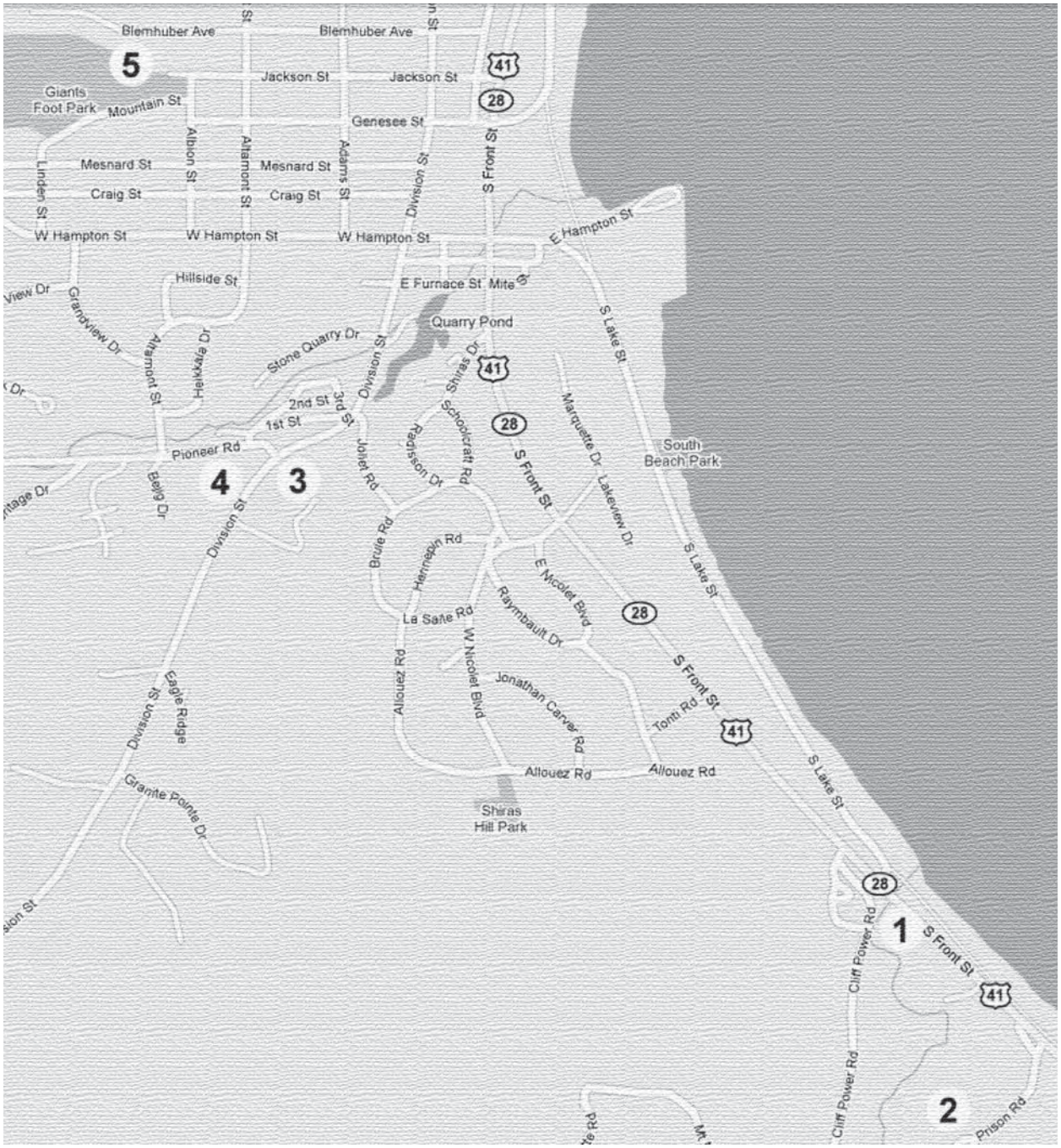
PART II:
SOUTH MARQUETTE



1. Carp River & Charcoal Kilns
2. Marquette Branch Prison
3. Brookridge
4. Old Catholic Cemetery
5. Hotel Superior

Carp River & Charcoal Kilns

Gerald immediately took Lucius to the river bank where the forge was to be built. The old man heartily approved, and he made several suggestions until Gerald was thoroughly impressed with his knowledge and experience. As they walked back to town, Lucius keeping up with Gerald's swift gait, Gerald described the hardships to be expected from a life in this wilderness.

