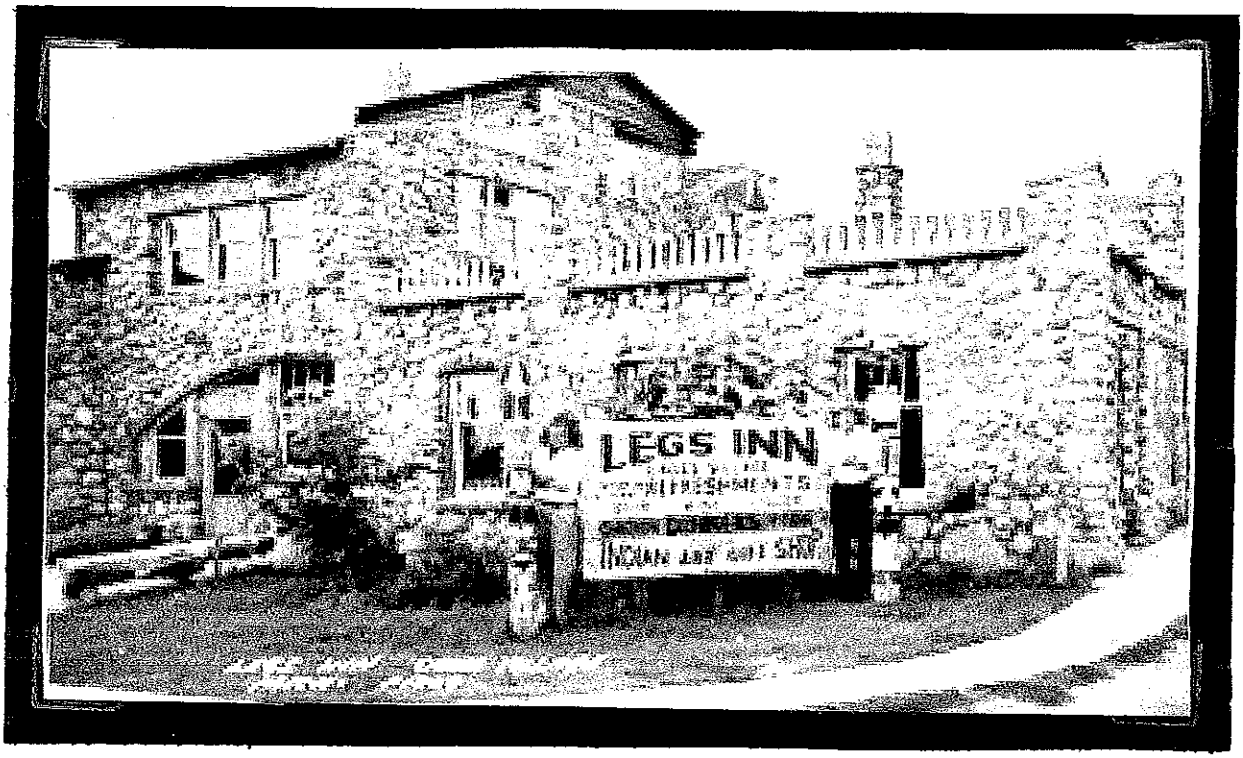
LEGS INN RESTAURANT
6425 NORTH LAKE SHORE DRIVE
CROSS VILLAGE, EMMET COUNTY, MICHIGAN

LEGS INN
CROSS VILLAGE, EMMET COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Left: Stanley Smolak Right; Joe Smolak {Joe's son}
circa 1940's





LEGS INN RESTAURANT
CROSS VILLAGE, EMMET COUNTY, MICHIGAN



6425 North Lake Shore Drive, Cross Village, Michigan



Back of Restaurant, Garden and Outdoor Dining

A HISTORY OF LEGS INN
CROSS VILLAGE, EMMET COUNTY, MICHIGAN

HISTORIC CROSS VILLAGE

Cross Village, once a thriving fishing and lumber town, is located on the northwestern tip of **Michigan's Lower Peninsula.** As one of the oldest settlements in the **State of Michigan, Cross Village's** rich history has strong ties to the **Native American Ottawa Indians.**

Early historical accounts indicate that **Father Jacques Marquette**, the famous **French Jesuit** who endeared himself to the **Native Indian** population of **Northern Michigan,** planted a huge white cross on a bluff overlooking **Lake Michigan** before his death in 1675. Today, a replica of this cross stands at the edge of the bluff and is visible off the shore, far into **Lake Michigan**.

