Greetings everyone. Our museum is still open on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. for the remainder of winter. We are now in our quiet season, and as always, we take this opportunity to thank our crew of volunteers, who kept us a vibrant organization for another year. The following columns are a complete list of our volunteers in the past year to our knowledge, including Lighthouse Tour Guides and Board Members:

Anderson, Barbara
Basile, Sue
Berman, Sally
Bishop, David
Chabot, Bill
Chabot, Roberta
Chastan, Don
Doyle, John
Eckloff, Jean
Giuliano, Teri
Gonzales, Kristie
Haarala, Sharon
Hawley, Tom
Heitjan, Michael
James, Victoria
Jaris, Alexandra
Jaris, David
Johanson, Roberta
Johanson, Bruce
Johnson, Audrey
Johnston, Mary
Juntunen, Dean
Koski, Jerry
Koski, Linda
Lind, Jean
Lind, Bob
Maass, Carol
Maass, Steve
Malila, Fern
Miller, Nathan
 Olson, Josie
Olszewski, Katarzyna
Olszewski, Ryszard
Pattison, Judy
Penegor, Coriane
Penegor, Diane
Penegor, Willah
Raisanen, Ken
Ray, Kaitlyn
Rieger, Jon
Spetz, Mary Ann
Workman, Marie
Workman, Ralph
Yaklyvich, Missie

These “Ontonagon Polar Bears” are in our museum’s school display. However, here’s their story: Edwy Crooker of Ontonagon had invented the Penetread Tire, which had built-in steel traction bits. Gillette Tire Co from Eau Claire, WI made the Crooker tires. Gillette’s logo was a Polar Bear, and their trademark was “bear for wear.” The polar bears in our display were given to Edwy Crooker to use as advertisement in his shop.
Also, we thank all of the Chamber of Commerce Information Center people who were set up in our museum this past year. They helped us out, too.

**A BIG THANK YOU**

goes to everyone who donated baked goods, or made other donations throughout the year. You are keeping us alive and well, and we deeply appreciate everyone.

OCHS GOVERNANCE

by Tom Hawley, Secretary

The Ontonagon County Historical Society was founded in 1957 as an informal unincorporated association. In 1963, it was granted 501(c)(3) status as a charitable organization by the Internal Revenue Service, and in 1968, it became a Michigan nonprofit corporation under the provisions of the Michigan General Corporation Statute of 1931.

OCHS has not amended its articles of incorporation in the 52 years since its incorporation, and during that time Michigan has adopted and revised a modern Nonprofit Corporation Act that offers both operational efficiencies and improved protections for nonprofits and their boards and officers. The time is at hand to consider whether OCHS should amend its articles of incorporation to take advantage of these developments.

Likewise, our bylaws -- the internal rules that govern how OCHS is organized and operates -- have had only one revision in the past twelve years, and are in need of a thorough review and update.

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**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.

Terry Davison  
Dale Koski  
Walter Lukkarila  
Matthias Schuster  
Sarah Wagner

Changes to the current articles of incorporation and the bylaws will require approval by the membership, and you will be hearing more on these subjects in the coming year as the board looks into these topics.

**WHAT’S HAPPENING**

The year 2020 will be a big one for OCHS, with major projects getting lined up. This past fall, an opportunity arose through the Ontonagon DDA for a Facade Improvement grant, wherein 75% of the cost is paid through the grant, with 25% left for us. Ultimately, the money comes from Federal Community Development Block Grant funds, and then through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to the Ontonagon DDA and finally to those businesses that opt in. As a Nonprofit, we qualified for the grant. Architect Lisa Wrate has been hired by the DDA to coordinate all projects. Several businesses in Ontonagon are proceeding thus far.

We will have to make a decision by February 1, 2020 if we definitively wish to proceed. Initial estimates have our cost share at approximately $42,000.

Since our exterior bricks are spalling, our building was going to need attention one way or another. In the proposed facade project, all four walls will be covered with siding, and the open corner near our front entrance, where the large anchor now sits, would be filled in to improve our entrance area and offer a bit more interior space. The mansard roof would go away. See image on next page.

Meanwhile, our mural artist, Sue Martinsen, is painting panels in Ashland, WI, and she’ll have the mural ready for installation in May or so; however, if we proceed with the facade project, Ms. Martinsen said that she can store the panels until our siding has been installed. The mural will be installed on the south wall,

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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.
facing the RICC Pocket Park, toward the Aspirus Fitness Center.