"They can't be any worse than when I was a boy," Lucius replied. "My father uprooted us from Vermont to go into upstate New York, which was all wilderness at the turn of the century, but now it's so built up my father wouldn't recognize it if he were alive."

Gerald felt the true pioneer spirit in this man, and Lucius had an incredible knowledge of iron ore; he had made blooms out of ore shipped from all over the world, even as far away as Russia. Then as Gerald and Lucius passed the little blacksmith building, Lucius suggested they peek inside. They watched the blacksmith for a minute; then Lucius started to ask the man questions. Gerald stood silently, knowing nothing about the work, while Lucius rolled up his shirt sleeves, picked up a hammer and tongs and struck some blows, showing the blacksmith himself a trick or two. Gerald watched the veins of Lucius's arms bulge as he swung the hammer with the strength and dexterity

Charcoal Kiln

> *of a man half his age. Gerald knew he personally lacked such physical power. Lucius appeared a veritable Vulcan come to bring civilization to the pioneers. Yet what most impressed Gerald was the man's eagerness and his apparent enjoyment in getting his hands dirty; such earthiness would prove the foundation of his shrewd business mind. Gerald's father was brilliant at bookkeeping and business deals, but the actual labor itself—never would he have stooped to such work. But Lucius did not stoop; in labor, he manifested his mastery of Vulcan's art. Lucius would be a strength to Gerald's business ventures and to the entire community…*
>
> — Iron Pioneers

Just south of Marquette and Iron Bay is the Carp River. Here in *Iron Pioneers*, I imagined Gerald Henning and Lucius Brookfield building their first forge. Forges were generally built along rivers and streams so the moving water could be used to power them. One of the first forges, the Jackson forge, was built farther up the Carp River just south of present-day Negaunee; today its location is part of the Michigan Iron Industry Museum on Forge Road.

Several forges were built around Marquette in those early days, so I decided to invent a fictional one for Lucius and Gerald to operate. My ancestor, Basil Bishop, whom Lucius is loosely based upon, never did build the forge he initially intended when he decided to come to Marquette, but rather he worked with the city's founder, Amos Harlow, at the one he established.

Forges ultimately proved to be ineffective because of the cost to refine the ore prior to shipping it. By the late 1850s, the local forges were already shutting down, and the ore began to be shipped raw to Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Cleveland and other industrial centers where greater resources were available to refine the ore before turning it into steel.

Today, the only remnant of the early iron ore industry along the Carp River are two charcoal kilns that stand beside US 41 as you head south out of Marquette. These charcoal kilns were not connected to a forge, but rather used as part of a blast furnace to produce pig iron. In 1852, John Burt started a sawmill on the Carp River, and later, in 1872, he built the Carp River Blast Furnace. Thirty-six charcoal kilns were built for the furnace where hardwood was burned to supply fuel for the furnace. The kilns functioned from 1874 to 1916. The remaining two kilns have been preserved with timber inserts to keep them from crumbling down, and they are protected from vandals by a cyclone fence.

The Carp River is also notable in my own family's history because my great-great grandfather, Jerome White, died from serious injuries in a runaway carriage accident at the Carp River Bridge in 1900. Jerome, the source for Jacob Whitman in *Iron Pioneers*, lived on what is today Ford Road in Cherry Creek. I decided his fictional counterpart would also die fairly young, but when I realized what I originally conceived as one historical novel was going to become a trilogy, I had to decide where to divide the books. I thought it would be more dramatic if Jacob Whitman died at the end of the first book, thus leaving suspense about what would become of his two young sons. Consequently, I changed his death to 1897 to coincide with celebrations surrounding the unveiling that year of the Father Marquette statue, which I felt a fitting place to end my first novel about Marquette's history. A sudden death for Jacob was also more dramatic than letting him linger for weeks as did Jerome White, following his accident. And so, the Carp River got written out of the scene, but nevertheless, Jerome's runaway carriage accident did inspire a dramatic death for Jacob even if the deaths happened differently.