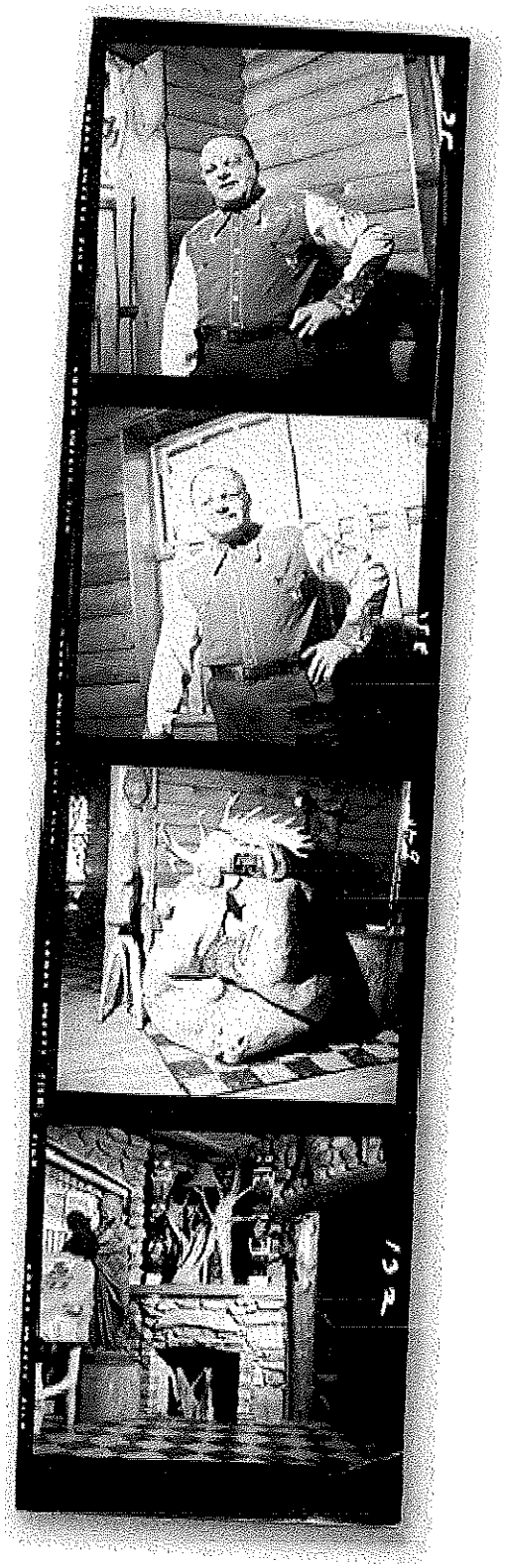
As late as 1787, as many as twenty tribes populated the region and met here around tribal council fires. To the **Indians** who populated the numerous historic missions in the area, **Cross Village** was known as the **"Land of the Cross."** To the **French,** this region was known as **L'Arbre Croche;** to the **Ottawas,** it was called **"Wau-gaw-naw-ke-ze";** and to the White man at the time, it was simply known as **"Land of the Crooked Tree."**

Bishop Frederick Baraga is another individual with historical ties to **Cross Village. Baraga** left a comfortable, upper-class existence behind when he left **Slovenia** in 1830 to serve the **Native** population and isolated small communities of this region. He spoke and developed written Native languages and is credited for spreading the Gospel among the local **Ottawas** and **Chippewas.** In 1853, **Baraga** was elevated to **Bishop,** becoming the first Bishop in **Upper Michigan.**

In an 1855 **Emmet County** was reorganized and four new townships were created by the State. One of them **was "La Croix,"** which was officially changed its name to **Cross Village** in 1875

STANLEY SMOLAK: EARLY YEARS

One man, **Stanley Smolak,** created the fantasy-like atmosphere of **Legs Inn**. This **Polish** immigrant was born in **Kamionka, Poland** in the year 1887. At the time of **Smolak's** birth, **Poland** did not actually exist as an independent country as its neighboring empires partitioned it into **Prussia (Germany), Russia** and **Austria** at the end of 18th century. Despite this division, **Poles** were able to maintain their language, culture and traditions for over a hundred years.



Stanley and his drift wood creations

A HISTORY OF LEGS INN
CROSS VILLAGE, EMMET COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Smolak came from large, talented business-oriented family. His six siblings possessed a variety of musical talents, and often performed at local events in a family band. His father operated a local store and was also a village accountant. To avoid a possible draft into the occupying Austrian army in preparation for World War I, Smolak decided to pursue a new life in the United States. He decided to immigrate to the United States in 1912 following the path of hundreds of thousands immigrants before him.

