

The County Historian

News from the Ontonagon County Historical Society

Dean Juntunen, Editor

Spring 2016

NOTE: If you want an article published in the newsletter, send it to Dean Juntunen, 11425 Aspen Lane, Mass City, MI 49948, or e-mail it to deanjunt@jamadots.com.



MUSEUM NEWS

Greetings. As of Memorial Day, museum hours for the summer months will be 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday -- Saturday. If we get enough traffic, we will open on Sundays, too.

As always, we would appreciate anyone who can volunteer, and we would be happy to make you a greeter in the museum this summer, even for just an hour or two per week. You will meet a plethora of interesting people.

Museum manager Vikki James is taking the summer off, much of it in Alaska. So, we have a new museum manager for the summer, Coriane Penegor, who has been an excellent employee for us for many years. We also have Tammy Jousma on staff three days per week, and Dustin Brand, a former SHIP student, will work a couple days per week.

UPDATED WEB PRESENCE

Carol Maass of the Friends of the Porkies wrote a cooperative mini-grant application on our behalf to the Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs (MCACA). We have been awarded the grant, and work has begun on modernizing our website.

Also, Coriane Penegor will be modernizing our web presence by making the OCHS Facebook profile more active, and establishing Trip Advisor and Instagram accounts. She's also like to set up a Sunset Advisory

for those who want to photograph sunsets on Lake Superior.

PERSONNEL UPDATE

Jean Eckloff is our new Calling Committee Chairperson, taking over for Don Helsel, who has retired. Don always did an excellent job of it, and we remain in good hands with Jean.

Also, we will have four board seats up for election at our Annual Meeting in August. The seats are currently held by

Dave Bishop
Bill Chabot
Diane Penegor
Ruth Zimmer



You'll see this smiling face around our museum a lot this summer, as she is our interim museum manager for a couple of months.

-- Coriane Penegor --

LOCAL HISTORY SMACKDOWN

I had the honor of being a Judge again at the Keweenaw National Historical Park's Local History Smackdown on the Fourth Thursday in April. It is one of the best events I attend every year.

Having won first place in 8 of the past 13 years, Ontonagon always has the team to beat. Ontonagon's last win had been in 2013. Baraga History Hunters won it in 2014, and the Dollar Bay Minettes took it in 2015. The stage was set for a rousing competition.

It was clear that all of the teams had done some homework this year, as nobody was failing fast. But then the questions increased in difficulty, and teams started dropping. When the dust settled a bit, only three teams remained: The defending champion Minettes of Dollar Bay, the Hanka Homesteaders of Baraga, and the Nonesuch Know-It-Alls of Ontonagon. And then the Minettes went down in the 10th round, secure in third place.

The Hanka Homesteaders and Nonesuch Know-It-Alls duked it out for another four rounds, until Nonesuch stood alone.

And so, the traveling trophy is back in Ontonagon County.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER **by Bruce Johanson**

Dear Members and Friends:

It was a long winter for us financially. When we went to winter hours in January, it was to save money; however, we have learned



The winning Nonesuch Know-It-Alls, in action at the 2016 Local History Smackdown. Standing Left to Right, Colton Heikkinen, Nathan Ashbreck, Hannah Davidson, and Britni Lakkala.

the lesson that when we are not open, our retail gift shop sells no merchandise, and our income is stagnant. Yet, we still have to pay the light bill, the gas bill and the water bill, not to mention wages for paid help. Your Board of Directors is going to have to make some decisions about winter hours before the end of December. If we had a few more volunteers to man the desk and operate the cash register in the gift shop, we could make the long winters into a more productive time for your Society. If you spend most of your winter months in Ontonagon, we could sure use some help, and you meet some very interesting folks who continue to drop in.

Spring is here and we are looking forward to a great summer. Our **Summer History Intern Program (SHIP)** again received generous funding from the Keweenaw National Historical Park Advisory Commission. Our work with young people through this program builds us a great deal of support in the community.

Once again, one of our SMACKDOWN teams won the traveling trophy which will be on display at the museum all summer. This is the 8th time we have won first place in 13 years of competition. I am particularly proud of this achievement this year, as we also had three Ewen-Trout Creek students join us in the competition. We are, after all, the Ontonagon County Historical Society. Miss Emily Carpenter, a member of the Ontonagon Area School faculty helped train these kids and Vicki James also acted as a coach.

On June 25th, we will hold an open house at the museum in cooperation with COPPER FEST, a new summer festival that is being planned by the Chamber of Commerce. COPPER FEST will be a three-day affair, June 24-26. For more information, see <http://ontonagonmi.org/copperfest-2016/>.

Summer hours began with the Memorial day weekend and we are open 10:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday thru Saturday with

Lighthouse Tours at 11:00, 1:30 and 3:30 daily and by appointment on Sundays.