The Jerome White House in Cherry Creek

MARQUETTE BRANCH PRISON & THE SUNKEN GARDENS

"Patrick's a good husband to Kathy; he's got a good, steady job at the prison."

"The prison? Where's that?"

"Oh, it's a state branch prison. It was built just south of town maybe half a dozen years ago. It's a large sandstone building, quite impressive. You should drive past it before you leave."

Gerald shook his head in wonder. "A state prison here in Marquette. I can't believe it."

"They built it here because we're so remote from the rest of the state. Most of the prisoners come from Lower Michigan, and if they break out, they only get lost in the woods, especially in winter, so they're soon caught. Even if the prisoners got out of the Upper Peninsula, they'd have to travel through Wisconsin to get back downstate."

— Iron Pioneers

Marquette Branch Prison's Sunken Garden & Frog Fountain ~ 1998

Where should you go on your Sunday drive? To Marquette Branch Prison of course. People used to do it all the time to see the sunken gardens, which were quite beautiful in their day, although they have not been kept up as well in recent years. In *Superior Heritage*, John Vandelaare first learns about his great-grandfather, Patrick McCarey, when as a young boy, his grandparents take him for a drive through the prison grounds and his grandmother mentions that her father used to be a guard at the prison.

Marquette Branch Prison was built in 1889 because prisons in Lower Michigan were becoming overcrowded and because the Marquette Business Association, and Peter White in particular, lobbied to get a prison in Marquette to provide jobs in the area. Since the prison's construction, thousands of inmates have been incarcerated there.

It's almost a shame the prison is not viewable from US 41. The main administration building is built of sandstone like many other Marquette buildings. Its turrets and high towers make it look like a foreboding castle.

The prison is one of the few Marquette landmarks to have an entire book written about it, *One Hundred Years at Hard Labor: A History of Marquette State Prison* by Ike Wood. The book goes into great detail about many of the wardens, guards, and prisoners, and also the prison breaks that occurred during the prison's first century.

Not mentioned in *One Hundred Years at Hard Labor*, was my great-grandfather, John Molby. However, Mr. Wood rectified this oversight by signing a special book to my cousin, Ted Molby, and mentioning my great-grandfather as a prison guard in it. My great-grandfather's role as a prison guard inspired me to have Patrick McCarey work as a prison guard in *Iron Pioneers* and *The Queen City*. While I do not know precisely what years my great-grandfather served there, for dramatic reasons, I made Patrick a guard during the 1921 Prison Riot, when a prisoner nearly kills him, but he is rescued by another prisoner, Harry Cumming, because he had been kind to Harry earlier.

The 1921 Prison Riot was the worst prison riot, but other riots have occurred over the years, and not a few prison breaks have taken place. Escapes seem few and far between today but several happened during my childhood. Prisoners who do escape usually try to get through the woods since the only other option is Lake Superior. The woods behind the prison ultimately will lead the prisoner into Marquette or to County Road 480 or County Road 553. I grew up by the Crossroads where County

Road 480 and Country Road 553 meet. At least twice, prisoners have been caught in this vicinity. Once a prisoner was caught at a gas station by the Crossroads, five miles from the prison and a half mile from my house. Another prisoner was actually caught in my next door neighbor's backyard. He was ready to give himself up at that point. Five miles of forest were enough for him.