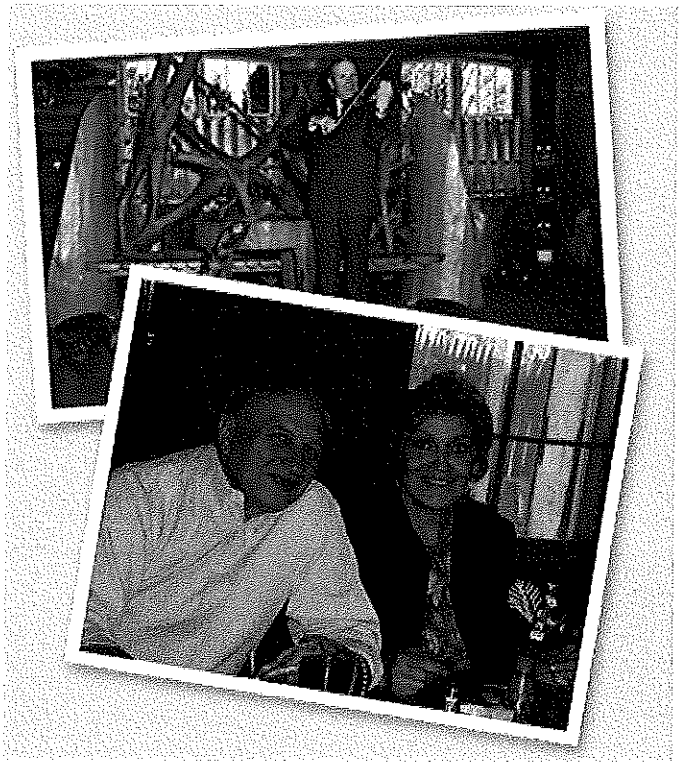
ORIGIN OF LEGS INN

After working in automobile factories in both **Detroit** and **Chicago, Smolak** met and subsequently married a fellow **Pole, Eleanor,** and sought out to settle in an area that reminded him of his native land. It was **Smolak's** admiration for nature and his love of diverse people that led him to **Northern Michigan** in 1921. He found an ideal setting in the town of **Cross Village,** where he quickly fell in love with the town and its people, many of them **Ottawa** and **Chippewa Indians.**

While spending a great deal of time in the forests and shores surrounding **Lake Michigan** and **Wycamp Lake, Smolak** observed the artistic beauty inherent in nature. The twisted and tormented forms of trees, roots and driftwood collected by **Smolak** from the surrounding area, along with the stones washed smooth and round by **Lake Michigan's** waters, aroused the artist in him - and from them he created this unusual building, fixtures and furniture. He once said: *"Nature is the greatest sculptor - I am only helping to make the artistic objects more visible to the ordinary eye."*

In the late 1920's, **Stanley Smolak** began building this extraordinary complex. He first constructed the curio shop with its **Indian** handiwork, souvenirs and living quarters. Then came the large tavern with its expansive balcony, and finally the dining room with its scenic bay windows overlooking **Lake Michigan.** Four great stone fireplaces throughout the building add more charm.

Smolak's active artistic period was interrupted 1953 by the sudden death of his only son, whose life was cut short in a tragic automobile accident. **Joseph Smolak** served in **U.S. Navy** during **World War II** and was only 30 years old when he died. At the time of his death, Joe had already begun to establish himself as a gifted artist who assisted his father in the creation of numerous sculptures and totem poles for the Inn. **Stanley's** hope for his son to continue the **Legs Inn** legacy was suddenly interrupted.



(Top) John entertains guests with his violin. (Above) George and Kathy pose in the dining room.

COMING TO AMERICA

This unexpected loss of **Smolak's** sole heir prompted him to reestablish contact with his relatives in **Poland** - all of which he had little or no contact with since leaving his homeland. After waiting several years for the proper immigration legalities, **Stanley** was finally reunited with his brother **John (Jan),** who immigrated to the **U.S.** in the spring of 1963. Many years earlier, **John's** musical talents earned him a spot in the occupying Austrian army during **World War I. John** was accompanied by his youngest son **George (Jerzy)** on this maiden trip to **America.**

A HISTORY OF LEGS INN
CROSS VILLAGE, EMMET COUNTY, MICHIGAN

George had already begun architectural studies in his native **Poland,** which qualified him for his first job in the **U.S. Despite George's** inability to speak **English,** a young architect by the name of **James Muschell** from **Cheboygan** gave **George** a chance and hired him as an architectural draftsman. **Jim's** firm, **United Design Associates,** had been providing architectural services for decades. Recently, his firm assisted the **Smolak** family in **Legs Inn's** most recent expansion and upgrade.

