

The County Historian

News from the Ontonagon County Historical Society

Dean Juntunen, Editor

Winter 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. We've scaled back operations for the winter, but we're still open part time. Museum hours for the winter months will be Friday from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m., and Saturday from noon to 4:00 p.m. We'll extend our hours if we can get a volunteer to work in the museum/gift shop, or as dictated by weather, and then return to summer hours the week before Memorial Day.

As always, we would appreciate anyone who can volunteer in any capacity. OCHS remains a vibrant organization thanks to our dedicated group of ingenious people. The following columns are a complete list of our volunteers in the past year to our knowledge, including board members:

Anderson, Doug
Anderson, Marilyn
Bardell, Judith

Berman, Sally
Bishop, David
Buscombe, Martin
Byle, Marshall
Chabot, Bill
Chabot, Roberta
Croteau, Doris
Doyle, John
Fischer, William
Fuller, Anna
Giuliano, Teri
Haarala, Sharon
Helsel, Don
Helsel, Sue
James, Victoria
Johanson, Roberta
Johanson, Bruce
Jousma, Tammy
Juntunen, Dean
Karlson, Idele

Kisor, Debbie
Koski, Jerry
Koski, Linda
Lind, Jean
Lind, Bob
Maki, Dorothy
McGuire, Sally
Murray, Helen
Olson, Josie
Parker, Doreen
Pattison, Judy
Penegor, Coriane
Penegor, Diane
Raisanen, Ken
Rieger, Jon
Solberg, Karen
Spetz, Mary Ann
Spolarich, Doris
Store, Tiffany
Zimmer, Ruth



Who is that masked man? Why, it's Bruce Johanson, our OCHS president, drumming up customers for our annual Christmas Open House. It cost me a \$400 donation to OCHS to spur him to walk up and down River Street with the sandwich board, and it was worth it.

If we've forgotten any volunteers, we deeply apologize, for we truly appreciate their enthusiastic efforts. If you'd like to join our volunteer force, please contact the museum at 884-6165.

Big Thanks to everyone, and we look forward to seeing you soon.

COOPERATIVE GRANT

The Friends of the Porkies generously offered to apply for a mini-grant from the Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs for us. Carol Maass, of the Friends, filled out the grant application. She is an experienced grant writer, and we are most thankful.

The grant will fund the creation of a new, modern website for OCHS. Also, 50 or 60 objects in our museum will be professionally photographed for the creation of a web gallery.

IN MEMORIAM

On a somber note, we recognize the Ontonagon County Historical Society Members who have passed on during the previous year, honoring them in our memories. They are sorely missed.

Doris Cane
Rita (Joni) Jachim
Tom Jachim
John Murray
Nancy Niemi
Betty Zimmer

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Bruce Johanson

Dear History Buffs:

It has been a relatively easy winter, so far. The Village has been faithful in keeping the parking lot cleared, but business has been pretty scant. We have reduced the hours at the museum to 1:30-4:00 on Friday and 12 to 4 on Saturday, and yes, there are a few visitors.

Your Board of directors was anxious to get a solid visitor count, so we have installed an electronic device that counts people as they come in the door. Presumably people also leave, so at the end of each month we will take the count, divide by two, and have an accurate tally of the number of persons coming through our door. We add to this our dinner attendance, and that gives us a total number of participants in our activities. The Keweenaw National Historical Park, of which we are an official Heritage Site wishes this information for their records.

The Christmas decorations have been packed away for another year and the museum is back to normal.

We are also gathering the data to apply for a Heritage Site Grant to fund our Summer History Intern Program again. We will need help in preparing the Cheryl Dennis, our fishing boat, for its final move to Rose Island, and also setting up our fishing displays. The months ahead are going to bring about a great deal of change in our mission to tell the story of Ontonagon County history.

We have also joined in a partnership with the Friends of the Porkies in applying for a grant that will enable exploration of our museum and its offerings online.

We have also received our first request for a bus tour of the County's points of interest. This came well in advance, for the tour is scheduled on October 3rd, 2016!

It is nearly that time to start preparing the Ontonagon School Local History SMACKDOWN team for competition, and Miss Emily Carpenter is planning on taking up the bulk of the coaching duties.

Yes, things may seem to slow down at the Historical Society during the winter, but beneath the snow and ice we have a lot of activity brewing. Financially, we are hanging on, and memberships as well as special donations have been invaluable.

Also, OCHS has a lot of friends among the members of other historical societies in the area who are quite generous in supporting our work. Our membership should be very proud of our reputation.