Most of the escaped prisoners have no idea what to do once they get outside the prison's walls. The Upper Peninsula is such an isolated place it is hard to get out of it without being caught—an escapee would either have to make it to the Wisconsin border, at least eighty miles away, over the International Bridge into Canada—unlikely to be successful and 150 miles from Marquette—or over the Mackinac Bridge to Lower Michigan, 165 miles from Marquette. But even to reach these safe havens, first the escapee has to get through the woods, and since many of the prison inmates come from Lower Michigan and metropolitan areas, they do not have the skills to survive in the woods, especially in winter when the temperature is commonly around zero and the snow several feet deep or in summer when the humidity and the mosquitoes can drive a person nearly mad. Couple those conditions with fear of being lost and starving and it is not surprising that a prisoner will turn himself in when he reaches civilization. To my knowledge, no prisoner has ever successfully gotten out of Upper Michigan without being captured.

In 2004, local author and Northern Michigan University professor John Smolens wrote the novel, *Cold*, about a convict who escapes from Marquette Branch Prison in the dead of winter. He encounters a widow in her cabin. What ensues between them, once she realizes he's an escaped prisoner, is wonderfully suspenseful.

But what about those popular gardens that inspired Sunday drives? In the 1920s, the sunken gardens were built and dedicated to Warden Corgan and his wife after Mrs. Corgan had first suggested laying out the gardens to beautify the prison and provide activity for the prisoners. Although the gardens have not always been kept up, they are still available to be viewed whenever the prison gates are open, which is most days. Many people squirm at the thought of riding through the prison to see the gardens, but no one has ever had a problem, although photos are no longer allowed. Be sure not to miss the spitting frog fountain.

Spitting Frog Fountain

Brookridge

Because of my memory, I can always be back in the past again—like when I drive along County Road 553, and I come around the curve into Marquette, still expecting to see the old Brookridge Estate standing there, momentarily forgetting it's been torn down. As long as I remember, the past is still part of the present for me, and I'll always be able to live in Old Marquette. As I get older, I imagine I'll live even more in the past, but maybe that's what it means to get older.

— Superior Heritage

I grew up by the Crossroads south of town, so whenever I came into Marquette with my parents on County Road 553, I would pass by the old Brookridge estate. I was always a bookworm, always reading in the backseat of the car, but when we approached the curve where the road came into Marquette, I would reverently look up from my book and turn my head to the right where the Brookridge estate stood proudly like some old English estate, the home of a country squire, a carriage house in the back, an apple orchard to the side, and with a lane lined with Lombardy Poplars that led up to the front door. In those days, I felt if I could have lived in any house in Marquette, the Brookridge estate would have been the one. The entire property spoke of a time past, a simpler time that created within me a sort of "Good Old Days" nostalgia. Although it was by then abandoned and a couple of its windows broken, the house's stately presence could still be felt. I dreamed of the day when I would purchase it and rename it Plumfield after the boys' school in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Men*, one of my favorite books at the time—the ideal place for a boy to grow up.

Even when I found out the Brookridge estate had originally been the Marquette County Poor Farm, I thought no less of it. If anything, I probably thought that made it all the better—it had been a charitable place, and a farm, and so had Plumfield been as the Bhaers took in boys to their school and turned their lives around.

Brookridge Estate ~ c. 1905

The first poor farm in Marquette began on this site in 1873. In 1900, Marquette residents decided an improved structure was necessary and the new facility, the one I would so grow to love, was built at a cost of $15,000 in 1901. The staunch new building of red brick, sandstone, and yellow trim looked like a giant, solid home, a safe haven. Twenty-seven rooms sat on forty-seven acres of pastures, orchards, and woods surrounded by a brook. The farm produced vegetables and potatoes and even had some cows to produce dairy products.

While officially named the Marquette County Citizens' Home, everyone in Marquette commonly knew it as "the Poor Farm." Its residents were self-sustaining, taking care of the house and property. Fred Rydholm, local Marquette historian, noted in a 1986 *Mining Journal* article that his mother worked there as a nurse about 1912 at which time it also served as Marquette's earliest nursing home, primarily for older people including lumberjacks in their sunset years. At its peak, as many as thirty-five people lived in the house, but by the mid-twentieth century, the population declined. When the building finally closed its doors in 1965, it had only a dozen residents remaining.

