

## A nostalgic skyline

## Holly recreates its colorful early days

**HOLLY** — When you turn off Interstate 75 at the Holly exit, you leave city and expressway behind in exchange for red barns and huddled houses. Old farmhouses and new ranch houses follow the low Michigan hills into town, where old Victorian mansions lead across the railway tracks to Saginaw Street.

Your first look at the single downtown street says "ordinary old Michigan town," but when you turn into Battle Alley, it has another look; not the look the old-timers remember, but new-old look of buildings given the "nostalgia treatment."

The carved rooftops, molded windows and old-fashioned doorways, restored during the 1970s, make a crooked skyline from Saginaw Street to white pillars of the Holly Hotel.

A sign on the front of the hotel explains why this block is considered part of Michigan history. The railway lines that nourished Holly in the mid-19th century brought a rough crowd to the noisy saloons along the street. After an 1880 brawl between local rowdies and circus workers, the street was named Battle Alley.

Carry Nation, the queen of prohibition, marched through Battle Alley in 1908, belting drinkers on the head with her umbrella and bellowing about "demon rum." The city celebrates that event with the Carry Nation Festival every September, but an increasing number of visitors are coming to Holly for day trips.

It is an interesting, close-to-home travel experience for anyone who is feeling closed in by winter.

**THE HOLLY HOTEL** was rebuilt to its turn-of-the-century design after a major fire in 1978. The renovated building has attracted far more attention than the old one ever did; not to the



**1-of-a-kind traveler Iris Jones**  
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rooms, because you can't rent hotel rooms there anymore, but to the dining room, bar, banquet rooms and cocktail theater.

From the hotel doorway, you can see past the reservations desk to the dining room, where small, candlelit tables sit on a dark-red carpet under the original recessed tin ceiling. The reservations desk is actually the postmaster's counter from the first Holly post office.

Another Michigan antique dominates the main bar, where a soda fountain from Detroit's first Cunningham Drug Store makes a magnificent backdrop to the bar.

Behind the bar are two small dining rooms: The Depot, with bentwood chairs and oak pews "No. 231" overlooking the old railway depot; and the Dining Car, with its original Pullman overhead racks and railway seats.

If you eat in any of the dining rooms, you won't appreciate the antique Toledo scale at the top of the stairs near the banquet hall; the scale still works. The lower level, excavated during the restoration, holds the Battle Alley Saloon and a live cocktail theater that operates every weekend. "A Touch of Broadway" will be offered on Saturday and Sunday evenings in January by TAPS, The Theater of Arts Productions from Birmingham.

**NEW YEAR'S** Eve activities will go on throughout the hotel: regular dining from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. in the main dining room; a \$25-a-couple casual party



Behind the turn-of-the-century exterior of Holly's Battle Alley Arcade is an indoor al-

loy of shops, each with its own nostalgic storefront.

with folk music and champagne downstairs in the Battle Alley Saloon; and a \$75-a-couple gourmet dinner called La Grande Cuisine upstairs in the banquet hall.

Neither the hotel nor the adjoining Battle Alley shops will be open New Year's Day, but the street provides an interesting shopping experience during the rest of the year. In the Battle Alley Arcade, next door to the hotel, an innovative architect has created an indoor alley of shops, each with its own, genuine, turn-of-the-century storefront.

Among the many unusual stores you will find Musically, with its old-fashioned musical instruments and music boxes; the Pampered Lady, where they make scents and soaps to order; Lila's Place, full of interesting trinkets; and The Daily Grind, which sends the smell

of its assorted coffee beans throughout the arcade.

Tea lovers go across the street to Alley Accent for dozens of different loose teas and gourmet kitchenware. Unusual household wares are also available down the street at the Country Loft.

The Holly Hotel is open for lunch from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Saturday; for dinner, 5-10 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 5-11 p.m. Friday and Saturday, noon to 8 p.m. Sunday. Main-course entrees on the dinner menu range from \$11 to \$15. Most items on the lunch menu are under \$5. For reservations, call 1-634-5210.

Holly is just west of I-75, 50 miles north of downtown Detroit, 20 miles north of Pontiac. You can also approach Holly by taking the Fenton exit off US 23.

*Carry Nation, the queen of prohibition, marched through Holly's Battle Alley in 1908, belting drinkers on the head with her umbrella and bellowing about "demon rum."*

Photos by Micky Jones



## Oldest operating inn located in Marshall

Michigan's oldest operating inn is the National House Inn of Marshall.

Built in 1835 as a stagecoach stop, the inn is a National Register site and a Michigan State Historic site.

The National House is furnished with antiques ranging from elaborate Victoriana to country primitive.

Architecturally a Greek Revival structure, the building served as an inn until 1878, when it was converted into a wagon and windmill factory. It was used as apartments until January 1976, when it was restored into an overnight inn.

The National House is not the only historic structure in Marshall. In fact, the city has been labeled the "Williamsburg of the Midwest" since it has more than 1,200 19th-century buildings.

The inn sponsors Candlelight Tour Weekends in which visitors can tour many of these historic structures, which include such architectural styles as Federalist, Gothic Revival, Greek Revival, Italianate and Queen Anne. The tour package includes accommodations at the inn.

The next Candlelight Tour Weekends are scheduled Jan. 14-15 and Jan. 28-29.

For more information, contact the National House Inn, 102 South Parkview, Marshall 49068.

Marshall is located between Jackson and Battle Creek, just off Interstate 94.

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