The five-year cycle for the Rieger photo project in the county is due in the summer of 2020. Dr. Rieger, a sociologist from the University of Louisville, KY, had studied Ontonagon County for over 50 years, and he is now retiring from the project. He had taken about 700 photographs throughout the county every five years, always from the exact same location, and framed the same, in order to document change over time.

This summer, photographer Nathan Miller is hired to shoot the photos. Tom Hawley will present a contract for the board at our February meeting.

Our long term plan is to have the photos available to the public upon request. Older photos have been digitized, and all new photos will be digital of course.

Another long term project is to digitize the historical photos in our museum collection. We may be able to accomplish that through a program that the Northern Michigan University Archives is developing.

**SIGNS**

Robert Wagner has offered to donate the old Toll Road Sign which had been on display at his home (the historic Spellman home), across from the Forest Service Complex.

As luck would have it, OCHS board member Tom Hawley owns a triangle of property where the Old and new Rockland Roads split, just a couple blocks toward town from Robert Wagner’s location. The Welcome Sign for Ontonagon is currently posted in the roadbed of the Old Rockland Road where it is blocked off near Payne Street.

Tom Hawley’s triangle is perfectly positioned for hosting the Toll Road sign, offering great visibility right after the Ontonagon sign. The Hawley triangle will also offer space to place a new Ontonagon County Historical Society sign, as our old sign near Bestard Road is showing a lot of age-related weathering.

Big thanks to Tom Hawley.

**OCHS COLLECTION**

Your Acquisitions Committee (Carol Maass, Fern Malila, Bruce Johanson, Dave Bishop, Dean Juntunen, and Diane Penegor, plus Jean Eckloff and Mary Johnston) has been meeting every two weeks or so to work on organizing our collection. This will be a multi-year project. Meanwhile, Steve Maass has been working on inputting everything into the Past Perfect program on the computer. When all is said and done, we will be in good stead for being able to find anything in our currently overstuffed museum, and all accession records will be as consistent as possible.

Also, I have been personally touring the museum with Bruce Johanson, who knows more stories about our artifacts than any other current OCHS member, and I’m typing notes into a Word Document. These notes can then be attached to various artifacts in the Past Perfect program, to preserve the stories forever.

**LIGHTHOUSE NEWS**

Our Lighthouse is shut down for winter at this time. We have a replacement interpretive sign donated by Dan and Donna Sullivan, whose wedding had been held at the Lighthouse last year. The sign is posted outside of the Lighthouse, and talks about the harbor and the Ontonagon Fire of 1896. Big thanks to Dan and Donna.

We have at least one new Lighthouse Tour Guide on board for next summer. Big Thanks to Mike Heitjan for volunteering. If you might be interested in guiding, too, please notify the museum.

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

28 Spiral Steps $300 ea
Master Bedroom $5,000
1st-flr 1890’s kitchen $6,000

DUES DUE

If you have not paid your membership dues for the year 2020, please use the Membership Form printed on the back of your address sheet for this Newsletter.

UPCOMING DINNER MEETINGS

ALL DINNERS AT 6:30 pm

February 20, Thursday -- Holy Family Catholic Church
(Don Chastan Responsible)

Don Chastan and Mike Rebholz will present on the old school in Ontonagon.

March 19, Thursday -- Holy Family Catholic Church
(Josie Olson responsible)

Josie Olson will present on the history of the Rockland Reporter, a fine newspaper founded in the later mining days of Rockland.

April 16, Thursday -- Methodist Church in Rockland
(Tom Hawley responsible)

Tom Hawley will present on George C. Jones (1829-1914), the first lawyer to settle in Ontonagon, in 1853.

May 21, Thursday -- Holy Family Catholic Church
(Diane Penegor responsible)

Robin Hammer Mueller, manager of the Delaware Mine Tours, will present on the history of copper mining, focusing on the ancient miners of the UP.

PAST PROGRAMS

October:
(Dave Bishop responsible)

Dave Bishop spoke on the history of MI-TRALE, a very active group that has improved recreation trails in our area, with plenty of help coming through grant funds.

November:
(Jerr Koski responsible)

Eugene Soumis, from UPPCO, presented the history of the hydroelectric power generating efforts of UPPCO, focusing on the hydro plant at Victoria Dam.

