

# The County Historian

News from the Ontonagon County Historical Society

Dean Juntunen, Editor

Spring 2019

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 everyone. Another glorious summer is starting to bloom in the UP, and as of mid-May, our museum hours are Thursday-Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. As of Father's Day Weekend in mid-June, we will be open Monday-Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Sundays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

We are in desperate need of Lighthouse Tour Guides again this year. Please call the museum at 884-6165 if you can guide one day per week. You will be well-trained prior to giving tours, and our guides report that it is a rewarding experience.

We also need volunteers for the museum greeter's desk -- another rewarding experience.

Our Gift Shop has many fresh items, such as new Michigan mugs, Christmas ornaments, stuffed animals, UP cutting boards, new jewelry, new candy items, and various novelties.

We have purchased Past Perfect software for managing our museum collection. Carol and Steve Maass will be utilizing this software this summer in conjunction with a couple of grant-funded employees who will inventory and catalog our entire collection. The grant is from the Keweenaw National Historical Park Advisory Commission.

We now have a mural contract with artist Sue Martinsen, who will have our panels painted by the end of the year 2019. Next spring, with agreeable weather, the panels will be installed on our museum's back wall facing RICC Park. The mural will catch the eyes of vehicular passers-by on River Street.

## LOCAL HISTORY SMACKDOWN RESULTS

Ontonagon once again had a strong team in the annual Local History Smackdown held in the Calumet Theater in April, organized by the Keweenaw National Historical Park.

Each team is allowed two misses and one pass before being eliminated. Our Ontonagon team was perhaps overconfident as they went out with one pass still available. They did get third place though, and did a nice job of representing the Ontonagon Area School. A well-coached team from Dollar Bay took first place for the second year in a row.



The Nonesuch Know-It-Alls claimed third place in the KNHP's Local History Smackdown at the Calumet Theater in April.

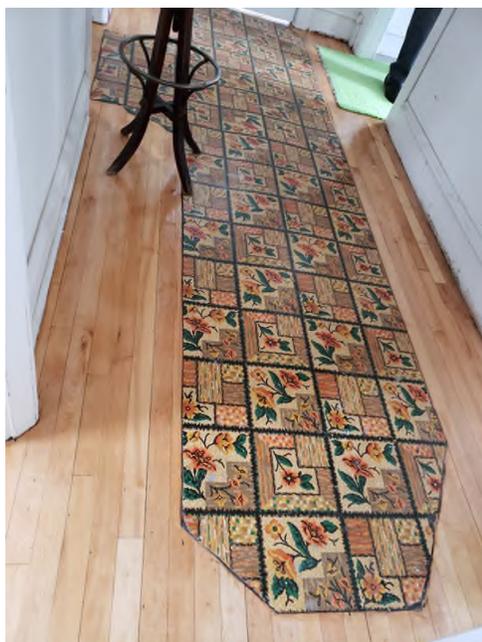
L to R: Coach Emily Carpenter, Reece LaBine, Rory LaBine, and Henry Menigoz.

### LIGHTHOUSE NEWS



The big news is that our hardwood floors at the Lighthouse have been refinished. The contractor was Deke Routheaux from Ironwood (originally Kenton).

Vikki James provided the following photo so that you can appreciate Deke and company's fine work.



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

- 29 Spiral Steps**            \$300 ea
- Master Bedroom**        \$5,000
- 1st-flr 1890's kitchen**    \$6,000
- West Parlor**                \$6,000



The Past Perfect software above will be used to inventory and organize our entire museum collection.

the Bruce Crossing area, and then earned an engineering degree at Michigan Tech, and spent most of his career in the cement industry in the Alpena-Rogers City area downstate, then retired back to the Bruce Crossing area.

Mr. Alanen's gift is a lifesaver for OCHS, as our operating budget is historically tight.

Reino Alanen was also a life-long Lions Club member, and in his retirement he served with the Ottawa Lions in Bruce Crossing. I knew him personally and he will be sorely missed.

### YOOPER TALK

Mark your calendar for Friday, July 19, 2019 for a very interesting event at the Ontonagon Theater.

Will Rankinen, a professor at Grand Valley State College, will be giving a presentation on our unique Yooper dialect, and why we speak the way we do.

[www.gvsu.edu/csd/2019slls](http://www.gvsu.edu/csd/2019slls)

### ESTATE GIFT

The dearly departed Reino Alanen of Bruce Crossing gave us a gift of \$10,000 in his will. Mr. Alanen had a keen interest in history and in Ontonagon County in general. He had grown up in

### PRESIDENT'S CORNER by Bruce Johanson

Dear Members and Friends of the Ontonagon Co. Historical Society:

Whether or not you will agree, summer is upon us. Since our last newsletter, the mighty Ontonagon River is free of ice, and flows unvexed into the Big Lake.

At the museum we know that the summer has arrived when we start getting calls for Lighthouse Tours. This year we were a bit late getting the lighthouse ready because at long last, we have

refinished the floors, and they do look great! To accomplish this, all of the furniture had to be moved to where the floor finishing project was to take place. Dave and Pat Bishop packed all the furniture into the Stripe Bedroom and into Tom's upstairs dormer room, and a day later, Mr. Bishop and yours truly

managed to move the monolith desk out of the office as well as three cast iron stoves.

The electric generator got a good workout providing the 220 volt juice for the floor sander, and Dave Bishop kept the monster fed. The floor sanding and stripping was a major undertaking given that the floors had never been refinished and had many-several coats of hard varnish to be cut through. Three coats of gym floor finish were applied.

In the meantime, Ralph Workman paid a visit to the lawn and it looks like a lush green carpet. We have a bit of paint touch up to do in the weeks ahead, but our historic lighthouse is now ready to welcome visitors.

