

Painesdale Mine & Shaft, Inc.

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Newsletter—Spring, 2021

We are highlighting one of the founding members of the original board of the PM&S in this spring issue of our newsletter, Rudy Gregorich. As told by his grandson, Greg Kyle, and his daughter, Janet Gregorich, one of our board members.

Rudy Gregorich and the “Save Our Shafthouse” Retrospective

By Greg Kyle Aurora, Colorado USA

“The hell they will!” retorted my grandfather, Rudy Gregorich, every time someone dared to mention that Painesdale’s Shafthouse #4, built in 1902, risked being flattened. He was aware that the Quincy Mine’s shafthouse and buildings had been preserved. To him, they were wonderful, ever-present reminders of times past, especially with that distinct silhouette when looking from Houghton to Hancock. “Why can’t we save our Champion Mine shafthouse?” he would ask. If local citizens and my grandfather had anything to say about it, his goal would be eventually be attained.

It was the early 1990s when it was discovered that the scrapper’s torch would soon be applied to what was considered by some to be an open and dangerous eyesore in Adams Township. Despite it being the last above-ground, intact shafthouse of the Copper Range Mining Company, few people were interested in saving it, until my grandfather discovered the plans to destroy it. The smells of grease, poor rock, and old wood while cooling off in the structure during the heat of the summer months, would likely be no more.

One of my cherished memories is of Rudy’s daughters and the community forming the fledgling Painesdale Mine & Shaft organization. Rallying around him and helping to change the narrative from “The Hell They Will” to “Save Our Shafthouse” was a significant



accomplishment. Though I recorded grandpa in 2004 telling various stories about the mines, this written narrative by me, his grandson, will suffice for now.

As many readers are aware, the Copper Country, in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, enjoyed a multi-faceted and long mining history. For nearly a half-century most of the copper supply for much of the world was provided by area mines. My grandfather cherished that he lived through those exciting times and was keenly aware that he was rapidly becoming one of the few who remembered the boom times of the



Rudy Gregorich Continued

mining era. While many Painesdale locals and visiting snowmobilers enjoyed seeing the Champion Mine shafthouse, most other Copper Country residents knew nothing of it because of its location in a small valley below Jeffers High School. While it was quite obvious from the adjacent snowmobile trail it was not easily seen from a passing state highway.

“Too many poor, immigrant miners lived, worked, and perished in the Painesdale mines to be forgotten so easily,” he would remind us. Time was running out, however, to save the shafthouse and the mining history he cared so much about.

Rudy was born in Trimountain, Michigan on April 5th, 1914 to Katarina Gasparac and Jacob Gregorich. His parents were Croatian immigrants who both left Croatia to seek a better life in the United States. I suspect, however, that all of the snow shoveling required was quite a shock! After working in the mines for a time, Jacob Gregorich, after much deliberation in the local saloons, decided that drinking alcohol was more important than working and providing for

his family. As a result, Rudy, the oldest, chose to drop out of school after the 8th grade to go to work to help raise the first of two families. His brothers and sisters were: Thomas, Henry, Kathryn, Frances, and Mary. The second family he raised, according to my mother, Joanne (Gregorich) Kyle, included my mother, Judith, and Janet.

When our grandfather would drive my cousin Jimmy and me around Painesdale, Globeville, Quincy, Calumet, and Ahmeek, he told stories about how they moved the houses from this area to a different location when they stopped mining a shaft. We were riveted and were rewarded with additional stories on subsequent trips. More stories were about how up on the hill in Painesdale was a rowdy boarding house. Over there were three other shafthouses, and over there was the hospital in Trimountain. He always seemed most indignant when he mentioned how the Sarah Sargent Paine Memorial Library was now gone forever. “It never should have happened!” he would lament.