Four years later the house became a teaching facility, operated by the Marquette Alger Intermediate School District, for emotionally impaired children, and was renamed Brookridge. Funds to sustain the facility were scarce and after twelve years the house was closed. It was during the years it was closed that I remember it.

Various attempts were made to save the property as a historical landmark and it was even listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places for its distinctive early twentieth century architecture. Talk of turning the property into a country inn or a holistic healthcare center fell through in the 1980s. Then in 1994, the property was sold to Marquette General Hospital and the grand old house razed.

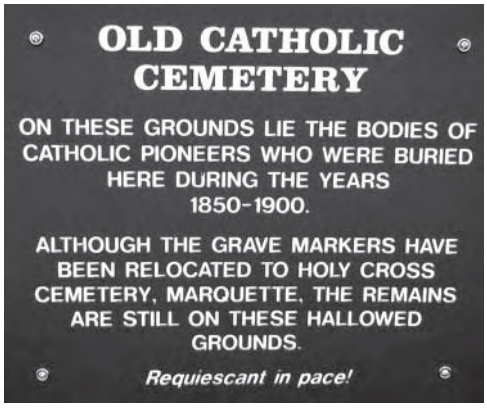
I was devastated by the tearing down of my dream home. I still have all the articles from *The Mining Journal* about the debate over what to do with the property and its eventual demolition. I am no poet, but I was moved enough at the time to write a mournful poem over the loss of my imaginary home, which I'll spare the reader from perusing.

Like John Vandelaare in the quotation above, every once in a while I still catch myself in a time warp, turning my head as I drive by to look at the old Brookridge estate. Since 1998, the modern Brookridge Heights assisted living facility has stood in its place, but in my mind's eye, the grand old house is still there, waiting for me to ride up to it on my horse and announce I am home like any good English country squire would do.

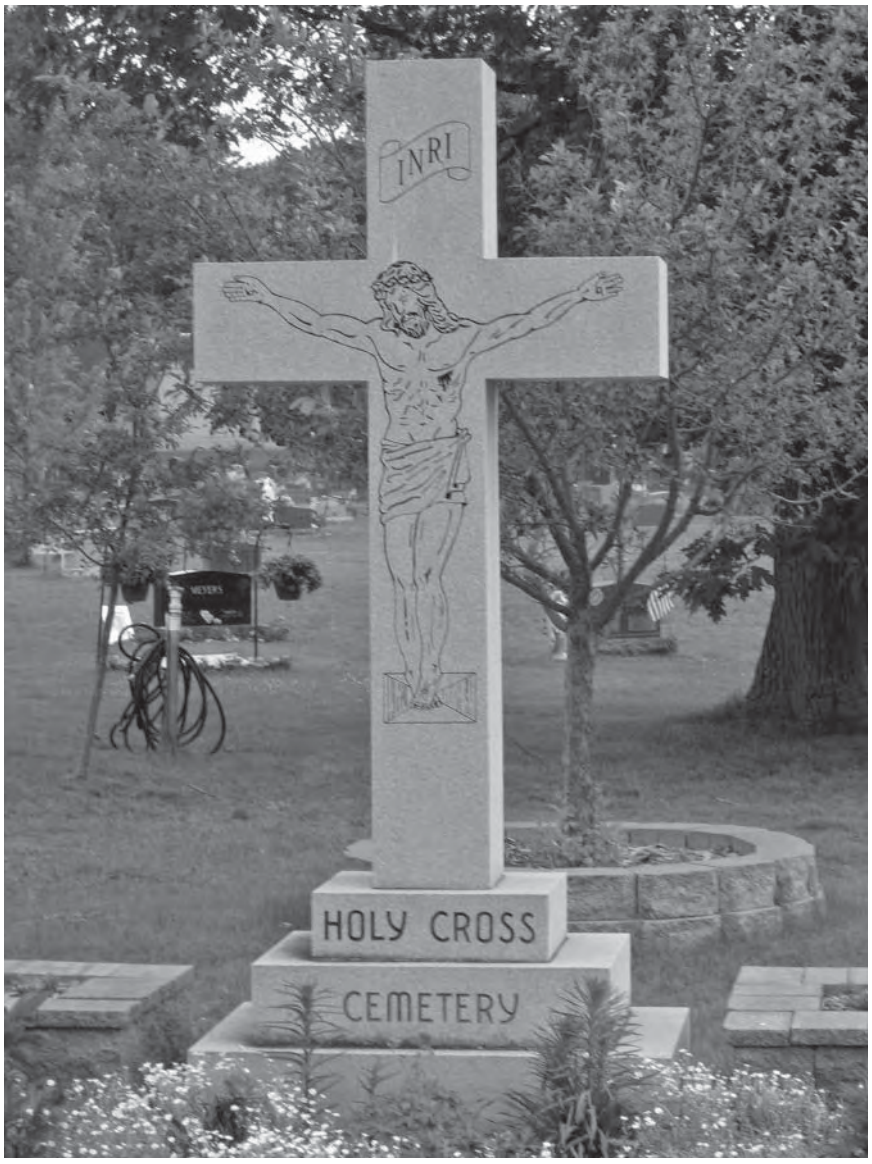
Catholic Cemeteries: Pioneer Road & Holy Cross Cemetery

