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LAMBDA CHI ALPHA FRATERNITY HOUSE RESTORATION

After extensive renovation, the LCA fraternity will reopen in August

We're Back, Stronger than Ever

[Houghton, Mi, July 20] Early the morning of June 3, 2022, the entire roof and third floor of the historic Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity House on College Avenue was engulfed in flames. After heroic efforts by emergency personnel from the City of Houghton and surrounding areas and several hundred thousand gallons of water, the fire was extinguished. "Fortunately, and most importantly, there were no injuries to occupants or emergency personnel." said House Corporation Board President Tim Bednark. Despite extensive investigations, the cause of the fire was never determined.

Hours after the fire, an outpouring of support from the local community, Michigan Tech and the entire body of Greek and other campus organizations demonstrated how fortunate we were to be part of such a special community. "It gave us energy and determination to look forward. The fact that most college students forgo rental insurance is a fact. This community created a GoFundMe account that helped

support the residents who lost lodging and personal contents to the fire - truly unbelievable!" said House Corporation Board Member Stephen Williams.

The next three years would become a relentless effort by a very strong group of alumni with diverse backgrounds in engineering, construction, design, finance and law dedicated to bringing the grand house back to its former glory. "With few exceptions, this group has met every Monday night since June of 2022 to ensure that the project kept moving forward. Efforts included many site trips as well as a subgroup dedicated to guiding the active chapter during these difficult times. This effort was not by chance or accident but is a tribute to the rock-solid education we all received at Michigan Tech, and to the Lambda Chi Alpha bond that we forever share". said Bednark.

Once the structure was deemed sound and remediation was completed, the rebuild and restoration commenced. The insurance company hired Upper Peninsula Engineers & Architects (UPEA) of Houghton as the architect of record for the project, and this proved to be an invaluable local resource. By the end of 2022, the third-floor walls and trussed roof were replaced, and the house was sealed from the elements. "Rebuilding an historic house is difficult, and there was much learning along the journey. Upgrading to current building codes requires substantial modification. As with any project, there are delays, and a significant one was the considerable time required to reach a consensus with the insurance company on the choice of a general contractor." said Greg Carlson, House Corporation Board VP.

In April of 2024, Gundlach Champion, Inc. (GCI) of Iron Mountain/Calumet was chosen as the general contractor for restoration of the house, which evidence supports was originally built by Herman Gundlach himself in 1899. Work rapidly accelerated and by the end of 2024 most of the structural, interior partition walls and exterior work had been completed. As winter intensified, activity inside of the house reached full swing. GCI subcontractor Aire Care of Houghton was chosen to install the new forced air heating system, plumbing, electrical and fire suppression. "The company did a masterful job of modernizing the house mechanically and electrically while making it nearly invisible to the casual observer." said Carlson. GCI subcontractor World of Wood (WoW) in Hancock was chosen for all the unique and stunning wood trim and flooring throughout the interior and exterior of the house, most of which had to be recreated from scratch using the water damaged pieces as patterns. "The result is nothing short of amazing, as every piece of intricate trim in the house matches the original exactly, restoring to life one of the most prominent

features of this grand structure." said Marty Gamble, Special Advisor to the House Corporation.

The reconstruction team proudly prioritized local Houghton, Keweenaw, UP, and UP-adjacent partners for the restoration, from Upper Peninsula State Bank to Framed by Mary, over 35 local businesses played a role in the restoration. We express our gratitude and thanks for all their contributions!

On July 11, 2025, Houghton County granted a temporary occupancy permit for the house, slightly more than three years from the date of the fire. The multimillion-dollar renovation has demonstrated the importance of having comprehensive replacement coverage. "It has been a long and exhausting journey, and we would not be here except for the incredible Houghton, Greater Keweenaw and Michigan Tech communities and our local contractor's passionate craftsmen that have all been beside us from our lowest point. We are privileged to be caretakers and stewards of this iconic, majestic home, on behalf of those before us, and in anticipation of those after us." Bednark concluded.

From the planning and design phase to reconstruction, the fraternity has been sensitive to the historic prominence of the home on College Avenue. It was a priority to restore the home to its former glory. "We are confident we have met that goal and the home will again serve as a point of pride for the city of Houghton and the Michigan Tech community for the next 100 years and beyond." stated Mike Muller, Special Advisor to the House Corporation.

Lambda Chi Alpha's Phi-Phi Zeta at Michigan Technological University will celebrate its 45th Anniversary August 7-10, 2025.

About Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity (lambdachi.org)

In 1909, Lambda Chi Alpha's founders dared to create a fraternity that would uphold timeless traditions, bold principles, and authentic ideals in a manner wholly set apart from other fraternities. Our mission is to inspire and equip men to lead an ethical life of loyalty, duty, respect, service, honor, integrity and leadership. There are over 170 active collegiate chapters of Lambda Chi Alpha. The Phi-Phi Zeta Chapter of Lambda Chi Alpha at Michigan Technological University was colonized in 1979 and fully Chartered in 1980. The continuously operating Phi-Phi Zeta has initiated nearly 600 members since colonization.