Geographic and Historical Background
The unincorporated town of Copper Harbor in the Upper Michigan’s Keweenaw Peninsula was founded on land that had been ceded to the US government by the Ojibwe nation in the 1842 Treaty. For the next half-century, the region became a site for the extraction of resources on an industrial scale, including mining for copper and iron, lumbering and fishing. Shortly after the turn of the Twentieth Century, however, these industries began to wind down operations. Inspired by state-wide efforts to reimagine Michigan as a place of “natural” beauty, the Keweenaw witnessed habitat rehabilitation efforts (Shapiro 2003, 4), Copper Harbor was one of many communities that turned towards tourism to shore up an economy weakened by the decline of local industries. The completion of US-41, which runs from Miami, Florida to Copper Harbor, further encouraged tourism to the area.

Against this backdrop, the Chynoweth family, moving to Copper Harbor from Minnesota, built the Minnetonka in 1938 as a cabin court. The name Minnetonka is an adaption of a Dakota word, meaning “big water,” apparently an homage to both Lake Superior and the Chynoweth’s place of origin (Juip, 2020). The resort was sold to the Davis family, guests of the Astor House Museum and the addition of the Minnetonka Resort, which runs from Miami, Florida to Copper Harbor, further encouraged tourism to the area.

Introduction
In the Fall of 2020, Dr. Sarah Scarlett and students from Michigan Technological University documented the Minnetonka Resort as an example of vernacular architecture. This research places the Minnetonka in a contest of settler-colonialism, the creation of a post-industrial tourist economy, and narratives of an American “wilderness.” It identifies the Minnetonka Resort as an example of an American “frontier” aesthetic as reflected in the many changes the resort has undergone since its initial construction.

Colonial Revival
At least one integrated motel court was added to the property prior to 1963. Unlike the faux-log cabins, the motel was sided in wood clapboard. The motel building also featured decorative touches such as door moldings, mullioned windows and wrought iron lanterns - an example of Colonial Revival style.

This style was based on popular interpretations of Anglo and Dutch settler architecture. Prevalent during the mid to late 19th Century, it’s popularity gradually waned until the early 20th Century, when the desire to nurture a sense of national identity in the wake of World War II and the onset of the Cold War renewed the style’s popularity (Rhoads, 1976). The adoption of Colonial Revival style was particularly pronounced in roadside vernacular architecture (Rhoads, 1986). The colonial motel building alongside the newly whitewashed cabins adds to the sense of visiting an imaginary frontier in the woods.

Astor House Museum and Trading Post
The early 1960s saw the conversion of the washroom to the Astor House Museum and the addition of the Trading Post gift shop to the property.

The facade of the museum was constructed in a distinctly “Wild West” style, complete with signboard and porch. It was advertised as housing a doll collection, maritime artifacts and Indigenous-made objects. The museum is currently closed.

The Trading Post has since been renamed Thunderbird Gifts. It sells a variety of items, including knives and , which appropriate and indigenous aesthetic, alongside local history books and thimbleberry jam.

Conclusion
The Minnetonka began life as a rustic cabin court, benefiting from constructed narratives of an untouched wilderness (Denevan 1992, Shapiro 2003). The architectural and marketing changes that the resort has undergone, incorporating architectural tropes harkening back to American colonists and pioneers, have transformed the Minnetonka into a stage set of an American mythology that crystallized around self-sufficiency, whiteness, and Anglo-Saxon origins. Though the Minnetonka appropriates multiple cultural motifs from Indigenous Americans, they are taken out of context, disconnected from the Ojibwe communities of the Keweenaw today, and are framed within exploitative power differentials, such as objects for sale or on display in the private museum. Thus a guest staying in a cabin or motel room at the Minnetonka would be able to participate in a superficial reenactment of an idealized frontier narrative, staying in a cabin of fake logs in a false wilderness, while symbolically reasserting their rightful inclusion in a narrowly defined version of American identity.

References