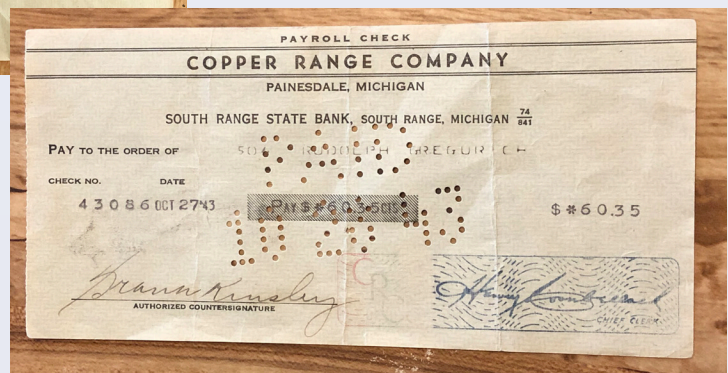
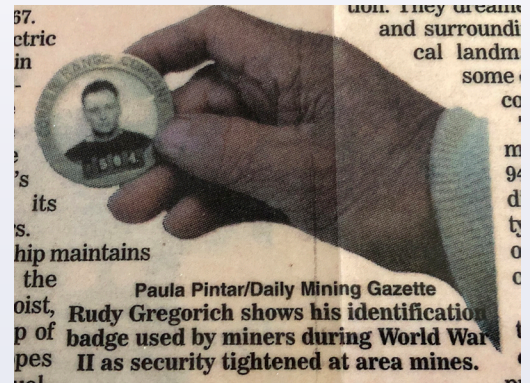
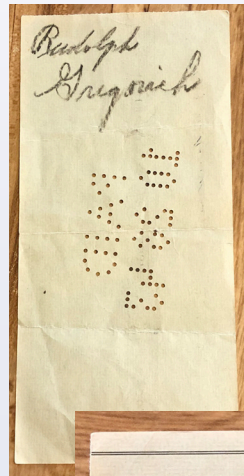
Rudy Gregorich: One of the Founding Members of PM&S

By Janet Gregorich, Trustee

My dad would be so happy the organization is going so strong. We have a present board that continues the mission of preserving the mine shaft, hoist house, and Captain’s office for today’s visitors as well as the generations to come. It is important this is moving along in the direction it is.

A photo copy of a payroll check made out to Rudy is shown here (right), along with a photo of his pin when he worked for the mining company.

Rudy was also instrumental in making sure the hoist house became part of the PM&S. He would attend many Adams Township meetings asking the hoist house be deeded to the PM&S. He would come home and say, “well not this month but I will go back next month.” They finally deeded the hoist house to us in the year 2000.



Rudy Gregorich Continued

He often reminded us on these trips that many immigrant miners were poor and had a limited grasp of English. As a result, they were underappreciated and underrepresented regarding mine safety. My grandfather mentioned to anyone who would listen about how the “bigshot” mine owners cared little for the workers who were toiling away in their mines all to enrich the stockholders back east. He would state that they cared even less for miners when the workers died in mine accidents. Miners’ families were often told to come and gather the bodies of their loved ones after they perished in underground incidents. Most upsetting to Rudy was how, upon losing the patriarch of the family, the wives and children were treated so poorly; the family of a deceased miner received no compensation nor funeral expenses!

Grandpa also told us of how employees of the Champion Mine could receive paychecks for a certain amount or receive a larger amount if they chose to spend their earnings on goods in the company store. Not surprisingly, he said that his family most often chose the latter option.

Mining representatives, however, were not always troublesome for the miners. According to my grandfather, a mine executive witnessed that Rudy and Ann were struggling to provide for their young family. One day he approached Rudy and offered free paint to spruce up their dilapidated house on Forest Street in Painesdale. Once painted, the mine captain offered him a coveted, above-ground job as a steam hoist operator at the Champion Mine. There was, however, the warning, “If I ever see your car in front of a bar or hear that you have been drinking you will lose your job immediately.”

He was aware that each day the lives of countless miners in the skip and tons of copper ore were his responsibility. Rudy recounted many times how intently he would listen for “those bells” to determine on which level he needed to stop and start the skip “with no mistakes”.

And here we are almost 25 years after the campaign to “Save Our Shafthouse” launched. In retrospect, if folks were lucky to listen to Rudy’s stories in person they would count him as one of the most important local historians and authorities on mining history in the Copper Country. He wrote no books nor articles but through his mining stories and indomitable spirit, he prompted and supported community efforts to save the #4 shafthouse.

Visitors can now safely visit the very building which Rudy and so many others used to extract so much copper for so little pay. My grandfather did not accomplish his goal alone but he worked until his final days to preserve the memories of the Champion Mine for those families who provided so much toil and sweat for so little reward. He was extremely grateful that an army of supporters, buoyed by the Yooper can-do spirit, made both large and small contributions and worked diligently to preserve an important part of Painesdale history.

If Rudy were alive today he would repeatedly thank all who helped make this stunning achievement possible and for realizing his dream to keep Painesdale’s remaining shrine to history from being destroyed. Never have I seen such a proud man when my grandfather talked about how everyone banded together to “Save Our Shafthouse.” And through the continued efforts of Painesdale Mine & Shaft, my grandfather’s efforts and his memory live on for generations to come.

Docents Needed

Over the past year the Board of Directors has been making a huge effort to expand the visibility of the Champion #4 within the community. One of the ways we hope to do so is to establish regular hours of operation. It is our hope that we can establish regular open hours on at least one weekend day that will allow casual drop in visitors.