Two of John's other children, Alex and Anna, arrived in the U.S. a year later. Although neither of them spoke English, they had a strong desire to better their lives and to help their uncle continue his dream. However, in 1964, the fact remained that operations at Legs Inn could not support all of Stanley's extended family. In November of 1964, John, George, Alex and Anna packed themselves into George's first car, a Chevrolet Corvair, and headed south. As they approached Kalamazoo, they came to a fork in the road where the road sign explicitly stated: Detroit left lane, Chicago right lane. It was there they decided to travel on to the metropolis of Chicago, given its sizable Polish population, to pursue their American dream.

Merely one week after arriving in **Chicago, George** met **Katherine,** a beautiful young **Polish** girl, at a **Halloween** party in a **Northside Polish Nightclub.** A few years later, in June 1968, they were married and both continued their respective academic studies. Soon thereafter, **Kathy** found employment at a downtown **Chicago** doctor's practice as an **X-ray Technician** & **Physician's Assistant.**

Stanley Smolak died in November 1968, preceded in death by his wife **Eleanor** only six months earlier. **Stanley's** brother, **John,** returned to **Cross Village** and took over operations at **Legs Inn**, until his death in 1972. **John** is still remembered for entertaining guests of **Legs Inn** with his beautiful violin music. To this day, guests from both near and far still return to **Legs Inn** with children or grandchildren and fondly recall how they enjoyed his music decades ago.

THE SMOLAK FAMILY SECOND GENERATION

George continued his part-time work at an engineering office downtown while continuing his engineering studies. His first son, **Mark**, was born in 1969. In 1971, **George** finished his studies and earned a **Civil Engineering degree** from the **Illinois Institute** of **Technology.** Continuing on in his career, he worked as a **Senior Structural Engineer** with the **Chicago**-based global engineering firm of **Sargent & Lundy. George** and **Kathy** welcomed their second son, **Christopher**, into the world in 1975.

Alex (Stanley's nephew, John's oldest son), assumed the responsibility of running **Legs Inn,** following his father's death in 1972. Responsible for the first real expansion and improvements since **Stanley's** original construction, **Alex** added a new restaurant kitchen to the building and made improvements to **Legs Inn's** lakeside cottages. Many still recall his bold and brazen personality, sharing stories about his colorful character and his assorted exploits. During his tenure, **Legs Inn** evolved into more of a bar, roadhouse and live music outpost. Many still recall the raucous crowds and rock and roll music, which on many hot summer nights, could be heard both near and far. It was his presence in **Cross Village** that provided continuity in keeping this *"family" business - in the "family."*

George (Stanley's nephew, John's youngest son) and wife **Kathy** undertook ownership and management of **Legs Inn** in 1987, and have been actively involved in the business since. **George** and **Kathy** are credited with obtaining **Legs Inn's Historical Site** status in 1989 (the current site marker was erected in 2008), as well creating **Northern Michigan's** most unique family dining destination. **George** and **Kathy** are also responsible for developing **Legs Inn's** beautiful landscaped gardens and patio dining areas overlooking **Lake Michigan**, as well as recent kitchen additions, dining area expansion, equipment upgrades and parking improvements. On many summer nights, it's often difficult to find a spot along the fence to appreciate the panoramic views and magnificent sunsets over the big lake.

Guests of **Legs Inn** will notice three portraits hanging in the entry foyer. They were created by another talented **Smolak** family member, **John's** daughter, **Anna Smolak Kuznar. Anna** studied architecture in her native **Poland,** earning a Master's degree from the prestigious **Warsaw University of Technology (Politechnika Warszawska.)** While employed as an architect in **Chicago** at **C.F. Murphy Associates**, she never stopped utilizing her artistic talents. Throughout the years, **Anna** participated in numerous art exhibitions and won various industry awards. Currently, her portraits and landscapes depicting the surrounding area are displayed throughout **Legs Inn.**

THE SMOLAK FAMILY: THIRD GENERATION

Today, **George** and **Kathy's** two sons, **Mark** and **Christopher,** have increased their day-to-day management and long-term operational roles at **Legs**

A HISTORY OF LEGS INN
CROSS VILLAGE, EMMET COUNTY, MICHIGAN

Inn, transitioning this nearly **90 year** old family business into its third generation of ownership.
Mark holds a Bachelor's degree in Advertising from **Indiana University** and a Master's degree in Integrated Marketing from **Northwestern University**. Prior to working full time at the family's business, he spent many years at the global advertising agency DDB in Chicago. **Mark** and his wife **Amy** are the proud parents of three children.

