

BOLHOUSE, BAAR & HOFSTEE, P.C.
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

On a Hill in Marquette

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History, architecture, law, and drama - they all come together in many of Michigan's old historic courthouses. Many courthouses have been torn down over the years, but some of our beautiful old historic courthouses still exist today.

The Marquette County courthouse, which sits on a hill in Marquette, Michigan, was completed in 1904. The courthouse is a Beaux-Arts and Neoclassical structure which has a 3-story central mass with a dome flanked by two 2-story wings. It is built almost entirely of local sandstone over a steel frame. The front of the building is lined with 23-foot granite Doric columns from Maine. The inside of the building has mahogany, marble, mosaic tiles, and stain-glassed windows. The building was renovated in the early 1980s and you can tour it to this day. The building is on the US National Register of Historic Places and listed as a Michigan State Historic Site.

In 1913, a man named George A. Newett, who was the publisher of the Iron Ore, an Ishpeming newspaper, accused former President Teddy Roosevelt of being a drunk. Teddy Roosevelt, who rarely backed down from a fight, sued George A. Newett for libel in the Marquette County Courthouse. After approximately a week of trial before a jury, Mr. Newett stated, "in the face of the unqualified testimony of so many distinguished men ... I am forced to conclude that I was mistaken." Roosevelt then withdrew his claim for damages, asking the jury only for nominal damages. The jury agreed and awarded Roosevelt the sum of six cents. Roosevelt commented that six cents was "the price of a good newspaper."

In 1959, one of the best trial movies ever made, "Anatomy of a Murder," was filmed at the Marquette County Courthouse. The movie, produced and directed by the famous Otto Preminger, was based on a novel of the same name which was written about a murder that actually took place in the Marquette area. The music score for the movie was produced by Duke Ellington, and actors included James Stewart, Lee Remick, Ben Gazzara, Eve Arden, and George C. Scott. The movie was filmed in the same courthouse and courtroom where the actual trial took place. While I don't have space here to detail the plot, it is certainly a movie worth renting.

Michigan's old county courthouses are historic. Most have very impressive architecture and most have seen some significant drama over the years. They also provide a place where the law manifests itself and provides a place where citizens can have their disputes handled in a fair and just manner. If you have the opportunity, visit some of Michigan's remaining old county courthouses. You won't be disappointed.