and Sons fishery. The shoreline slip they worked out of can be see today in front of a local residence. Fish were purchased wholesale from local fishermen then packed in ice for shipment by the Railway Express Agency and the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad to Chicago and New York. Fishing in this area was originally accomplished with Mackinac Boats and eventually gasoline powered fish tugs. Hansen and Jensen were the first to establish a gas pump at their dock, which led to opening the first gas station and fuel business in Escanaba.



## 223 Ludington Street - The House of Ludington

This is an excellent example of the Queen Anne style resort architecture that flourished during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The House of Ludington is the oldest continuing hotel and inn still operating within the city of Escanaba. It embodies the period when the city was a growing center of commerce and expanding population. The Ludington House was one of the earliest and largest of this class of hostelry. Guests came by rail and by lake steamer to visit Escanaba and view scenic Bay de Noc. The buildings architecture has changed many times over the years. Listed in the State Register of Historic Sites in 1981, the State of Michigan historic marker reveals that in 1864, E. Gaynor built the Gaynor House hotel, which he renamed the Ludington House in 1871, after lumberman Nelson Ludington. An advertisement in the 1893 Michigan Gazetteer read, "New Ludington Hotel - The Largest and Only hotel in the city having Baths, Steam Heat and Electric Call Bells - \$2.00 per day." The 1913 Sanborn map identifies the establishment as the New Ludington Hotel with 90 guest rooms. Pat Hayes owned and managed the hotel during its heydays from the 1940's - 60's. His influence at the hotel made it "the" place to stay for many years and the restaurant rivaled the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island. The House of Ludington is currently being rehabilitated to once again become a premier hotel.



### 616 Ludington - Gust Asp Building (1893-99)

This interesting art deco brick building dates back to when many of Ludington Street buildings were constructed. Its character is defined by a streamline inspired sign. Its central segment is emphasized by neon strips. Sections are lettered "TOBACCOS" and "SOUVENIRS" below "GUST" and "ASP." An arrow pointing down to the entrance flashes alternately "JUST ASK" and "GUST ASP." The moderne marquis and neon signage appear to date to 1930's when Asp bought the building. In 1906 it was a ladies' tailor shop, then an office for the J.K. Stack Lumber Co. The 1937 city directory notes for the first time Gust C Asp news dealer, an occupancy that continues today. At the time it was an important purveyor of local, regional and national newspapers. Asp was an influential businessman and community leader.



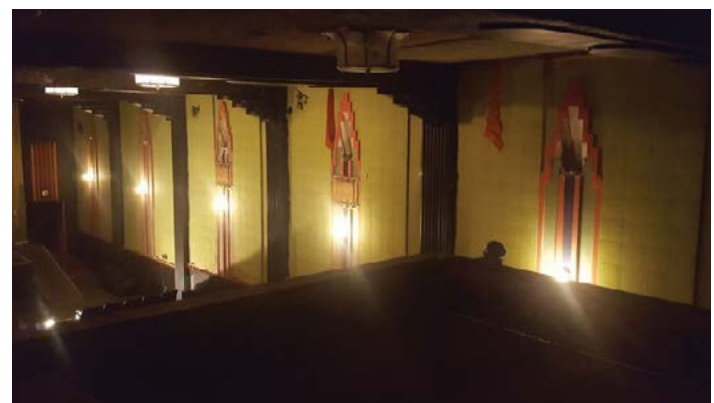
### 723 Ludington - Escanaba National Bank (1917-1957)

Escanaba builder John S. Lindsey constructed this rectangular masonry building on a conspicuous corner lot in the heart of the business district at 8th Street. Massive Doric columns flank the central entry bays and the equally scaled flanking pilasters near the building corners. The façade's columns and pilasters reveal simple capitals supporting a broad frieze with applied letters proclaiming "ESCANABA NATIONAL BANK." This is perhaps the best example in the district of Neo-Classical style influence in its monumental scale, colossal Doric columns, rigid symmetry, parapet and relatively smooth wall surfaces. Offices in the building were occupied by a number of businesses and professionals over the decades. John K. Stack and John Corcoran organized the Bank of Escanaba, a private bank, in 1892. Stack played an instrumental role in the paper mill being built here. Contracts to construct the new building were awarded in 1916, and John S. Lindsey of Escanaba was the general contractor for \$10,500, with the interior finish and fixtures costing \$12,300. The new bank building was occupied on the firm's 25th anniversary in 1917: "In pursuance of its policy of favoring home industry, the bank had a great deal of the work on the new building done by local firms." The banking room is furnished in Bottocini marble, bronze and mahogany. The building is undergoing renovation to become the new Lake Effect Distillery.