We also offer an interesting walking tour of historic downtown River Street, Ontonagon; night tours of the lighthouse by lamplight; and if there is interest among the members, we can do field trips in the evenings to historic locations in the County.

On May 24th, Don Chastan and I conducted a short seminar for area 4th graders on map reading and navigation on behalf of Keweenaw National Historical Park in Calumet. This was a program to get kids into the park, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the National Park Service. More than 400 4th graders from the four county area were brought to the KNHP central area in Calumet for a day of learning activities related to the history of the area. Ontonagon 4th graders visited the Keweenaw National Historical Park on May 23rd and took part in mini-seminars on farming, geology, and foundry processes. Our association with the National Park Service has been very beneficial to your Society.

Finally, we are working on a new presence on the internet that could go a long way to attracting more visitors to our door. In partnership with the Friends of the Porkies, we were successful in applying for a grant that was funded. Specifically, you will soon be able to view more of our museum and lighthouse online. Watch for more announcements about this exciting program.

If it has been a few months since you visited the museum or lighthouse, you may want to do this.

We have finally started the refinishing of the floors at the lighthouse, and there are many new things to see at the museum. Hope to be seeing you around.

Bruce H. Johanson,
President OCHS

REQUEST

You can save us money and resources if you opt to receive your newsletter electronically in pdf format. Your computer is probably already equipped with the Adobe Acrobat Reader, but if not, you can go to the Adobe website and download it. So far, over 100 people have signed up for e-newsletters. Graphics are better in pdf, and you can zoom to your preferred font size. If you're interested, please send an e-mail request to deanjunt@jamadots.com.

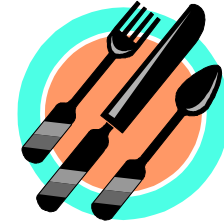
LIGHTHOUSE NEWS



We stripped and varnished our floor in the West Parlor. There was about 100 years of old varnish on it. Zip Strip did the job. We expect to have the Lighthouse fully ready for tours by May 28th, Memorial Day weekend.

If you are interested in being a lighthouse philanthropist, we still have the following rooms or structures available for sponsorship.

32 Spiral Steps	\$300 ea
Oil House	\$3,000
Master Bedroom	\$5,000
1st-flr 1890's kitchen	\$6,000
West Parlor	\$6,000



UPCOMING DINNER MEETINGS

ALL DINNERS AT 6:30 pm

June 16, Thursday -- Holy Family Catholic Church
(Dave Bishop Responsible)

Lynette Webber, from the Keweenaw National Historical Park, will give a digital slide presentation called "Missing in the Copper Country," about historic sites then and now. Also, Leanne Jessup will give a short informational update on the new expansion at the Ontonagon Aspirus Hospital.

July 21, Thursday -- Cane Court
(Diane Penegor responsible)

Scott See from the Keweenaw National Historical Park will give a presentation on the Quincy Smelter.

August 21, Sunday -- Location to be announced
(Bruce Johanson responsible)

Program to be announced.

September 15, Thursday -- Location to be announced
(Dean Juntunen responsible)

Program to be announced.

PAST PROGRAMS

February:

(Bill Chabot responsible)

Bill Chabot presented a whimsical look at classical advertising throughout history, starting with the Cave People.

March:

(Ruth Zimmer responsible)

Troy Henderson from the Michigan Iron Industry Museum gave a presentation on logging in the western UP up to 1950, focusing on logging camp life and some of the individual stories.

April:

(Doug Anderson responsible)

Josh Lopac gave a presentation on the Northern Lights (or Aurora Borealis). He shared many of his own photos as he explained the different degrees of light shows, and the science behind their cause.

May:

(Bill Fischer responsible)

Bill Fischer and Tom Pestka did a team presentation. First, Mr. Fischer presented a digital slide show on logging, including some excellent slides from Ontonagon County. Then, Tom Pestka presented the tools of the trade in the days of manual labor, horses, oxen, and river drives. Mr. Pestka also related some stories of the people of the past.

Editor's Note:

The following is a short paper by one of our SHIP interns from the summer of 2015.

Ontonagon's Fishing Industry

By Justin Lundberg

Before the turn of the century until 1968 the fishing industry was big in Ontonagon. The peak of the Fishing Industry was in the late 1930's when there were sixteen outfits and up to 40 or more individuals involved. As early as 1881, during the shipping season, the boats were bringing in up to seven tons of fish. The outfitters were fishing for lake trout, whitefish, herring, and chubs. Some of the families who went after those types of fish were Killoran, Wilson, Jones, Ostling, Karr, Keranen, Couture, and Hawleys.

