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Newsletter—Summer, 2015

Immigrants in the Waning Years of the Painesdale Copper Mine

By Barbara Manninen

We read and hear a lot about the immigrants who came to the Copper Country to work in the copper mines in the early years of mining, at the end of the 19th Century and early 20th Century and post WWI. However, there was another group of immigrants who came to work in the latter years of copper mining, to the Champion Mine of Painesdale, in the early 1950's, who are not as well covered in the local history books. They were known as DPs (Displaced Persons), or refugees, from the slave labor camps in Germany after WWII, who were uprooted by the Nazi's from Poland and other surrounding countries during the war and brought to Germany to work on farms and munitions factories, and now had no place to go back to as borders had changed during and after the war, or they were in fear of persecution if repatriated to their homelands. The Displaced Persons Act of 1948, passed by the US Congress in response to the great need to resettle the large numbers of DPs remaining in the camps, allowed for 200,000 DPs over two years to come to the US, and then amended in 1950 to increase the number to 415,000. For more information and details on these acts, see <http://www.immigrationinamerica.org/464-displaced-persons-act-of-1948.html> and this site http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Displaced_persons_camp

Four families of Polish descent came to Painesdale for resettlement through the sponsorship of Catholic Relief Services in the early '50's. Assurances were provided by the sponsoring agency, these displaced persons would be provided employment, without displacing American workers, and they would have housing. The copper mines provided the required employment and the company provided company houses for their families.

Those of us, who grew up in Painesdale and the surrounding area, remember the first days when we first became aware



The Pindral Family - This photo was taken in the yard of their home on Forest Street in Painesdale, MI. The year they arrived in Painesdale, 1953. Starting from the left: Uncle Andrew holding his nephew Walter Pindral, seated is mother Josephine Pindral with son Cazimir on her lap, Maria Pindral is standing with her brother Chester Pindral in front of her, father Joseph Pindral on far right.

of the new families in town. It was awesome for some, like myself, who remember being introduced to the children in school. We didn't speak their language and they had to learn English. I remember beautiful Alfreda, writing her name on the blackboard in the graceful, old-fashioned script they used in Germany and Poland. It was something else! We never learned to write like this. I admit to being envious of her handwriting. As children, we had no idea of what these new classmates and their families had been through. We had no personal experience of the horrors and trauma of war, or of being forcefully taken away from parents and the life they knew, the slave labor camps they endured, the uncertainty of repatriation vs resettlement decisions that their parents had to make, amidst the chaos, changing boundaries, and suspicions and distrust in the aftermath of the war, with the fear of possibly another war brought on by the new tensions arising between the Allies in the west and the Soviet Union in the east.

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Immigrants (Continued)



The Wisniewski family, August 1973. Back row, left to right: Tadeusz (Ted), Piotr (husband/father), Ryszard ("Roscoe"), Jerzy (George), and Stefan (Steve). Front row, left to right: Jan (John), Irena (wife/mother), and Anna Jenczelewska (Irena's mother).

Wow! All this I'm learning, as I research the background for this article I agreed to do for the Painesdale Mine & Shaft Newsletter. A deadline to meet, yet so much more to read and discover about this time in the history of the world, WWII, the work carried on by the Catholic Relief Services and the role the Painesdale copper mine had in the unfolding of lives of four families post WWII. But as children, our first experience was meeting the new kids in town, perhaps getting to know them, wonder about them. I was so young, I don't remember developing any real close friendships with the new classmates. It must have been very difficult for the families themselves, as "DP" was not always used in a positive way when people referred to the new comers in town.

The names of the four families that settled in Painesdale were: Wisniewski, Podkomorka, Fiszer and Pindral. Initially all the men worked in the Painesdale mine, with two moving later on to work in the White Pine Copper Mine, another one to work in the sawmill in Donken and one continuing to work in the Painesdale mine until it closed in 1967.

The U.P. Catholic, the newspaper of the Marquette Diocese, published two articles on two of the Painesdale survivors of the slave labor camps in Nazi Germany. The January 19, 2001 edition featured the life experience of Irene Wisniewski through an interview with Marcia Goodrich. The second Painesdale survivor interviewed

by Marcia Goodrich, was Maria Pindral Saari, published in the February 2, 2001 edition. The Daily Mining Gazette has featured Irene Wisniewski twice. First time regarding the reunion of Irene with her mother, at the Houghton County Airport, arriving from Poland, after a separation of 19 years. Irene was snatched on the street by the Nazi's in Poland in 1941 at the age of 14, stuffed into a cattle truck and taken to work as slave labor in Germany. Her mother didn't know what happened to her daughter, taking months to find out. Another article on Irene was on the reunion with her sister after 57 years, in the February 1, 1969 edition of the Gazette's Green Sheet.