### 809-811 Ludington - Michigan Theater

Around 1900 this site was occupied by a saloon called The Lumberman's Place. Sanborn maps reveal The Strand Theater occupied this location from sometime after 1913 until after 1929. Between 1929 and 1930, the theatre was redone and renamed the Michigan Theater. Its angular silhouette and clean geometric ornamentation indicates its design was strongly influenced by the Art Deco style popular during the 1930s. Photos from 1937 reveal that the exterior of this building is virtually unchanged from its period of construction. By 1937 the Michigan Theater occupied this location through 1959. When the theater opened it was owned and managed by the Delft Theaters through 1975, then by Melcorp Theaters until it closed in 1985. In 2003 the large silver screen was still present in the 340-seat auditorium (which was rented out to local groups), as was the stage, although it had been enlarged, while the concession and lobby area of the theater was converted to a clothing store and later the Silver Winds Church. Current owners are in the process of restoring the theater as second run movie - beer - pizza - arcade venue.



### 907 Ludington - Delft Opera House/Delft Theater

This brick, two-story theater was constructed in 1913 and is one of the most distinctive buildings in the central business district. The red Flemish bond brick alternating with white-painted masonry grace the exterior and extend to the arcade next door revealing a strong Dutch Renaissance Revival style influence. A \$5,000 pipe organ was installed in 1915. The interior, including balcony and stage, remains generally intact today, and was most recently used as a night club and entertainment venue. Sanborn maps reveal this building had a capacity of 830, with both a balcony towards the façade and a stage and scenery area at the rear behind asbestos curtains. Violinist/composer Fritz Kreisler and John Phillips Sousa's band played there. Local manager Lawrence Jacobs hosted musicals, theatre, movies and other productions. The theater was designed by the Charleton & Kuenzli architects of Marquette and Milwaukee. The theater was leased to M.W. Jopling, manager of the Marquette Opera House, who often booked the same theater companies into the two venues. The second floor of the Arcade Recreation Parlor Building next door contains a former bowling alley. At one point it was apparently known as the Delft Building and that the Delft Club, "A Public Club for Ladies and Gentlemen, Bowling and Billiards." Current owners are retrofitting it into a cannabis-friendly entertainment venue.



### 702 7th Street - St. Joseph Church, Former Gymnasium and Auditorium / Bonifas Fine Arts Center

This pair of buildings enhance the downtown area with their beautiful Romanesque structure of golden Kasota limestone construction that was quarried in southwest Minnesota. Designed by Foeller, Schober & Berniers Architects of Green Bay they were built in 1937 and 1938 by A.M. Arntzen of Escanaba.

Some of the lumber-based fortune of William Bonifas financed the new St. Joseph church, school gym and auditorium. William "Big Bill" Bonifas had come to the Upper Peninsula from Luxembourg in the 1880's to cut timber and make his fortune. His Irish-born wife, Catherine, returned another kind of wealth to the area with her donations of cultural and educational value.

The art center/auditorium interior has been extensively renovated to serve its repurposing as an art gallery, studios, and cultural center, but retains the theater with its balcony. The theater is used for concerts and by Players de Noc for plays. Renovation of the building has been ongoing over the years, and most traces of its former use are now replaced with modern administrative offices, climate-controlled upper and lower galleries, upper and lower level art studios, a pottery workshop, and a theater. The William Bonifas Arts Center was established in 1974 through the efforts of various arts groups including the Bay Area Art Association and the Players de Noc, it became a regional hub for cultural activities and educational programs.



### 201 S. 7th Street - Carnegie Library

Steel magnate Andrew Carnegie donated more than \$40 million to construct 1,679 community libraries across the U.S. Our Carnegie library was constructed of red Lake Superior (Bayfield) sandstone and brick in 1903 and is a fine example of Neo-Classical architecture. It features a distinctive central metal-roofed dome with louvered cupola and finial, which rises from an octagonal sandstone block platform. In 1995 the building was sold by the city with preservation covenants, to a local businessman. In 1977 it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