We were fully funded for our grant application to the Keweenaw National Historical Park Advisory Commission so we will be able to undertake an updating of our acquisition records and begin the task of doing an inventory of our massive collection under the supervision of Carol and Steve Maass. We have advertised for summer help in this endeavor and have already received applications from well-qualified candidates. We will schedule interviews shortly.

The Mural Project is moving ahead. As you may know, we have the funding in place to pay for and finish the mural which will be on the outside museum wall facing the new RICC pocket park. The artist, Susan Martinsen, will soon be putting her paint brushes to the mural panels.

Soon we will have another boat on display... a life boat off the Ranger III which is being passed to us by the Isle Royale National Park.

## 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.

Also, the boat that was built by the late George Mikkola is ready for restoration work to begin, too.

We should take great pride in our Historical Society and the things we have accomplished in the 62 years since a group of local people laid the foundation of our organization. I have often wished that the late Charlie Willman, who gathered and kept the collection together for 34 years, could see today's museum and what we have built on what he and the other founders started. I had the privilege of working with Judge Willman when I was first elected to the Board in 1983, and I like to think he would approve of what we have done.

Though we are a historical society in that we strive to maintain a connection to our past heritage, we must also consider that what we do today becomes tomorrow's history. We are only the temporary custodians of what we have to care for and it must continue to be our mission to not only share and interpret our history, but also to

hand it on to the next generation to care for and learn from.

The time comes to each of us to hand off our role to others, and hope that they will take up the challenge and privilege to be the guardians of the past, and the gatekeepers of the future.

Bruce H. Johanson, President



## UPCOMING DINNER MEETINGS

**ALL DINNERS AT 6:30 pm**

**June 20, Thursday -- Holy Family Catholic Church**  
(Vikki James Responsible)

Vikki James will give a presentation on the Siege of Vicksburg, MS during the Civil War, 1863.

**July 18, Thursday -- The Ontonagon Lighthouse**  
(Sally Berman responsible)

Sally Berman will give a presentation titled, "Lighthouse Trivia -- Fact and Fiction." We'll enjoy a picnic-style dinner at the Lighthouse.

**August 15, Thursday -- Holy Family Catholic Church**  
(Bruce Johanson responsible)

Bruce Johanson said that he does not have a program lined up yet, but he guarantees that he will come up with something interesting.

**September 19, Thursday --**  
**Holy Family Catholic Church**  
 (Dean Juntunen responsible)

Matt Portfleet, Adventure Mine owner, will give a presentation on the Wieliczka Salt Mine in southern Poland. The mine is perhaps Poland's first business ever.

**PAST PROGRAMS**

**February:**

(Dave Bishop responsible)

Bob Wild, Porkies Interpreter, gave an in-depth presentation on the history of the Porcupine Mountains and the formation of the Porcupine Mountains State Park in 1945. The name changed to Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park in 1972.

**March:**

(Jean Eckloff responsible)

Jim Michie, Fair Board Member, gave a presentation on the history of the Ontonagon County Fair, which is operated by the Ontonagon County Agricultural Association, commonly referred to as the Fair Board. The Association started out in the south end of Ontonagon County, and eventually migrated to Greenland.

**April:**

(Tom Hawley Responsible)

Tom Hawley gave a presentation on a Diamond Match Co vs. Ontonagon legal case which was heard in the US Supreme Court, regarding taxes on logs in the Ontonagon River. Diamond Match claimed that since their logs were stored up-river where they were outside of the village limits on tax day,

they were under no obligation to pay taxes to the village. This was in 1903, post-fire. Diamond Match was then shipping river-driven logs via rail to mills outside of Ontonagon.

Due to Michigan's Interstate Commerce laws, the Village of Ontonagon won the suit.

**May:**

(Josie Olson responsible)

Jim Kurtti, David Maki, and Joanna Chopp gave a presentation on "Finns of Michigan's Upper Peninsula," which is a book that they have written. They also wrote a cookbook, which includes not just recipes, but also stories to accompany the recipes. The cookbook is titled "Tastes of Finnish America -- Foods that make us smile."

If you would like to purchase either book, we have some at the museum, or you can contact the Finnish American Heritage Center at Finlandia University in Hancock.

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**Editor's Note:**

The following observation is from author Larry Chabot.

Many years ago, I was at the Michigan Mine site south of Rockland with Charlie Willman, founder of the historical society. This is my recollection of that day:

"I want to show you something," Charlie said. We walked northeast of the Michigan Mine site until we came to a natural rock wall, running roughly north-south. Jutting out from the wall, pointing west, was a semi-circular earthen berm, attached to the wall at each end.

The berm had very large trees growing out of it. The interior of the semi-circle had been almost filled over time with nature's leftovers: leaves, wood, dirt, and whatever else blew in, and also contained large trees.

The question is, "What happened here?"

Charlie thought it might have been a defensive setup, built by long-ago people to repel an attack. An archeological dig inside the berm might reveal some interesting clues.

**Editor's Note:**

While OCHS will not be hosting a SHIP program this summer, we do have a research paper from Ryszard Olszewski which has not yet been published in a newsletter. He was a SHIP intern last summer, and he wrote an extensive research paper on the Victoria Mine's Taylor Hydraulic Air Compressor. In future editions of The County Historian, we will run installments of Mr. Olszewski's fine work. He was also a member of Ontonagon's Robotics team, seen below, from 2017.





Ontonagon  
County  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

422 River St  
Ontonagon, MI 49953

ONTONAGON COUNTY  
HISTORICAL MUSEUM  
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Good variety of items,  
Ontonagon's widest selection of greeting  
cards for all occasions,  
sweatshirts, Abdallah Chocolate  
Books - including those written by past and  
present local authors,  
and much more.  
Special orders welcome.

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