Christopher earned his Bachelor's degree in Hospitality from the **Eli Broad School of Business** at **Michigan State University.** With years of experience at the historic **Chicago Hilton** and **Towers Hotel, Christopher** brings a keen understanding of the restaurant and hospitality business to **Legs Inn.**

Mark and **Christopher** are deeply involved and committed to running this truly unique, historic family business. They both strive to maintain the family legacy that precede them, working diligently to implement technology, efficiency and to utilize their respective personalities and management skills in the operations of this historic landmark destination.

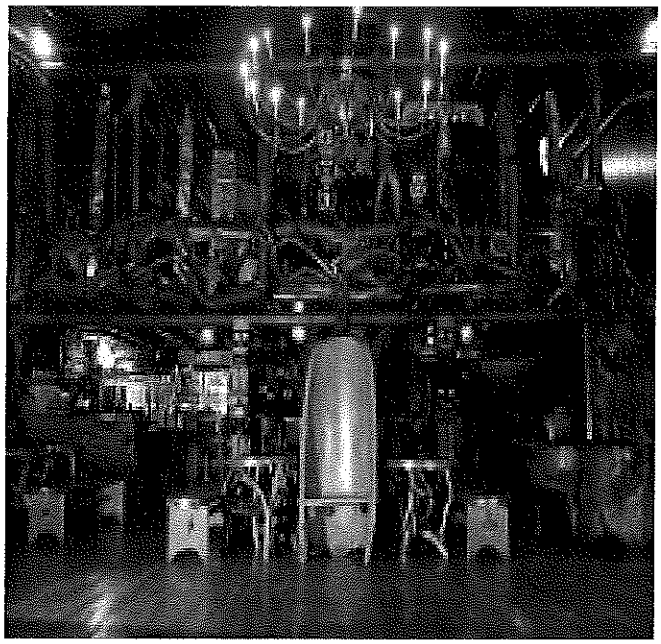
A LIFETIME OF WORK

Today, **Legs Inn** is a widely recognized historical destination. The **Michigan Historical Commission** described **Legs Inn** as one of **Michigan's** *"most unusual architectural marvels."* It has been written about and recommended by innumerable major media outlets, including: **The New York Times, USA Today, CBS News, NBC News, Detroit Free Press, Chicago Tribune, Mobil Travel Guide, AAA, Travelocity.com,** as well as local outlets such as: **Grand Rapids Press, Traverse City Record-Eagle, Petoskey News-Review, Booth Newspapers, Northern Express, The Graphic** and others. But what's most important of all, is that **Legs Inn** is beloved by multiple generations of guests and loyal visitors from around the globe, year after year.

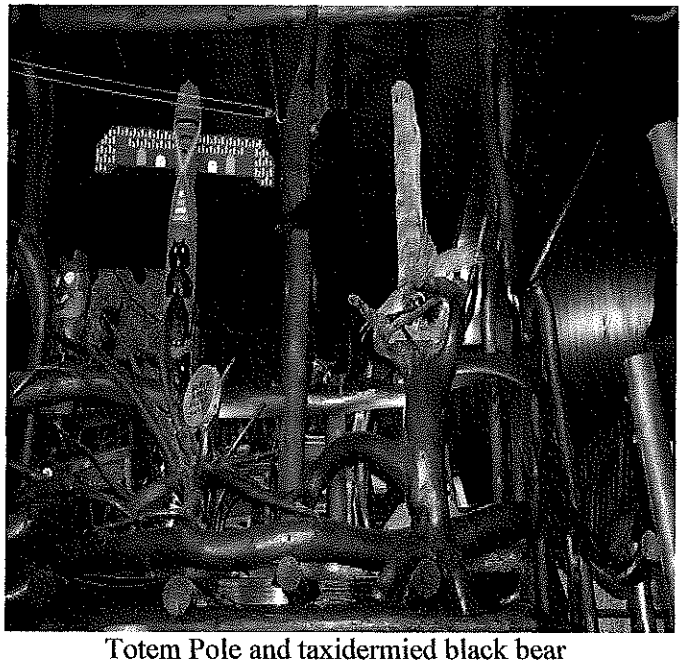
As a visitor to **Legs Inn,** it takes numerous trips to appreciate the artistic value, incomparable labor and lifetime of dedication required to complete such a monumental project. **Stanley Smolak's** dream to leave a memorial to be admired by generations was truly fulfilled at the time of his death in 1968.

WHAT ABOUT THE NAME?

The actual name, **Legs Inn,** is derived from the row of inverted cast iron stove legs **Stanley** used to fashion the decorative railing on the roof of the building.