Our next "corner" will be written in the spring. It is going to be a busy time!

Bruce H. Johanson,
President OCHS

COMPUTER ISSUE

I had to do a factory reset on my computer from which I email these OCHS newsletters. I have almost everything backed up on my external hard drive; however, I had to rebuild the folders in my email address book. So, if your email address has changed since October of 2015, or if you had recently signed up for the electronic pdf version of the newsletter, please send me an email note: deanjunt@jamadots.com

LIGHTHOUSE NEWS



Our Lighthouse is in cold storage for the winter. Meanwhile, the Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association will be publishing articles on our Ontonagon Lighthouse in two successive issues of *The Beacon*.

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

February 18, Thursday -- Catholic Church
(Bill Chabot Responsible)

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

March 17, Thursday -- Holy Family Catholic Church
(Ruth Zimmer responsible)

Tentatively, Troy Henderson from the Michigan Iron Industry Museum will give a presentation on Logging in the western UP up to 1950.

April 21, Thursday -- Location to be announced
(Doug Anderson responsible)

Josh Lopac from Bergland will give a presentation on the Northern Lights.

May 19, Thursday -- Paul's Superior View Restaurant
(Bill Fischer responsible)

Bill Fischer, with help from others, will give a presentation on logging in Ontonagon County from historical times to the present.

PAST PROGRAMS

October:
(Ken Raisanen responsible)

State Police Trooper Jerry Mazurek gave a presentation on the proliferation of heroin in the western UP. It has taken the place once held by meth; and, heroin can cause addiction immediately.

November:
(Jerry Koski responsible)

Christopher Stefano of Michigan Tech's A. E. Seaman Mineralogical Museum gave a presentation on the University of Michigan mineral collection. The collection had languished in dusty storage at U of M, and has now found a "permanent" home at A. E. Seaman. The collection includes some of Douglass

**NOTICE
DUES DUE**

Now is the time to pay your annual dues (\$15 per individual, \$25 per family). Or, consider becoming a Life Member for \$150.

Your membership form is enclosed with this newsletter.

Houghton's specimens from his initial Geological Survey of the UP. For anyone who has not recently toured the A. E. Seaman Mineralogical Museum at Michigan Tech, we highly encourage it. The museum is located west of the Student Development Complex and Ice Arena, off Sharon Avenue.

December:
(Josie Olson responsible)

Bob and JoAnn Hartle gave a presentation on Identity Theft, focusing on Mr. Hartle's personal trials and tribulations when his identity was usurped in grand fashion.

January:
(Doreen Parker responsible)

Dean Juntunen gave a presentation on kayaking in the Lake Superior basin, and also showed how he adapts as a paraplegic to function as a hardcore kayaker in wilderness settings, such as the rugged Canadian north shore of Superior.

Editor's Note:

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

ONTONAGON FIRE DEPARTMENT

By Brandon Store

The first Fire Department was founded in the Upper Peninsula in Ontonagon. The records started in 1889 but they were traced down to 1855. The original Fire Department called themselves the "Ontonagon Fire Company Number 1." They all started out as volunteers and continue to be a volunteer organization today.

When the original firemen's crew was established there were six members. They were James Mercer, John G. Parker Sr., M. A. Powers, Thomas Stripe Sr., John Bailey, and Alfred Meads. Thomas Stripe was a busy man. Not only did he volunteer for the fire department, but he also worked as the lighthouse keeper.

As the fire department finally had an official standing they needed to have official uniforms to go along with it. They had fundraisers to raise money so they could provide themselves with dress coats and pants so they looked "spiffy." If any of the members of the fire department lost or damaged their own or someone else's clothes, they would owe the fire department five dollars. An average mill hand working at the Diamond Match Company (1882-1896) would make only seventy-five cents a day. One can imagine how long you would have to work at the company just to make up for your uniforms. The advice would be to not mess up your dress uniforms, and to treat them with care.

The Diamond Match Company's presence in



Ontonagon changed the economy for the better. The Diamond Match Company provided most of the town with jobs. Several of the firefighters worked at the Diamond Match as well as being volunteers at the fire department. The firefighters would have to be ready to go at any time, so one can imagine the extra pressure that would bring. The Diamond Match Company supported many of the fire department's merchandise needs and tried to make sure they had those needs met. When the company first started, they used leather buckets to carry the water. They also used wooden ladders and axes. Every year they would upgrade their equipment. By 1889 they were using horses to haul and carry their equipment. Their main help was their steam pumper. The steam pumper made it much easier and helped tremendously.