The Killorans were Earl and Ira "Spike" and Earl's sons Howard and Harold. The Killorans fished in Sturgeon Bay, WI from 1916 to 1920 then moved on to Lafayette, MI, from 1921 to 1940. After their years in Lafayette, they moved to Ontonagon, MI. From 1940 to 1968 Earl had three boats during these years -- the fish tugs Wesley, Silver Spray, and the Goodwill. They were used to gill net whitefish and lake trout. Gill netting is a form of fishing which was used for several species of fish. Gill nets were designed to catch fish by the gills, drowning them. The largest haul that the Killorans brought to the port was roughly 7,000 pounds of fish in the fall of 1939. Most of the fishing from Ontonagon used gill nets or long lines with hooks. Then after gill nets became illegal, trap nets were used.

The Wilsons, Joe and John, were two brother partners who came to Ontonagon in 1890 from

Finland. The Wilsons, who were Swedish speaking Finns, were one of the last families to fish out of the Ontonagon harbor.

Martin Jones and his brother-in-law, Jay Thorse, hailed from Trondheim, Norway in 1888.

The Jones crew went through five boats in the time they fished Ontonagon. They had the Preble, Eagle, Sea Hag, Miss Entrée, and the Edith J. The Jones had their own dock and fish house which was the second along the right bank from the slough on the Ontonagon River. The Jones', Daily lift was about 500-600 pounds of fish during the fishing season. The fish the Jones were after were whitefish and lake trout. The largest lake trout ever recorded in the Jones' records was 33 pounds!

The Ostling family, Anton and Axel came from northern Sweden, coming to America in 1905. Anton and Axel were brothers that held the tradition of fishing in their family as their family had been commercially fishing for several generations.

The Ostling family, including Anton's sons, Alfred and Donald, spent about 20 years in Minneapolis working as carpenters, then moved on to Port Wing Wisconsin. The Boat that Anton built was known as the Viking which was used at Port Wing Wisconsin from 1926 until 1933. When the family moved to Ontonagon in 1943, Anton built the Viking II which was sold to John Karr and James Kane in 1946.

The Ostling brothers, Alfred and Don purchased a new fish tug from Marinette Marine, named Sheryl-Dennis, in 1946 and fished until 1953. This fish tug was in



Built for the Ostling Brothers in 1946, the venerable fish tug "Sheryl-Dennis" has returned to Ontonagon as a donation to OCHS, and will be a living museum on dry land, with final placement next summer.

recent years donated to the Ontonagon County Historical Society.

John Karr was in the minnow business at Kenosha Wisconsin when he was only fifteen years of age in 1924. In his spare time he would work on the fishing boats between 1926-1929. In 1931-32 he fished with a partner, Narvarre, off Grand Haven, Michigan on the boat that they called Kato. John Karr came to Ontonagon in 1939 and worked as a shore hand for Earl Couture. Mr. Karr fished on the Viking II with the Ostling Brothers, Al and Don in 1945, and also did some bait fishing. In 1946, he purchased the Viking II from the Ostling brothers.

Alex Couture fished from 1905 until 1939. His first boat was the "Tiger." Built in 1905, it was 30 feet long with twin gas powered engines. Later he had the "Papoose" Built in 1913 which was 40 feet long with three small engines of six horse power each. Alex Couture had many

different deck hands through the years of fishing. He had Couture sons Earl and Russell; Henry and Alvin "Bony" Johnson and Russell Johnson; Al, Joe and Ted LaDuke and Evald "Joe" Nygard.

Gus Johnson and Charlie Carlson purchased the Florence from Casper Roosen and Pete Hanson in the 1920's. Gus Johnson started fishing with his father Alec Johnson around 1915 on his father's boat, the Irene. Gus Johnson piled wood through the winters of 1939-1946 for the Northern and Lake Superior sawmills at Ontonagon.

Regarding fishing, Evelyn Plutchak recalled, "As the boats came in, a person could hear the seagulls following, making a big racket, after the innards being thrown in the water."

The prices that Gus and Charlie recorded in April 1927 for trout was around seven and a half cents a pound, and for chubs around five cents or less a pound. At the market in July of 1927 though, they got 22 cents a

pound. But once there was a Jewish holiday where they would make around 50 cents a pound. Those prices were in 1939, the best year of income anyone can remember in those times. The fish that were shipped off to Chicago for the Jewish market had to be sent "in the round," which meant that the fish were whole, with the guts still in them. They couldn't be cleaned until blessed by the Rabbi.

On September 2, 1904 Martin Miles fell off the boat named the "Hoffnung" and drowned at about 30 fathoms of water and about 8 miles off shore. It was a rough day on Lake Superior when this tragedy happened. His body was never found as Lake Superior never gives up its dead.



Lake Trout



Lake Whitefish