December:
(Bill Chabot Responsible)

Bill Chabot presented on the making of the UP’s most famous movie, Anatomy of a Murder, based on an actual murder in Marquette County.

January:
(Jean Eckloff responsible)

Emily Riippa from the Michigan Tech Archives gave a presentation on the contributions of women in historic copper mining in the UP, highlighting a female employee of Calumet and Hecla, who had a long career in their hospital.

Editor’s Note:

The following is the second installment of a research paper written by SHIP Intern Ryszard Olszewski in the summer of 2018.

In our last issue, you read about Charles Taylor, inventor of the hydraulic air compressor that ran the Victoria Mine. The next key person in the story is Captain Thomas Hooper:

Thomas Hooper was born March 1, 1842, at Chasewater, Cornwall, England. He was one of six children. He refused to attend school along with his siblings, and he began to work in the tin mines of Cornwall at age 9. When he was 16, Thomas, along with a neighbor, stole away onto a ship that was on its way to America. He was found as a stowaway, but was allowed to stay on that ship all the way to America. To get to the Upper Peninsula, the newcomers went up the Erie canal and shipped through Lakes Erie and Huron to the Soo Locks and onto Lake Superior. At that time, the inlet from Lake Superior to
Hancock was little better than a swamp. They had to be transferred to scows (flat bottomed boats with sloping ends) and poled to town.

The first place that Hooper worked was at the Quincy Mine in Hancock. There, he worked as a common miner from 1858 to 1860, until his leg was broken in a mining accident. Following this incident, he was discharged, and after a period of recovery, he walked more than 50 miles to Rockland. He then started working at the famous Minesota Mine and at the National Mine as a miner.

In 1862, he married Henrietta Augusta Firman, who had come to Ontonagon County with her family from Quebec, Canada. With her, he had seven children.

In 1864, Hooper moved to the Union Copper Mine in the Porcupine Mountains where he was appointed mining captain. He stayed there until he moved to the Champion Iron Mine in Marquette County as mining captain. In 1873, he moved to the Nonesuch Mine. It was at the Nonesuch that he became better known. He was the mine superintendent during its developmental stage. At this point in time, Hooper was probably one of the most capable men in the mining business. In 1876, the mine owner (Mr. Wade) died and the mine stopped operating. Hooper leased the mine and operated it at his own expense for several years. It is believed that he was the only one that could make the Nonesuch a paying mine.

Among other things, he helped find the White Pine Mine, and showed interest in the silver region at the Iron River. In 1883 he worked at the slate quarry in Arvon, Michigan, working there for five years, after which he resigned and took charge of the Beaver Silver Mine near Port Arthur in Ontario until the mine closed in 1891. After that, he worked in various states for the same mining company until he returned to Ontonagon County to work for the Victoria Mine in 1899.

At the Victoria, he was hired to develop the mine by Boston people. It was at the Victoria Mine that Hooper completed his most famous work: the installation of the Taylor Hydraulic Air Compressor.

At Victoria, Hooper was able to restart operations. He was impressed with the idea of using a hydraulic air compressor instead of traditional fuel after inspecting such a device at Norwich, Connecticut. Hooper supervised the revival of the mine and the building of the compressor. The entire time, Hooper had to deal with the parsimony of the mine owners and had to work under severe restrictions. He was committed to completing the compressor, and when it was finished in 1906, he retired. By the time of his retirement, he had virtually rebuilt and converted the Victoria from a tributer’s wreck to a modern operation, working on a shoestring budget and having to answer to the company accountants for every expenditure. He had done all of this without a break. There is little or no evidence that the mine’s owners appreciated the extraordinary talent and extra effort Hooper had put into making the Victoria a major copper producer. The mine was making money and operated until the end of WWI in 1918 and continued operations until 1921. Hooper died 14 years after his retirement, on the 20th of October, 1920.

Now that the main players of the making of the Taylor Compressor have been introduced, the story of the construction of the compressor is in order.

The story of the Taylor Air Compressor of the Victoria mine is a short but interesting one. It is a story about innovation and overcoming obstacles to reach a goal. It all started when Captain Hooper and President Dunstan went to the Menominee River to see a unique air compressor that was in operation and providing power to the Capin Mine. In this system, a pair of turbines turned by water powered two Ingersoll-Rand air compressors. Although this system is quite different from the one that was eventually installed in Victoria, it was what gave the two men the idea to use compressed air instead of electricity to run the steam engines used in mining operations. This was the first step in creating one of the most efficient compressors built to that time.