We are looking to recruit local residents who can serve as docents during these open hours. We would provide the training and supervision. All volunteers need is an enthusiasm for the Champion Mine, the history that it represents, and a willingness to share their knowledge with others.

Interested individuals can contact us at 482-7474 or send us an email at painesdalemine@gmail.com.

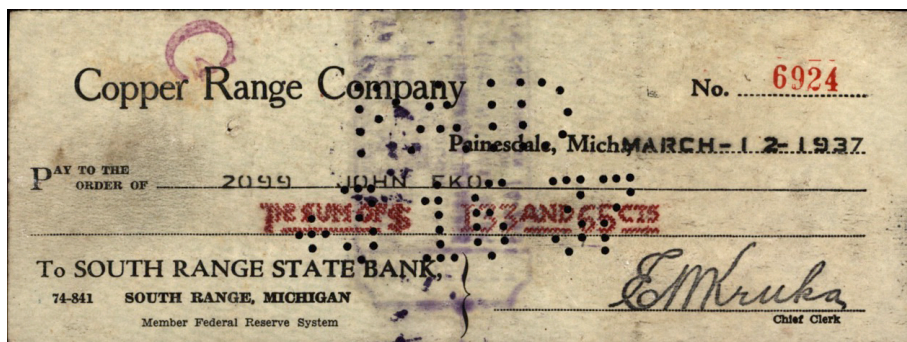


Paycheck Collection Fundraiser

Over the winter, volunteers at the Painesdale Mine & Shaft have digitally scanned its collection of employee paychecks. In total around 7,200 paychecks have been saved as digital images.

About 75% of the checks were issued in either 1930 or 1940. The rest were distributed over the years 1919, 1920, 1921, 1934, 1936, 1937, 1941 and 1944. The check images have been curated to allow easy on-line browsing by individuals interested in looking for names that they recognize.

A digital index to this collection has been created and made available to the public at no charge. With this index, it is possible to search for checks by first letter of the last name and then year of employment.



Now that the information found in these checks has been preserved for historical purposes, the Board of Directors would like to offer our supporters the opportunity to acquire the original paper checks.

PM&S is asking for a donation of \$10.00 per check. Checks will be sent via USPS First Class Mail. Payment for the checks can be made via PayPal or bank check. There is no cost to view and download the digital images.

More complete instructions on acquiring the original paper checks can be found in the index.

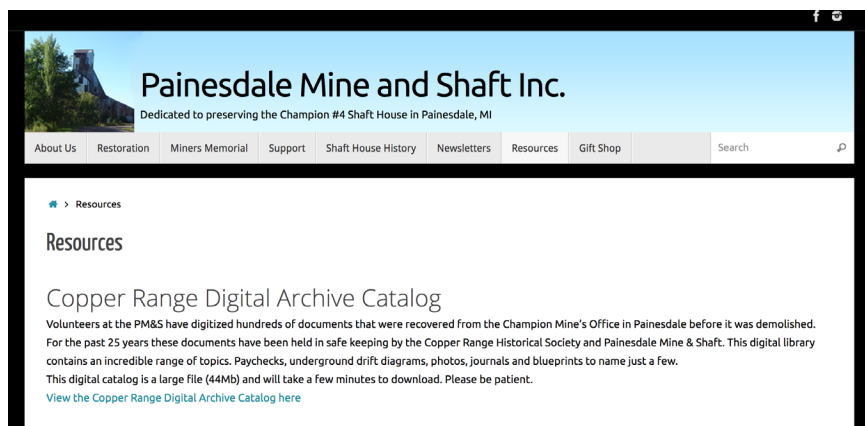
You can get a copy of the digital index by going to our web site at www.painesdalemineshaft.com and clicking the "Resources" tab at the top of the page.

Digital Library

Over the winter, volunteers at the PM&S digitized hundreds of documents that were recovered from the Champion Mine's Office in Painesdale before it was demolished. For the past 25 years these documents have been held in safe keeping by the Copper Range Historical Society and Painesdale Mine & Shaft.

This digital library contains an incredible range of topics. Paychecks, underground drift diagrams, photos, journals and blueprints to name just a few. The files have been placed into an on-line archive located in the PM&S Google Shared Drive and are accessible to the general public.

These digital files have been curated to allow easy access. To access this library, you begin by acquiring a digital copy of the Copper Range Digital Catalog. This can be done by going to our website at www.painesdalemineshaft.com and clicking



the "Resources" tab at the top. You will see a link to the Copper Range Digital Archive Catalog that can be clicked to open the catalog.

