

# The County Historian

News from the Ontonagon County Historical Society

Dean Juntunen, Editor

Spring 2015

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

As of Memorial Day, museum hours for the summer months will be 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 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.

New stuff is coming into the Gift Shop, and we now have a new supply of the latest iteration of our miniature lighthouses, which are very popular thus far.

Also, for the summer, Josie and Don Olson are setting up an OCHS booth at Dee Stadium in Houghton. The Dee hosts historical displays throughout the summer tourism season.

In other news, Ironwood is hosting the UP History Conference this summer. This conference is sponsored annually

by the Historical Society of Michigan, and it's always an informative and fun event. Scheduled for June 26-28, the registration deadline is June 19, 2015.

<https://www.hsmichigan.org/conferences/upper-peninsula-history-conference/>

## SHIP SAILS AGAIN

We have been fully funded by the Keweenaw National Park Advisory Committee for another Summer History Internship Program.



These bright students called *The Highlanders* from the Ontonagon Area School won third place in this year's Local History Smackdown organized by Keweenaw National Historical Park in April. L to R: Matt Niemi, Karlie Seid, coach Emily Carpenter, Lucas Dean, and Kaili Weiner.



Ontonagon's sharpest crew this year, *The Nonesuch Know-It-Alls*, won second place in the Local History Smackdown. L to R: Lucas Burrows, Colton Heikkinen, coach Vikki James, Nate Ashbreck, and Kaitlyn Ray.

It appears that we will have five interns this year, including one from the south end of the county. These motivated youths will learn local history, take field trips to historical sites, and accomplish a fair amount of work for us at the Museum and Lighthouse. Interns will be paid \$1000 for their summer efforts.

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Bruce Johanson

Dear members and Friends of the Ontonagon County Historical Society:

The Museum and Lighthouse are open for business. Everything survived the winter in good condition and we are hoping for a good summer of visitors and tours.

The Keweenaw National Historical Park Advisory Commission looked with favor on our grant application and awarded us the full amount we asked for. We are recruiting summer interns at this time and hope to have interviewed our candidates shortly so we can get them into the routine of our operations. Our Summer History Intern Program (SHIP) has not only helped your historical society but it has made our local and regional history come alive for several of our local school students. We reach out to students in Ontonagon and Ewen-Trout Creek for our intern program.

We have a new display in the museum, or rather, we have expanded an older display. The late Werner Lamsa, who spent years locating and retrieving prehistoric copper tools and specimens from ancient miners' pits had amassed a large and comprehensive collection

of artifacts. Werner's son, Jerry, has chosen to send these items home to Ontonagon County and we were very pleased to add these items to our collection. We may just have the largest and most complete collection of prehistoric copper artifacts in the region.

We are hopeful of moving our fishing boat to Rose Island this summer and we have started collecting items relative to Ontonagon's commercial fishing industry for display on the island near the Ostling's Cheryl/Dennis fish tug.

Our high school SMACKDOWN teams did well again this year, and though we did not take the traveling trophy home, our two teams came in second and third, and the SMACKDOWN teams that are drawn from the local schools and sponsored by your historical society continue to be a major player in the annual competition. Our work with younger people has gained us a certain measure of respect among the other KNHP Heritage sites.

Finally, our new shipment of miniature replicas of our historic lighthouse have arrived. These

miniatures were prepared from the scale drawings we had made some years ago and are quite realistic in detail. Hopefully, the supply we have will last us for at least two years, but more and more visitors, after touring our lighthouse, want a souvenir of their tour and we were almost completely sold out of the last batch we had made. We are the exclusive source of these miniature Ontonagon lighthouses... they are not available anywhere else.

We look forward to seeing more of our members dropping by over the summer to revisit your museum and checking out what's new. We have made many changes at the lighthouse as well, so don't assume that once you've seen it, that's all there is to see. History is being made every day, and as we discover new and interesting things about our area, we add display items and enhance our lighthouse tours as well.

We need, and thank you for your continued support.

Bruce H. Johanson,  
President OCHS



This boxed set of Ancient Miner artifacts is just a small part of the collection of the late Werner Lamsa of Mass City. His son Jerry donated the collection to us.