Bar, made from a giant hemlock

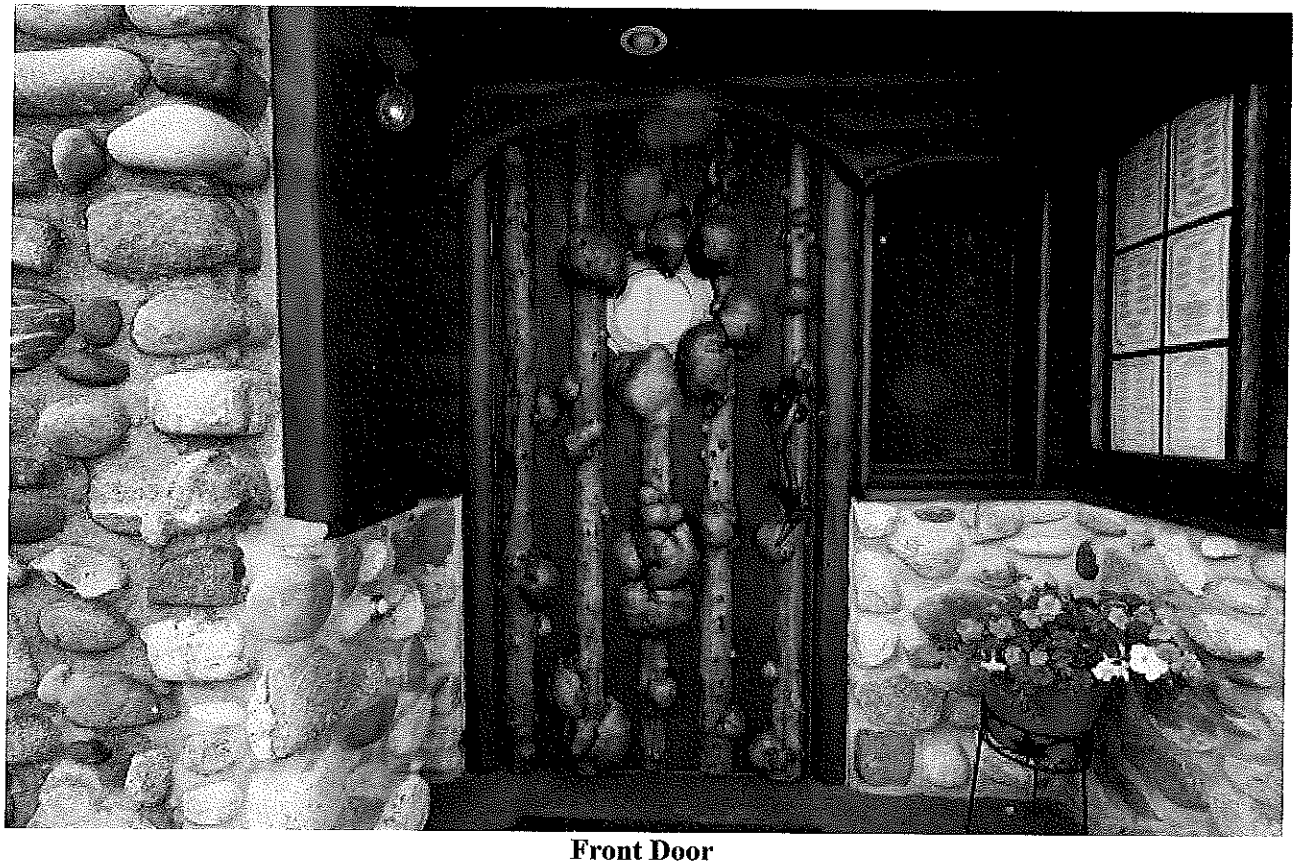


Totem Pole and taxidermied black bear

LEGS INN
CROSS VILLAGE, EMMET COUNTY, MICHIGAN

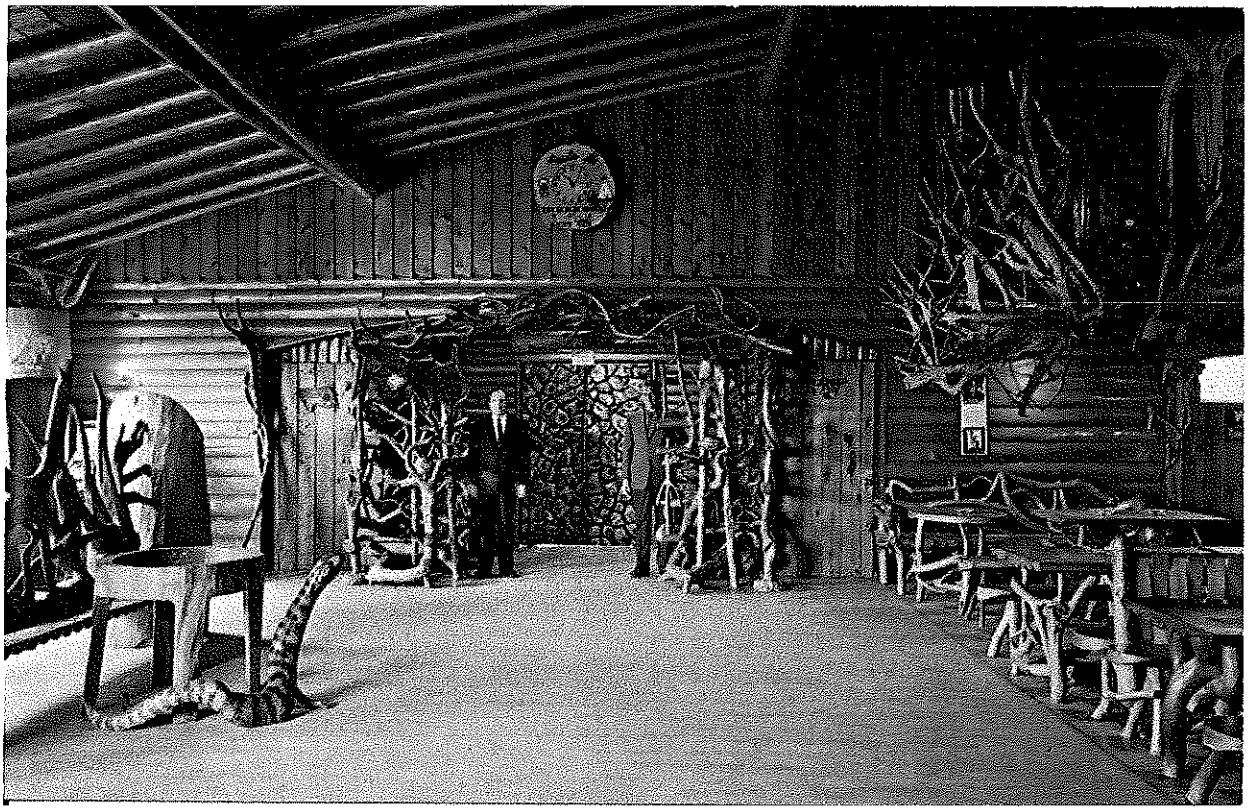


Native American Motif with Stove Legs protruding from roof