A couple of notes: This is a large file (44 Mb) and can take a few minutes to download. This catalog is not really designed to be printed since the catalog contains clickable links that direct your browser to the collection.



Summer Restoration Projects



As we come out of a strange year into one full of hope, there is a lot of exciting projects happening at the Champion #4. We have recently received a couple grants and generous donations that will allow us to proceed with essentially all of our proposed plans for this year.

To start the season, we are getting a set of steel stairs put into the hillside that will allow visitors an easy path from the main parking area by the Captain's office and main shafthouse entrance down to the lower part of the site leading to the hoist house. Currently, visitors need to walk down a gravel path on the north side of the shafthouse or walk along the road "the long way around". These steps will be on nice basalt gray concrete pads to blend into the surroundings and have steel grate steps that are naturally slip resistant even when wet. This will improve access around the site.

Last year, we had a major vegetation removal to open up the site. However, with spring rains come the plants trying to take the land back. To keep the vegetation at bay, we will be spraying another dose of herbicide in key areas. The hope is to get them more under control for less or easier management in later years.

The Captain's office will be getting an expansion in accessibility this year as well. In the summer of 2016, through a KNHP grant, we added a concrete handicap parking pad with a concrete handicap accessible walkway leading to the door in the back of the building. The door in the back however, is not very usable and has been mostly shut this entire time. We are going to be replacing the back door with one that is functional, making sure that it meets ADA standards. This will allow anyone with a wheelchair or walker to easily access the building and see our document displays. We will also be doing a few touch up items like removing the deteriorating furnace, removing the unusable toilet and shower, and replacing five broken window panes.

The old chlorination building is scheduled to be removed this season. It was discussed in the last newsletter that the state of the building subtracts from the site. The roof is long compromised and the inside is a moldy mess. The building will be removed but its concrete pad saved to be used as a future bench and informational sign site. Pictures and information about the building will be saved and represented so it is not lost in time.

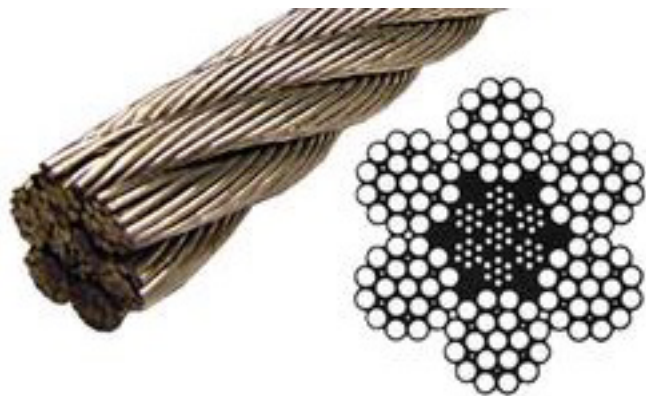
The largest project of the year is looking to be the removal of the asbestos around the site. There is asbestos tucked away in a few areas (particularly the shafthouse) which are currently inaccessible to the public. Our goal is to remove these hazards with the objective of opening up more of our buildings such as back rooms and upper levels. We really want to expand our tours as we have a lot more to show off once it is made safe. This whole process will be 2 days of work and quite expensive.

The smaller maintenance projects such as landscaping, building paths, generating signage, organizing documents, etc. will continue throughout the summer on top of all that is listed above.

Continue to check out our Facebook page for updates on the projects as well as pictures. Donations are what make these amazing projects happen. If a particular project really speaks to you that you would like to help fund, please let us know. We always accept physical donations, but we also have an online donation option on our website. Everything we do is to preserve this site for current and future generations to enjoy and appreciate. Thank you for your continued support.



Champion #4 Trivia



The papers found in the Captain's Office at the Champion Mine over the past year are loaded with interesting pieces of company trivia. For example, in October 1943 the Copper Range company purchased a new 1 1/4" 6X19 Roebling Hemp Center Steel Wired Hoisting Rope from I.E. Swift Company in Houghton MI.

This hoisting rope was 7,600' long and cost \$3,935. This rope was manufactured at the John A. Roebling Sons Company located in Trenton New Jersey. Shipping to Painesdale, MI cost \$206.

The rope consisted of 6 strands with each strand being made up of 19 individual wires. There was a hemp core at the rope's center that acted as a foundation to help keep the rope round and the strands properly positioned during operation.

Shout Out to Econo Foods

The Board of Directors of the Painesdale Mine and Shaft would like to give a big thanks to Tadych's Econo Foods in Houghton for a recent donation of \$443. For the past year volunteers at PM&S have been collecting receipts from Econo Foods. A portion of the sales represented by these receipts was donated to PM&S.