Fast forward to 1903. At this time, Hooper visited Norwich, Connecticut to inspect a different type of compressor. The plant that he went to visit was developed and built in 1899. This plant was not the most efficient, but was most impressive. This compressor design was based on the theories of the Canadian inventor Charles H. Taylor. The construction of the compressor however was supervised by two American engineers, W. O. Webber and J. H. Shed, and Webber had been the one to actually design the Norwich compressor. Webber, however, had used the ideas of Taylor, who had built a similar compressor in Magog, Quebec. Taylor secured the Canadian patents on his designs, and Webber had obtained the U. S. patents on a design that differed only slightly from those of Taylor’s.
Hooper, who was very impressed with the concept of using a whole river as part of the air compressor, became engaged in serious talks with Taylor. However, because Webber claimed patent rights to any compressor built in the United States, a lively controversy broke out. Taylor, however, was successful in selling his expertise to Hooper.

In 1904, Taylor made a contract with Hooper that specified that Taylor would have a compressor built that would produce 4,000 horsepower at 70 percent efficiency. He also agreed that he would receive 1000 dollars less for every three percent below 70 that the compressor produced. Because of this lucrative deal, the Victoria mine owners decided to hire Taylor. Webber, at the time, also lost his exclusive rights to the U. S. patents in court. This finalized the decision to build the air compressor, and the construction started.

Before everything had been finalized, Taylor had surveyed the site and made several return trips to the construction site later on to check on progress. The majority of the supervising, however, had been left to Captain Hooper. Throughout the construction, Taylor did not put directions on paper, but issued them verbally. He did this because he was afraid of another situation having to do with patent infringement like the one with Webber happening again.

The majority of the construction work was done by miners at the Victoria themselves. This worked out because the majority of the work was carving out the pressure chamber of the compressor and this was similar to regular mine work. Furthermore, because the local crew was working on the compressor, they were able to make it better because they knew very well the rock formations and were able to use this knowledge to solve some of the peculiar problems that were encountered during the operation. The miners also were the ones to sink the intake shafts, which was also a familiar process and the workers were able to use regular mining techniques.

In 1904, most of the preparation work for large scale operation was done. This included the construction of the incline shaft and the discharge outlet connecting to the river. A drywall and breakwater were also constructed. The river bottom below the outlet was cleared of boulders and other debris for 1,000 feet. Finally, a water tunnel 325 feet long running from the forebay of the compressor intake to the stamp mill location and a 14 inch main air pipe from the compressor to the mine location was built.

In 1905, very little work had been done at the mine as all of the available labor was put into completing the compressor. The rest of the work was done that year and included excavating the air chamber and digging down the intake shafts. A total of 6,000 cubic yards of rock was removed that year during that procedure. Other things important to the mine were also constructed that year.

The majority of the construction was uneventful. However, there was one incident in 1905 that resulted in the death of four working men, which was one of the worst mine accidents ever to occur in Ontonagon County. During the sinking of the intake shafts, the men used rock skips to haul waste rock to the surface. Two of them worked in counterbalance to clean out the air chamber. In January of that year, six men were being hoisted up and were roughly 75 feet off of the chamber floor. Because of how cold the winters were in Ontonagon County, the counterbalancing skip had frozen fast. Instead of descending, it was held up. Suddenly, the skip broke free and plummeted down the shaft. Upon reaching the end of the slacked cable, the weight of the skip snapped the cable. Without anything to stop it now, the skip continued down and struck the ascending skip. Two of the men were killed instantly, two others received broken legs, and the remaining two fell down the shaft and died upon impact. The men killed were William Penrose, Victor Sigquist, Michael Maratovich, and Simo Glumac. John Welch and John Isaacson both survived with broken legs. There was little resentment towards the company for this accident as the workers were normally treated well and the company was found blameless as the workers were not supposed to use the skips for transporting themselves in and out of the worksite.

Work continued on the compressor and other surface improvements all throughout 1905. It was finally announced that the production of copper could begin in March of 1906. On the exact date of March 19, 1906, the gates of the dam were opened, and the waters of the west branch of the Ontonagon River set in motion a contraption that more closely resembled perpetual motion than anything known up to that time.

Editor's Note:

The next installment in the story of the Taylor Hydraulic Air Compressor will be published in the Spring Edition of The County Historian.
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