

Detroit Lake's Graystone Hotel

Returning to former stature



and apartments, as well as businesses such as a bank, liquor store and newspaper office. The hotel annex carefully and considerably bricked in the 1920s by Holmes was sold in 1963. New owners tore down an adjacent stone building once used for employee living quarters to make room for a new parking lot. Plans to modernize the hotel never came to fruition, and successive absentee owners gave little attention to remodeling projects.

The Graystone discontinued hotel service forever on January 15, 1973. Instead, 22 apartments shared the building with

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commercial space. Problems remained, and the building fell into further disrepair. The once grand hotel became a seedy home to crime and community shame. Something needed to be done. The Midwestern Minnesota Community Development Corporation, a non-profit agency based in Detroit Lakes, acquired the property in 1998. MMDC, with financial help from state and local business and agencies, is rapidly transforming the six-building complex back to its original stature.

The hotel's rich history has been important since the project's inception. The hotel was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in July 1999,

and careful attention has been paid to retaining the building's historic character. The hotel's exterior is being completely restored, including all new windows.

More difficult problems arise in preserving interior elements. Dr. Allen Kangas, MMDC president, has worked extensively in ensuring historic integrity is preserved, while modern building codes and technological elements are included. The State Historic Preservation Office consulted with project engineers and architects at every step. Original floors, woodwork, railings and lobby fireplace were all retained. In other cases, historic ele-



Also left: When the Graystone Hotel first opened in 1917, it was a full-service luxury hotel that served the holiday needs of both tourists and businessmen who headed to Detroit Lakes. When the hotel was abandoned this year, the original elements that could be used were rescued.

Also: The hotel's original ceiling, floor and woodwork were retained during the \$3.5 million restoration.

Left: A plaque commemorates the Graystone's addition in 1999 to the National Register of Historic Places.

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pleted hotel so laborers could work in relative comfort underneath the huge tent. This feat had never been accomplished with a project of this size in the area.



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ments that could not be saved were recreated. New windows preserve natural architectural lines but meet current building codes and are more energy efficient. Marble wainscoting, previously destroyed, was recreated. New technology was seamlessly incorporated into renovation efforts. A state-of-the-art security system, fiber optic, heating and cooling system, new plumbing, and computer network make the complex truly modern. In residential sections, the structure's existing natural lines dictated apartment layouts.

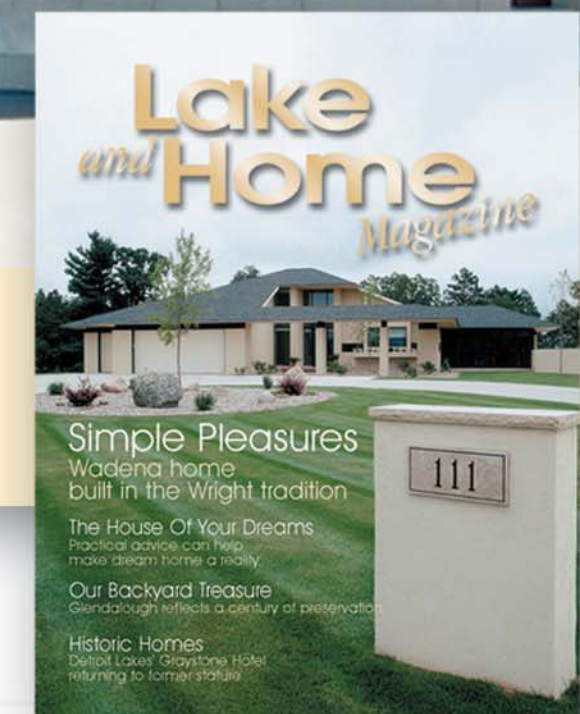
Not only architecturally accurate, MMDC has wisely retained the complex's original use, a mix of residential and commercial. Twenty-two income-adjusted housing units will be complemented by public space in the lobby area and commercial space. The entire project should be completely finished by May 2002. Most of the facility's 36,000 square feet are currently spoken for, but limited space still remains.

Similar renovation projects are taking place throughout the lakes area, with far more to be done. They represent an exciting shift from sprawl development to a genuine interest in preservation and revitalization. The result is far more important and impressive. These communities are reclaiming parts of their collective past, and with it civic pride.

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The original lobby fireplace that was retained during the renovation of the Graystone Hotel.

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