

# Painesdale Mine & Shaft, Inc.

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Newsletter - Fall, 2023

## President's Report By Michael Prast, President

2023 has been a big year for Painesdale Mine & Shaft. I will argue one of the most pivotal since the founding of the organization. Following the end of the 2022 tour season, our usually quiet winter was not so quiet. For the first time, the parking areas were actually plowed. Not for tours, but for important preservation work to be completed in the off season. If you have semi-indoor projects up here, the best time to get contractors is in the winter. Plus, this avoided interfering with public tours.

Busy bees first started by taking out all of the windows in the hoist house (except the north side) to be refurbished in a shop setting. The next set of bees worked in the Captain's office to replace all the electrical in the building. This is one of the few places we are happy to upgrade a structure as it is important to the safety of it. There was still some original wiring in there. New light fixtures were also put in to brighten up the rooms. Once that work was complete, workers came in and painted the entire interior of the building to "Copper Range Green." Heaters were run to keep the workers and the paint warm as snow had set in well by this point.

The largest winter undertaking was the start of construction on the upper levels of the shafthouse. After years of planning and fundraising, we were finally ready to start that work and get people up to the rock crusher level to see a unique perspective on the mining process. Most of the original walkways were intact but there were many little repairs and strengthening needed in order to allow public access to those locations. 2 months of work later and the workers finally could reach the rock crusher floor! A project that is 25 years in the making. Rudy Gregorich is on video at the early days of the organization stating that they hope to offer tours of the upper levels to see the machinery. And here we are, finally able to make it happen. We also have plans to continue expanding into the other nooks and crannies of the building.

By the end of winter, the hoist house had full natural light, the Captain's office was electrically safe and brighter and restored to its historical color, and the shafthouse upper levels were finally open for public tours for the first time. All of these site improvements enhance the experience of the visitor without distracting from the dusty and dirty feel of the structures being left how they were when the mine workers just turned it off and walked away.

In addition to the preservation projects, we had a new building acquisition. Adams Township donated a hexagonal water tank building to us and the accompanying land. This is important to us because it will help us tell the story about the water supply and water department that managed the mine site long after the mining company ended and abandoned it. We removed the trees and vegetation around the building to expose it and have a walking trail up to it. Environmental studies are being done to determine what has asbestos in it so we can remove it.

All of these preservation projects are great in themselves, but the real pivotal aspect of the year comes in the background of how we operate. Because of some of the background planning and operations of the organization, we are shifting to operate as a small business in that we are moving towards making sure we are following the procedures required of organizations that are gaining increased visitation and outreach. We are still non-profit and focused on the preservation of our site and sharing it with visitors, but our visitation is growing and with that, we grow too.

In the spring, our organization was accepted to become a Keweenaw Heritage Site with the National Park Service. This means that we have access to their support and resources, being added into their system, but still operate as an independent organization. This



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## President's Report Continued

is a huge deal because our organization has been working to become a site for a long time and the park hadn't added any new sites in over 10 years prior. Finally being a site does mean we need to have accessibility and meet certain requirements to remain a partnering site. We meet them easily now but it is something to be mindful of for the future. We are excited to work with the Park going forward and making sure we are preserving the Champion #4 site in the best way possible.

With the opening of the upper levels and how unique of an experience it is, combined with the significant capital needed to get to that point and maintain it going forward, we had the tough decision of changing our tour policy to charge for the upper level tours. It is important to keep them accessible, so we just charge \$10 per adult (making it the cheapest in the area) but it is still new to us to collect money upfront. In keeping with our mission, we still offer free tours of the ground level of the site. This means we have two types of tours. In order to manage them we also had to set defined tour times so that our tour guides do not get overwhelmed. This has been working out nicely and most people come at the defined tour times. This helps keep the site organized and a nice flow of visitors. We also started offering private tours for a higher deposit cost. This

has been popular for people coming on off days or larger groups.

All of this leads to us making sure we stay organized and operate transparently. We even have to collect sales tax now, yuck. This has been a shift in mindset but I am proud of everyone hanging in and getting us to where we are now. This has been a long road and while I have been president for the past year, none of this would have happened without the leadership that set things in motion and came before me. We have amazing people involved in this organization and I am proud to be a part of it and continue the legacy. It is so much fun for me and a true passion. I never knew that when I took a spontaneous tour while in college that I would be here giving this report and taking people up into the heights of the building where few had been before.

All of this change and work is paying off. The community is recognizing it. We have received a ton of publicity this year with all the work that has been done and especially with the upper levels. We are the exciting new kids on the block, even though we have been here for quite a while. But people are finally noticing and that is an exciting prospect. I expect we will continue to grow and hopefully see more involvement from others.

### Artifact Recovery



With the end of the 2023 tour season, volunteers are able to devote more time to preserving

the history of the Champion. On October 14, two volunteers cleaned out a back cubby in the hoist house. This area has rested undisturbed for many, many years. We found a "portable" bell signal, a Lilly Hoist Controller and many parts for the hoist and its engine. We have yet to examine the cache closely. That will be a job for the future. We are hoping to include these artifacts in our display next season.

### Requesting Oral Histories



Duke Pyykkonen, filmed this fall at the shafthouse.

Did you work in the Champion Mine or for the Copper Range Company in Painesdale? We would love to hear from you and collect your stories! Lately we have been compiling oral histories and historic videos that help explain what the mine was like from first hand experience. If you would like to share your story please reach out and we can hopefully set up a time to talk and note your valuable information.



## L.L. Hubbard Moves In

Lucius Lee Hubbard was in charge of early exploration for the Copper Range Company. He is credited with discovering the southern extension of the Baltic Lode. This lode later became the Champion Mine.