Research for this article began with searching through the microfilm of the Daily Mining Gazette at the MTU archives to see what information I could glean from that source, then online sources, talking with others who might have ideas, ordering

books from Amazon on the topic of DPs from 1945 to 1951, and then visiting Maria Saari, a former classmate, who was a goldmine of information, having been born in a camp in Germany in 1941, experiencing the trauma of those years in the camp, then coming to America in 1951 with her family, first to a farm in Virginia, and then to Painesdale in 1953 where her step father obtained work in the copper mine. Another source of personal information was talking with Steve Wisniewski, a son of Irene Wisniewski, who was also born in the camps, coming with his parents to Painesdale in 1952. I talked and visited Irene on occasion over the years as she shared some of her story with me at her kitchen table.

The two books that have been most helpful in filling me in on post WWII and the catastrophe and utter disarray of those years in Europe are: "DPs: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945-1951" by Mark Wyman and "Catholic Relief Services: The Beginning Years" by Eileen Egan.

Editor's Note

Do you have a story about DPs in Painesdale? Were you or one of your relatives a Displaced Person? If you have a story or memory to share, please write to us. We would be happy to put your story in a future newsletter or in our memory book at the Captain's office for people to read.



Restorations

New Windows

Last year, we were able to complete some more restorations on the shaft house. The upper level windows have been replaced. The window replacement had been something we were working towards since our organization started. The old windows were either broken or falling apart, letting rain and snow into the shaft house. In 2012, we had the lower level windows of the shaft house replaced. Last summer, we were able to have the upper windows replaced. The new windows are replicas of the old windows, even in color. Old paint chips were used to get the color for the stain on the new windows. The attention to detail was important to maintain historical accuracy, and now the shaft house again has the beautiful windows it once had.

Accessibility

Now that the window project is completed, we are working towards addressing some accessibility issues. For some time, we have been planning on making the Captain's office handicap accessible. The difficulty in that comes with trying to expand access while keeping the historical integrity of the building. Our current plan is to create a flat cement area

in the back where people could park and get onto a flat surface. From there, a ramp would allow access to the back entrance of the Captain's Office. The back entrance seems to be the best location for this, as there is a lower incline from the ground to the door in the back. Also, the front entrance has a small shed which would be difficult to maneuver a wheelchair through. Hopefully, this plan will allow for easy access for our handicapped guests while keeping as much of the historical accuracy of the building as possible. We hope to get started on this project this summer.

Shaft House Floor

Another project we would like to get started on is inside the shaft house. The back floor of the inside of the shaft house is in need of repair. While it is an area that we do not allow access to during tours, we would like to make sure that it is cleaned up and safe to walk through if needed.

As always, we rely on private donations to fund the restorations to the shaft house. If you would like to help, the donation form is in this newsletter.

Cookbooks

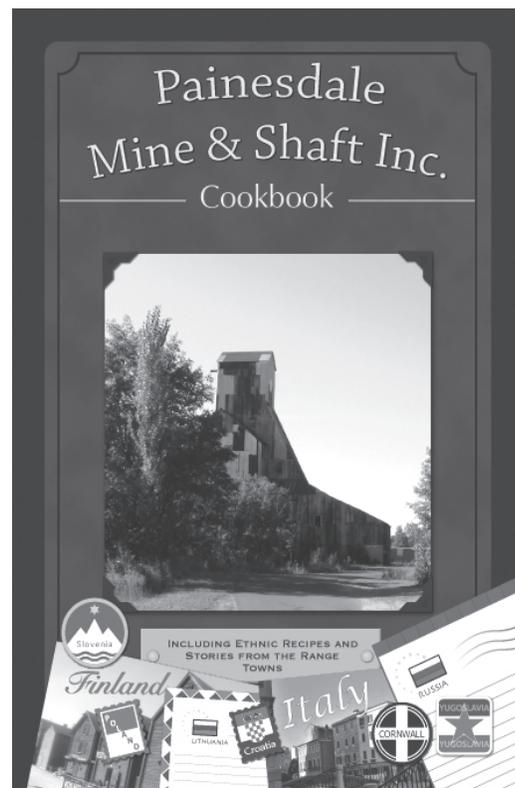
Our cookbooks are still available and can be ordered by sending a check for \$15 plus shipping to Painesdale Mine & Shaft. You can also get them by contacting one of our board members, or stopping by Tina's Katalina restaurant or the Copper Range Historical Museum in South Range.