The family got through the funeral. Grandpa had not gone to church in fifty years, but the funeral must be religious. Grandma wanted him buried in Holy Cross Cemetery, not in Park Cemetery with his Protestant relatives.

— Superior Heritage



Old Catholic Cemetery Marker



Holy Cross Cemetery Marker

Across the street from the former Brookridge estate, on the corner of County Road 553 and Pioneer Road, is a patch of woods where once the Old Catholic Cemetery existed. It became the burial place for Marquette's Catholics in 1861. Prior to that, Catholics had been buried on the property where the cathedral now stands. The new cemetery would within fifty years become the Old Catholic Cemetery. By the early 1900s, the new Holy Cross Cemetery off Wright Street opened, and between 1912 and 1925, the remains of some 165

Relocated Grave Markers

Catholics were transferred from the old cemetery to the new one, although not all the bodies were removed.

While I do not know for certain where they rest, my best guess is that my great-great-grandparents, John Buschell, his wife Elizabeth, and maybe her second husband Jeremiah O'Leary are all buried in the Old Catholic Cemetery.

Today, the forest has reclaimed the old cemetery property off Pioneer Road. Gradually, while some of the bodies were left behind, all the gravestones were removed—some for a time in the 1980s I remember being in the front yard of the John Burt Pioneer home when it was still a museum, but eventually all the stones that remained intact were transferred to Holy Cross Cemetery where they lie in the grass, most of them scarcely readable.

Today, all Catholics are buried at Holy Cross Cemetery in Marquette. In the cemetery's early years, Catholics were strict that only Catholics could be buried there. As a result, my great-grandmother, Lily Buschell Molby, lies in Holy Cross while her husband, John Molby, not being Catholic, is buried in Park Cemetery, which accepted all denominations.

By the 1980s, burial laws were less strict. John and Lily's daughter, my grandmother, Grace Molby White, also married outside the Catholic Church, but she wanted to be buried in the Catholic cemetery, so my grandpa, raised a Baptist, also agreed to be buried there. Today my grandparents rest in Holy Cross Cemetery with my grandma's family while my grandpa's family rests in Park Cemetery.

A few years after my grandparents passed away, my parents bought plots near them in Holy Cross Cemetery, including plots for my brother and me. At only thirty years old, I wasn't too crazy about having a grave plot waiting for me, but I guess it doesn't hurt to plan ahead.

Grace & Lester White Grave

Hotel Superior

"There's the Hotel Superior!" shouted Clarence.

"That's a hotel?" asked Gerald as Will turned the wagon up its driveway.