**LIGHTHOUSE NEWS**



Lighthouse Tours are in full swing for the season, and our Lighthouse is looking spiffy.

Please consider being a Lighthouse Tour Guide this season. It is a rewarding experience for all.

In other lighthouse news, the Corps of Engineers had offered the Pierhead Light to us. We were sorely tempted to accept this physical piece of history, too; however, given the logistics of the location at the end of the pier, and the fact that we would not have a walkway to the light, we had to decline the offer. The offer included some caveats that we just couldn't live with.

But regarding the fine lighthouse that we already have, if you are interested in being a lighthouse philanthropist, we still have the following rooms or structures available for sponsorship.

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



**UPCOMING DINNER MEETINGS**

**ALL DINNERS AT 6:30 pm**

**June 18, Thursday -- The Algomah Honey House in Greenland**

(Dave Bishop responsible)

Mike Pflaum, superintendent of the Keweenaw National Historical Park, will give a presentation on an upcoming centennial celebration for the National Park Service. Our country's first National Park was Yellowstone, chartered in 1872; however, the National Park Service was not formed until August 25, 1916.

**July 16, Thursday -- The Algomah Honey House in Greenland**

(Diane Penegor responsible)

Program to be announced.

**August 23, Sunday -- The Algomah Honey House in Greenland**

(Bruce Johanson responsible)

Program to be announced.

**September 17, Thursday -- The Algomah Honey House in Greenland**

(Dean Juntunen responsible)

Program to be announced.

**PAST PROGRAMS**

**February:**

(Bill Chabot responsible)

Bill Chabot gave a presentation titled, "Historical Myths, Legends, Spoilers, Trivia, and Balderdash," taking us on a trip down memory lane in Ontonagon.

**March:**

(Doreen Parker responsible)

Ontonagon County Animal Protection volunteers Dot Phillips, Janet Wolfe, and Anne Lundberg gave a thorough presentation on OCAP, and their excellent facility near the Evergreen Cemetery.

**April:**

(Ruth Zimmer responsible)

Sawyer Newman from the Michigan Tech Archives gave a presentation on the history of Michigan Technological University and The Archives themselves, which are housed in the University Library.

**May:**

(Josie Olson responsible)

John Haeussler gave a presentation on the history of Hancock, MI, focusing on many of the prominent buildings in the 1800's.

**Editor's Note:**

The following is a short paper by one of our SHIP interns from the summer of 2014.

**WHITE PINE,  
A SMALL MINING  
COMMUNITY  
SURROUNDED BY  
WOODS**

**By Kaitlyn Ray**

White Pine is a very small community in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. This tiny little town has quite a bit of history. White Pine had one sole purpose though, and that was copper mining.

"It all began in the early seventeenth century when some voyagers on Lake Superior heard word of a huge piece of float copper in the Ontonagon River. Around 1766, Alexander Henry, the elder, laid eyes on the copper piece and reported it to be so pure that he was able to easily remove a piece." ("Ontonagon Boulder", n.d.)

Another voyager named Henry Schoolcraft came across the boulder. Schoolcraft and his team went up the Ontonagon River on a geological voyage around Michigan. Schoolcraft reported that the copper was scarred by chisels and axes of Native Americans.

This copper boulder is called the Ontonagon Boulder and it got a lot of people interested in the Upper Peninsula and the mineral supply here, thus the beginning of copper mining in White Pine.

According to Cox (2014), the first owner of the White Pine mine was Thomas Hooper and he established the mine. The first big company that owned it though was Calumet and Hecla and they were the third owners. "Calumet and Hecla operated a mine at White Pine from 1913 to 1920, producing 18 million pounds of copper and 200,000 ounces of silver before closing down." After C&H, the mine belonged to Copper Range Company. They bought the land in 1929 for \$19,000.

There were many departments in the early days of the mine. Some of these included industrial and public relations, plant engineering, general works, quality control and safety. "All production and maintenance jobs were evaluated into 18 different classes of work. In 1966, the

company processed 4120 individual insurance claims for a total payment of \$667,500." (Cole, n.d., p. 16-17)

The billionth pound of copper from the White Pine mine was a huge deal in town. They even had a billionth pound commemoration for it on September 18, 1965. This commemoration started by registration and then a press conference in the elementary school. After the luncheon they had surface tours at the mine, then the official pouring. The governor at the time, George Romney, even attended, and they had a reception for him. There was also a banquet to end the commemoration.