The cookbooks feature many recipes, including ethnic recipes from the many cultures that came to work in the mines. It also features stories of life in Painesdale and the range towns when the mines were open.

Free Tours

Now that the snow is gone, we will be offering free tours by appointment. Call (906) 231-5542 to set up a time to tour the shaft house, hoist house, and Captain's office.

See "Visitors" article for more information on tours.



What You Are Telling Us By Anton Pintar

We often receive comments from our members on their family ties to Painesdale, Copper Range, the Champion Shaft Houses and the Range Towns. We share these as memorials to the many everyday people who built, lived in, worked in, and died in the towns of Painesdale, Atlantic Mine, South Range, Baltic, Trimountain and Toivola. If you have comments to make, please send them to us and we will put them in future Newsletters. -- Anton J. Pintar, Treasurer

“My grandfather worked in Champion Mine in Painesdale during the winter months and operated his own farm in Obenhoff during the summer months. In 1910, he bought the property to build his home and farm from Michael Messner and built his home there the following year. At that time, he and my grandmother were living with his dad and stepmother in Atlantic Mine. Evidently, my grandfather liked the design and style of company houses that existed on Eighth Avenue in Trimountain - so much so that he took measurements of them and built an exact duplicate on his farm in Obenhoff in 1911.

I didn't realize what he had done until sometime around 1964 when Steve Kangas and I became friends in high school. Was riding bike and stopped to see Steve - I knew his house looked strangely familiar from the outside, but when we went in and sat at kitchen table, it hit me. Everything was the same - location of windows, stairs, chimney, sink, pantry, doors, etc.

Stranger part of it is that my grandfather never actually lived in Trimountain at all. Sure must have liked the design of the houses, though.”

Brian R Juntikka, Fort Myers, FL

“My dad worked in that mine until it closed in 1946.”

Donald Mattson, South Range/Leesburg, FL

“Thank you for working to preserve the Painesdale mine. I was told this was the shaft my great-grandfather John (Juho) Ollila worked in before losing his hand in a mining accident. My family had taken my grandmother to see her old town in the '80's (She was the first American born child of Finnish immigrants). She was a bit sad to see these parts of her past falling apart at the time. I came across this project while researching my family history in the Copper Country and would like to contribute in her memory.”

Tina M. Ponzetti, Gilroy, CA

“Many thanks for the pictures and information. I was enrolled in Mining Engineering at Tech from 1956-1958. Got married at Trinity Church – Houghton by Father Page in 1958 and left the area to work and finally got a Mechanical Engineering degree. I have fond memories of the Copper Country. My father-in-law was a miner from Cornwall but worked with many of his village friends in Ironwood. But my Cornish cousins have visited the Houghton-Hancock area with me. I am so sorry that I never got to Painesdale while in school but hope to in the summer. My only trophy from Painesdale Mine #3 is a large piece of copper ore that came from a Copper Range ore car.”

Harvey Barkley, Northville, MI

“I am sending you some pictures that were taken in 1957-61 in the Range-Painesdale area [see below]. I have fond memories of my days in Painesdale. I am sending PM&S a check to cover my dues. Rosalie and I would enjoy a tour when we are in the area for the Fourth.

I attended Painesdale School for the third grade only walking to school from Concord Street in the blustery winter.

I also remember helping you with your first car, a 1949 four door Ford.”

Joe Sullivan, Lake Placid, FL

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Visitors

Our mineshaft is majestic to look at from the outside. Visitors who arrange tours get to see the inside of the shaft house, the hoist house, and the Captain's office. Visitors say that they feel like they have stepped back in time. They say it looks like the whistle blew at the end of the day, everyone went home, and it remained the way it was decades ago. This is kind of the truth. While we have done some restorations to keep the buildings intact, we make every effort to keep the original look of the buildings. Because we rely on private donations, we don't have money to make the place look shiny and new even if we wanted to (which we don't).

Visitors come from all over the USA and some from foreign countries. Most of our visitors come from the local area. The next largest group comes from the Lower Peninsula. The

west coast visitors have come from California, Colorado, Washington, Idaho and Utah. We have had Midwest visitors from Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Ohio. The southern visitors have come from South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. We need some visitors from the northeast, come visit us! Our foreign visitors have come from Australia and South Africa. These are just the people we know of from when they have signed our visitor's book and have given an address.

We enjoy sharing and showing our mine buildings and appreciate all of you who have shown an interest in our organization. If you would like to arrange a tour when you visit the area, call Sherri at (906) 231-5542.

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