We plan on using this money to buy paint and cleaning supplies so that we can give the inside of our Captain's Office a good once (or twice) over this coming summer. Once that is done we hope to develop the historic material that we have on display.

Supporters who live in the area and who have Econo receipts that they would like to donate to our preservation efforts can send us an email to painesdalemine@gmail.com and we can arrange for someone to drop by to pick them up.

Thanks to all of our members and followers for their continued support of our efforts to preserve the Champion #4!

Kalle Wuolle

Volunteers at the Champion #4 recently unearthed a treasure trove of documents that came from the office of the Copper Range Company. In that cache was a box of Workmans Compensation files recording the deaths and injuries at the Champion Mine during the years 1921 - 1922. These files contained detailed information about the circumstances of the miner's death and family he left behind.

One of these files recorded the circumstances around the death of Kalle Wuolle. This is his story...

Kalle Wuolle began life in Finland and ended it in 1922 on the 20th level of the Champion Shaft #3. He died as a result of the falling of loose ground. He suffered a fractured spine at the lumbar region and a fractured leg at the left ankle joint. He was dead by the time the doctor could examine him at 1:10 pm in the dispensary. His body was taken to his home.

He had been a miner for the Copper Range Company for six years. He worked 6 days a week, 8 hours/day. His daily salary was \$3.15 per day.

In 1922 a man's death benefit provided his wife and family \$3,402 paid out in 300 weekly payments of \$11.24 each. Funeral expenses were \$276.50 and were paid to John R. Manty. Funeral expenses and tombstones were paid for by the Company Aid Fund.



Donations

The following is a list of donations that we have received from September, 1 2020 - May, 31 2021. Thank you to all who have donated. Your support will help us restore and preserve the Champion #4 shaft house as well as the hoist house, and Captain's office.

New Life Members

- Bruce Feuerstein
- Katherine Johnson
- Harold Wilson
- Jim and Barbara Morin
- Todd and Maggie Perry
- Dianne Perry Smith and Jason Smith
- Al and Melissa Perry
- Jim Andreini
- Denise Morgan
- Melissa Chichester
- John and Luana Russell
- Mary Taddeucci

Yearly Memberships

- Marlaine Deforge
- Deborah Frontiera
- James Paine
- Diane Neuman
- Bonnie Wolff
- James Nelson
- Jane Dykowski
- Otto Dickow
- Jack Rades
- Donna Laux
- Charles & JoEllen (Putrich) Albertson
- Andrea Mickalich Maggard
- Anita Pakkala
- Ken Niemi

IMO Eino Sten

- Anonymous

IMO Anton Pintar

- Range Lions Club
- Tony and Bonnie Datto
- Amy Jarvi
- Emil and Bonnie Dyni
- John & Karla Lawton
- Joseph Pintar

IMO Elsie Iskra & Margret Lombard

- Mary Taddeucci
- Paul & Karen Hackman Kangas

IHO Scott See

- S.M. Dickinson

IMO Rudy & Ann Gregorich

- Gregorich Family

IMO Neal Puncocar

- Christine Tews

IMO Erik Sporbert

- Richard McCrate

IMO Harry Williams

- Nancy and William Gaggioli

IMO Doris Hanzi

- Bruce Groeneveld
- Mike Groeneveld

IMO Margaret Lombardi

- Janet Kokko

IMO Steve Albee

- Janet Kokko
- Mary Taddeucci

IMO Paul Putrich

- Janice Putrich

IMO Dean Cole

- Erin & Glenn Cole

IMO David F. Cole

- Gail Armstrong

General Donations

- Martin & JoAnn Steinmetz
- Denise Morgan
- Nanette Schulte
- John and Jean Pemberton
- Wendy Hunter
- Gail Armstrong
- Dennis Takalo and Judith Jasper
- Donna Holmstrom
- Susan Maijala
- Arlene Stevens
- Joyce Swan
- Jim Enright
- Judy and Steve Albee
- Kathleen Steinen Lewis
- John Beckius
- Don & Barb Horack
- Anthony & Kay Briski
- James Dunstan
- Carolyn Haines
- Debra Goodwin
- David & Kathryn Louks
- Marlene Nordstrom
- James Downing
- Alison Hoagland
- Karen Bryan
- Richard Robertson (For Asbestos Removal)
- Janet Kokko

Become A Member/Donations

Name: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

\$10.00

Yearly Membership

\$100.00

Lifetime Membership

\$ _____

Other Donation

Please make checks payable to:
 Painesdale Mine & Shaft, Inc. PO Box 332 Painesdale, MI 49955