Copper Range studied the possibility of solution mining in 1993. Two years later the company shut down mining operations because permitting delays with the EPA made it uneconomical. The copper Refinery did not close though. It continued refining copper from Flin Flon, Manitoba, Canada until shut down in 2010.

With all the mining that went on in White Pine they needed houses and schools and other amenities for the miners and their families. That is why the town of White Pine came about. Planning and building of the town site started as soon as Copper Range acquired the property in 1929.

The plan for White Pine was like a dream, with a mall, schools, a lake, banks, and high class restaurants. "The master plan took advantage of all America's experience in building cities." (Development Plan, A Real Life Dream.) Everybody was excited for White Pine to go into action.

The 10-year plan they had for White Pine had 3 phases. Phase One was very large and would start everything off. "During this period it was anticipated that the population would increase to 5,000. The land between Highway M-64 and the Iron River would be developed. It called for the erection of 250 three and four bedroom homes in the area called Evergreen acres, as well as construction of more than 300 additional homes and a senior citizens housing." (Development plan, A Real Life Dream.)

A shopping mall and business center were planned for this phase. The mall would house a super market, a salon, and a drug store. The business center would have had a theater, motel, bar, dry cleaners, filling stations, real estate and insurance offices, and many other establishments.

Phase One also called for expanding the high school and building an elementary school. The hospital would have had 35 extra bed rooms added on and a nursing home was planned to be built. A building was supposed to be built to accommodate town offices and a fire station. Also, a 10-acre plot was supposed to be set aside for the White Pine Cemetery.

"Plans also included a proposal to build a dam in the Iron River to create a manmade lake 4 1/2 miles long and 1,500 feet wide. In the center of the lake, which would offer opportunities for swimming, boating, water skiing in summers and ice skating in winters, would be an island connected by a bridge and set aside exclusively as a park land for camping, picnicking and other forms of recreation."

(Development Plan, A Real Life Dream.)

Phase Two was a small stage and only called for a few improvements. Some of the improvements it called for were 600 more houses, apartment buildings, another elementary school, and a start of a cultural center that would include a library. This phase also called for a marina.

Phase Three was another small phase and was the last of the three stages. During this phase houses were supposed to be built toward the Porcupine Mountains. By the time Phase Three was done there was expected to be 10,000 people living in White Pine and the residents of White Pine would have just about everything they could ever want. Although there were great plans, things went awry with the plan for White Pine's town site. Most of the plans did not even happen. The business center, with the theatre, motel, bar and other establishments, was never built. The nursing home that was supposed to be built never was, along with the cemetery. The dam was never made; therefore the lake was never formed. Also there was only one elementary school that was built, not two.

Some of the plan did go into effect on the other hand. The mall was built and some of the houses were built. Some of the bedrooms were added onto the hospital. Houses were built toward the Porcupine Mountains and a few apartment buildings were also built.

I am sure White Pine was once a very fun and exciting place but now not much goes on there. The mall is still there but all that is present is a bank, a restaurant

and a post office. At the end of Phase Three, White Pine was supposed to have 10,000 people living there but as of the 2010 census there were only about 474 people in White Pine (2010 U.S. Census). Both the high school and elementary schools are closed down but two of the three churches are still going. There also is a filling station and a convenience store connected to the Konteka, which is a restaurant/bar with bowling lanes too.

White Pine's glory may be over for now but there is some hope in the air. Highland Copper Company bought the White Pine mine site for over 3 million stock shares. "Highlands's Calumet subsidiary, Keweenaw Copper Company, will spend the next year researching and drilling at the site to affirm copper reserve." ("Upper Michigan's Source", n.d.)

All and all, White Pine had one main purpose when it started and that was mining. After 18 years of no mining and the town going downhill, there is hope for the future in White Pine, and once again it's because of copper mining.

#### **Editor's Note:**

The following is another short paper by one of our SHIP interns from the summer of 2014.