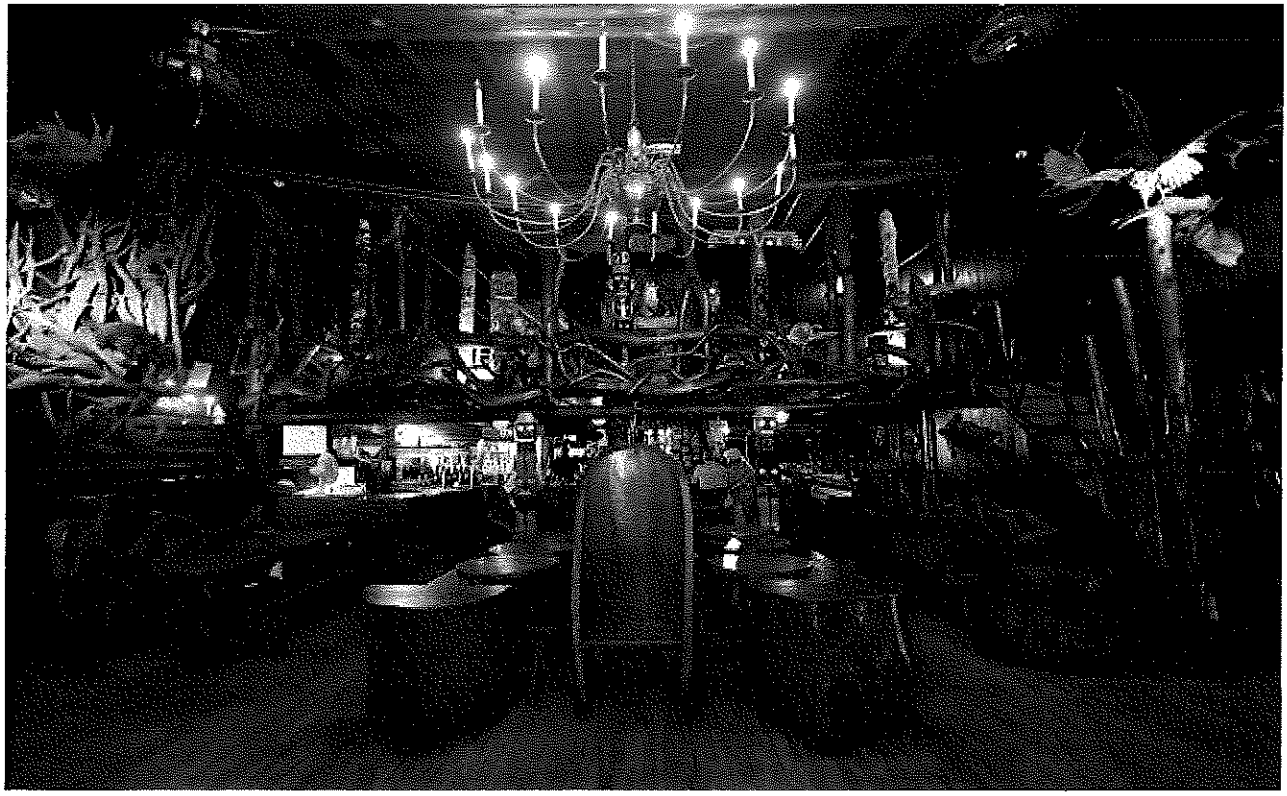


Front Door

LEGS INN RESTAURANT
CROSS VILLAGE, EMMET COUNTY, MICHIGAN



Main Lounge Early 1970s
John Smolak {left rear} and son Alex {on the right}

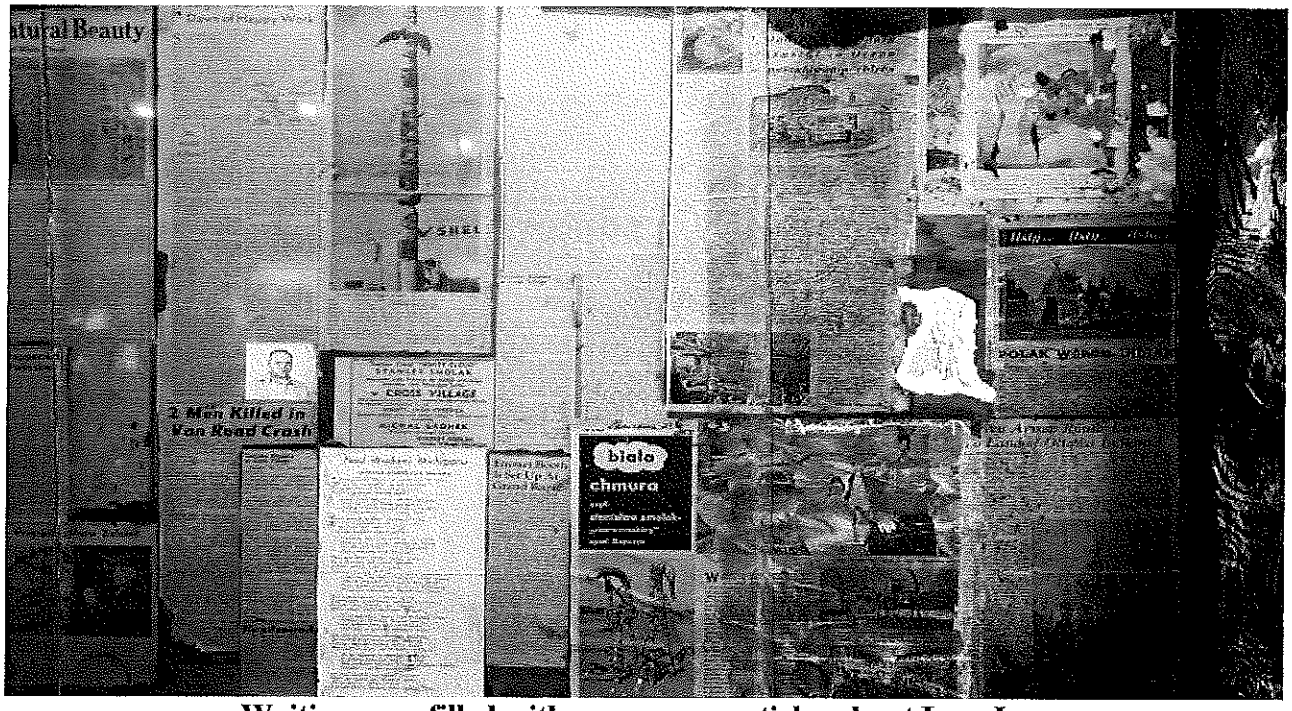


Bar, made from a giant Hemlock

LEGGS INN RESTAURANT
CROSS VILLAGE, EMMET COUNTY, MICHIGAN



Pool Table Annex



Waiting area filled with newspaper articles about Legs Inn

LEGS INN
CROSS VILLAGE, EMMET COUNTY, MICHIGAN