Not only was the fire department worried about improving their own equipment, but they also wanted to advance the town. By 1892 they started installing fire hydrants throughout

the entire town. Having fire hydrants throughout the entire town sped up the firefighting process tremendously for the fire department. On the 25th of August in the year 1896, the booming town of Ontonagon was demolished to nothing. Gale force winds coming from the outside of town blowing from southwest fanned the burning brush piles from the outside of town into the larger lumber piles that were stocked up outside of the Diamond Match Company. The Fire Department might have had newer equipment and were more advanced with fire hydrants and so forth, but that didn't guarantee that they were able to protect the town this time. The winds were so strong that they picked up parts of the burning lumber piles and blew them throughout the town. At this time people didn't have tin roofs or asphalt shingles. They were all wooden, and dry wood catches fire easily.

Just because the town burned down didn't mean they lost all hope. Within two weeks they

already had plans on rebuilding. Much of the village of Ontonagon was rebuilt by the year of 1897.

On March 4th, 1898, the new fire hall was completed at last. At the end of this era, having the new fire department, and now with the village also using it as their village hall, they decided to end the original Fire Company Number One designation, as Ontonagon was beginning all over.

As this new era began with many new people and new opportunities, the original Fire Company Number One members were gone or too old to serve. One would think after starting everything up and always being there for their community that they would get something for all their actions. The records from the fire department showed me that the new members of the new fire department didn't care as much as the original people did. They missed meetings regularly. The new chief of the department felt that there was no reason to have a meeting unless there was something important to talk about. March 30th, 1917 there was an order to call a meeting. They called that meeting to discuss getting custodians for the hall. The fire department wasn't really using the hall as much. Originally, members of the community used the hall a lot. They would use the upstairs for school rooms so the children would get an education. The whole town was different and renewed, so they didn't need to use the hall as much as they did before. Before, anyone was invited to use the hall if they so needed. At this time the Village band was also denied access to the hall so they could practice.

Before, with the original fire company the Village used the hall whenever they needed it without cost. The Village and the Fire Department must not have been on good terms any more.

In 1918 the United States was in trouble. We were going to war. Everyone wanted to pitch in from everywhere in the US. Even Ontonagon did its part to help with the war effort. The United States was looking for a lot of scrap metal at this time so they could build equipment for the war effort. So that's what the fire department did. The fire department gathered up all their old metal objects that they had lying around and donated them to the war effort. They sent old spare axes with them also that were in good condition for use. Not only was the fire department all for helping with the war, but so was the community. All the ladies that were part of the Red Cross committee were allowed access to the hall to do whatever they needed to do to put in their part. After all the hard work of the people the war would slowly come to an end. They all had a plan to have a big party for the people, who where overseas putting in their time to help with the war effort that were from Ontonagon. What better place would it be to hold a big party than at the fire department? The fire department was a big building and had a lot of space for everyone to have a good time.

In 1929 the village of Ontonagon got their first fire truck. What was unique about this fire truck? It had a high pressure pump, ladders, and carried all the fire fighters to the scene. It also had the connectors

that would hook up to the fire hydrants throughout the town.

One thing has remained constant -- the dedication the fire fighters had towards the village of Ontonagon. They are highly more advanced with technology than the fire department was before. The roster of the fire department is supposed to be 30. Currently we have 21 people that are part of the fire department. The fire department has two meetings a month. The first meeting is a work meeting on the second Monday of the month. The last Monday of the month is for the business end of the fire department.

Now the fire department has big pumper trucks and they don't have to depend on a steam pumper that was horse drawn. Now the fire department can just drive to the fire and get the job done as fast as they can with less of an impact from the fire. The fire department currently has two big pumper trucks. Each pumper is loaded with hoses and ladder. Each truck is equipped with a 35 foot extension ladder and a roof ladder on each side of the truck. Each roof ladder is 16 feet. All pumpers on each truck are preset to 100 psi. There are two different types of foam water they will put out to try and stop the fire. Wet foam is usually used on wood chips and wooden objects. FFF type of water foam is to be used on gasoline of fuel. They now have one of the old village transportation vehicles that the fire department restored and made it look good for some more use. Now the new and restored vehicle brings the fire crews equipment to them right on the scene.



Dear Readers,

The above photo was taken from the snowmobile trail at Lake Mine (former Copper Range Railroad Grade, now the Bill Nichols Trail), January 31, 2016 . These stone remnants of a mine structure are located on the north side of the trail. If anyone knows the historical details of this structure, please send the information to Dean Juntunen (deanjunt@jamadots.com), and he will publish it in the next issue of the County Historian.