### **B-17**

**By Karlie Seid**

The whole aircraft was armored very well. There are many protective armor plates installed at each station throughout the airplane. The

pilot and copilot were protected by armor plates on the backs of their seats. The bombardier-navigator area had plates at both the front and back of the compartment. The gunner's seat located in the Ball Turret is made of armor plate. In the waist section, armor plates are located above, below, and to the rear of each window, and padded plates and bulletproof glass protected the tail gunner.

Human bodies aren't designed for high altitudes, therefore every crew member on a B-17 had to wear an oxygen mask. It was such a safety precaution that before every mission, everyone had a checklist they had to go over to make sure their mask was good for use. They had to check for worn spots on the straps, make sure it had a good fit, test for leaks, and make sure that when wearing the mask, the crew member was free to move without kinking the hose, and be sure that the gasket was properly seated.

To operate a B-17 properly, there had to be many crew members, and each and every one of them had a different duty to do. The airplane commander made sure everything was safe and made sure the other crew members knew how to be safe, the copilot helped the pilot check everything over, the navigator calculated position, speed, and course and reported it to the radio operator, the bombardier jettisoned the bombs when it was needed, the flight engineer jettisoned ammunition and loose equipment, the radio operator runs the radio and sends out messages, and the gunners manned the guns in their compartment.

Although the crews on every B-17 were very well-trained and prepared, that didn't mean accidents wouldn't happen. On April 19, 1944, a B-17 with the serial number 42-30762 crashed in the Porcupine Mountains, about twenty miles away from Ontonagon, Michigan. This B-17 was on its way from Sioux City, Iowa, to Duluth, Minnesota. When the aircraft was about fifteen miles west of Marquette, Michigan, the crew discovered an oil leak and shortly after, engine no. 3 caught fire. The plane kept course and was planning an emergency landing in Duluth, but the crew was unable to feather out the fire. Pieces of the engine began to blow off. The pilot, Tom Smith, set the plane on autopilot and commanded the crew to bail out, and they did. They all landed in the Porcupine Mountains and all but one were found the same day. One crew member was lost in the woods for two days, but was found safe. Every crew member survived the crash.

The aircraft also landed in the mountains. The Air Force sent a bulldozer to the scene of the crash and most of the ruins were cleared out, but a winter storm moved in, causing them to leave some of the wreckage. Some of the ruins still sit among the trees and grass of the Porcupine Mountains.

Since everyone survived the crash, soon they were all out on another mission. Tom Smith was again the pilot, and they left from Lincoln, Nebraska, flew to Bangor, Maine, then to Goose Bay, Newfoundland, and on to Nuts Corner, Ireland. When they landed in Nuts Corner, the crew got to Bassingbourn by train on

May 29, 1944. On June, 17, they started their first combat mission. August 13, fate was against them. Their B-17 aircraft (serial number 42-107030) was hit by flak, just below the cockpit and crashed in La Manor, France. Pilot Tom Smith was killed in action, but the rest of the crew bailed out safely. Four crew members ended up getting captured, and the other four, with the help of the French, found a way underground to avoid getting captured.

Everyone except Tom Smith survived, and most of the crew returned to Ontonagon in 1994 for a reunion. They had a dinner with the Historical Society, and they hiked out to the crash site.

"I was at the reunion in Ontonagon in 1994. After the crash, the Army Air Force sent bulldozers to remove the plane. Then a big winter storm hit and they only got the big parts out and three engines. When I went to the crash site at the reunion, which was quite a hike, there was only small pieces of the plane

remaining, but I did see the tail wheel stuck up in a tree -- probably still there," said J.W. Britton, (the ball turret gunner on B-17 42-30762) during a phone conversation in August of 2003.

"The crew of B-17 42-30762 consisted of Tom Smith Jr. (Pilot), Raymond Rietschel (Bombardier), Calvin Seiler (Waist gunner), Charles Sturgeon (Engineer), Leonard Rogers (Tail Gunner), Louis Starks (Co-Pilot), Alexander Calder (Navigator), Richard Hayes (Upper Gunner), Delmer Spears (Radio Operator), and Jess Britton (Ball Turret Gunner)." (Porcupinemountainsb-17.com)



With tongue firmly in cheek, we were astonished to see that the Ancient Miners had double-bladed light sabers! Who knew?