"Yes," said Will. "It was built to be a fashionable health resort. Marquette is considered to have the healthiest climate in the world because of its fresh air and clean water, so people come from all over the country to spend summers here."

"I can see why," said Gerald, straining his head to see the top of the Hotel Superior. "It looks like you could fit the entire population of Marquette into this hotel—probably all the livestock from the surrounding farms as well."

"Only the richest people can stay or eat here," said Clarence.

"Well," said Gerald, raising his eyebrows, "I hope they'll let us in then."

— Iron Pioneers

Hotel Superior

Today, all that remains of the Hotel Superior are a few foundation pieces at the terminal points of Blemhuber and Jackson Streets. There is little point in going to the site and trying to locate these—they are not easy to find. Better to look at a photograph of the grandest hotel Marquette has ever known.

The Hotel Superior was built with the belief that Marquette could be celebrated as a health spa environment full of fresh air, clean water, and refreshing lake breezes that would invigorate people. It was the northern answer to the doctor's urging a sick person to spend the summer at the seashore. A visit to Marquette was touted as able to relieve hay fever sufferers, and also as the perfect place to summer if you were wealthy and traveling on the Great Lakes. The intention was for the Hotel Superior to outrival all other hotels on the lakes, including the recently built Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island.

The Hotel Superior's enormous tower rose up two hundred feet, while its pointed arches resembled a Bavarian castle. Inside, visitors were treated to the latest innovations in plumbing and electric lighting. Even Turkish baths were available. The spacious porch was sixteen feet wide, and the porch and rooms provided a view of scenic Lake Superior as well as South Marquette. Lush gardens filled the grounds. Nothing like the Hotel Superior had ever been seen, or ever again would be seen, in Marquette.

But right from its opening in 1891, the Hotel Superior would have its troubles. When I wrote the original draft of *Iron Pioneers*, I set in 1894 the scene where Gerald Henning takes his grandsons to lunch at the Hotel Superior and they are pleasantly surprised to be joined by Peter White. Later, in double checking my facts, I discovered that as early as the summer of 1894, the hotel had closed because of financial troubles. Fortunately, it reopened in 1895, so I moved the scene to that year.

Considering how few years the Hotel Superior actually operated, I set as many scenes as possible there—two. The second scene is in 1897, when a ball was held in the hotel following the unveiling of the Father Marquette Statue—at this grand ball, thirteen year old Margaret Dalrymple is annoyed that handsome seventeen year old Will Whitman is dancing with a "hussy" (Lorna Sheldon, who would eventually be the mother of Eliza Graham in *The Only Thing That Lasts*). By the time of *The Queen City*'s opening in 1902, the Hotel Superior was already closed. Neither the hay fever sufferers, nor the rich and famous came frequently enough to keep the magnificent summer resort in business.

From 1902 onward, the Hotel Superior stood vacant. As long as it remained standing, Marquette residents dreamt of it someday reopening, of its two hundred rooms

filled, of people once more strolling along its five hundred foot veranda. But as the years passed, twenty-seven acres of gardens became grown over and the orchestra music could no longer be heard.

The Hotel Superior became the stuff of mystery in its last years. Boys would reputedly break in to roller skate in the hallways and have pillow fights which resulted in feathers flying out of the high windows and covering South Marquette. Then after it was torn down in 1929, a task Will and Henry Whitman assist with in *The Queen City*, it became the stuff of legend. Local English professor and author, James Cloyd Bowman, whose book *Pecos Bill: The Greatest Cowboy of All Time* was a Newberry Honor book in 1938, used the Hotel Superior as the subject of his 1940 children's novel, *Mystery Mountain*.

The glory of the Hotel Superior lingered long in the memories of Marquette's residents. My great-aunts and uncles who remembered it from their youth frequently mentioned it to me, although it would have already been long closed by the time they were all born.

Anyone who sees a picture of the Hotel Superior today marvels that it ever stood in Marquette. We can only now imagine what it was like to stroll its veranda or to sit in its dining room and have lunch with Peter White.