During the years 1891-1901 Dr. Hubbard worked and lived in the Houghton area while his wife and children remained in Boston. Hubbard exchanged near weekly letters to his wife Francis from January 1891 to April 1901. Over one hundred of these letters remain and are part of the document collection found at the Copper Range Historical Society. The following is an excerpt from one of these letters. Note: E Location is the block of houses bounded by Hubbard Street, Cherokee Street, 2nd and 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets.



E Location.  
Photo courtesy of UWM Libraries Robert S. Platt Collection

*Houghton, Mich., Nov 5, 1899*

*We have moved our office and sleeping quarters temporarily into one of the little houses near E on the "location." I have one of the small bedrooms in the rear and Mr. Mason the front room where he has a drawing table and space for his work. Downstairs are the two offices for the Clerk and Bookkeeper. We are as cozy as we can be without carpets and with only the most necessary furniture. The office building is erected as far as the roof, which will probably go up this week. We do not expect to move in until January, for there will be much to do to furnish it and put in steam pipes. We now take our meals at a miner's next door, and have a fair table.*

*Work is making good progress. The twenty houses are nearing completion and in two or three weeks about half of them will be occupied. E shaft was down 56 feet in sand and anchored safely on rock. We are cribbing it up and in ten days, shall be able to start a drill on it. A drill is working at D where we have a small compressor at work. At C we have a small gasoline engine and at B have done some hand drilling and blasting. All four shafts are turning out very good work and at C and E we have found several masses that must weigh well up to a half a ton each. Mr. Paine and party, including Mr. John Stanton, were out on Tuesday and were delighted at the showing. The stock has gone up \$5 within a week! Our roads are nearly graded in the location and we have begun another between the highway and the R.R., over which we shall hereafter haul our supplies in. The R.R. is already several miles beyond our junction.*

## Last Name Frequency

An interesting (perhaps) piece of trivia that can be extracted from the Painesdale Mine & Shaft's digital payroll database is the frequency of occurrence for workers last names. In total there are over 15,000 entries in the database. Not all of these entries represent unique individuals. An employee who worked at the mine for many years would find his (or her) name occurring more frequently than a fellow worker with less seniority.



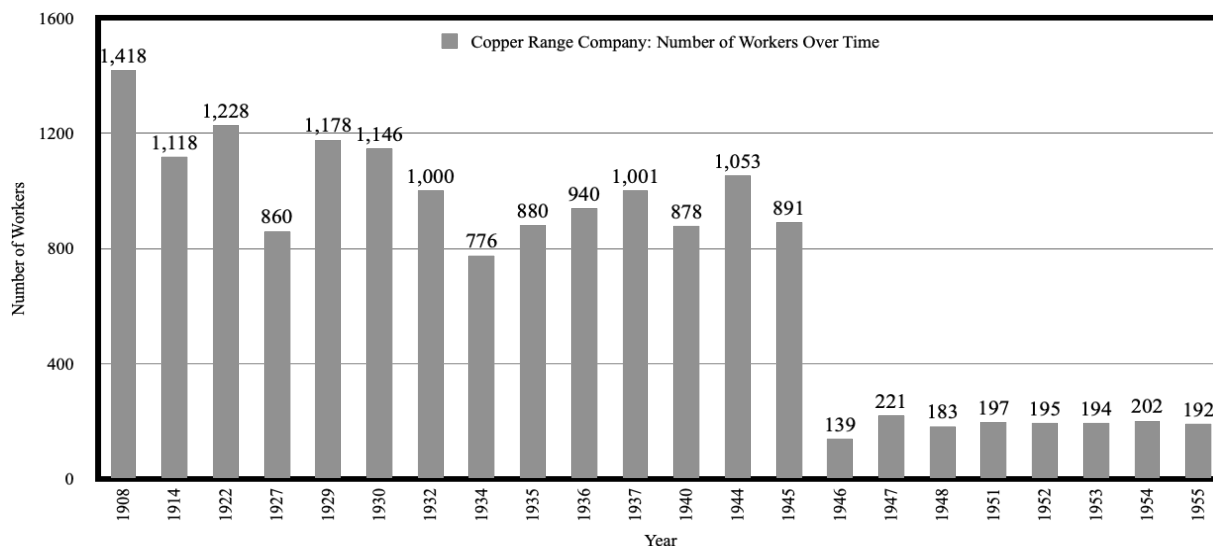
For those readers who would like to see the complete ordered list of last names, you can scan the adjacent QR code to open a PDF version of the complete list.

### Last Name Count

- |                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| • Aho 130      | • Keranen 70  |
| • Juntunen 121 | • Kangas 67   |
| • Stimac 114   | • Erickson 65 |
| • Johnson 99   | • Laru 65     |
| • Maki 89      | • Morin 64    |
| • Niemi 83     | • Dunstan 58  |
| • Plesha 80    | • Isaacson 57 |
| • Durocher 79  | • Moilanen 57 |
| • Chopp 74     | • Ozanich 57  |
| • Smith 72     | • Kyllonen 53 |
| • Chapman 70   | • Raisanen 53 |



# How Many Men Worked at the Champion Mine?



This is one of the more frequently asked questions during our tours. The reply is always “It depends on the year.” As a result of our efforts to digitize sections of the 22 payroll ledgers in our collection, it is now possible to answer this question with some degree of accuracy. This chart shows the number of employees by year at the Champion Mine, as recorded in our collection of payroll ledgers.

Our records show that the greatest number of workers occurred in 1908 (1,418) with the smallest

number in 1946 (139). These numbers fit well with the history of the Champion Mine. During the early years most of the mining effort went into developing the mine and building surface infrastructure. With the end of World War II, the mine shut down production and maintained only a skeleton crew who recovered equipment from the lower levels. It is important to note that the number of workers includes those who worked both underground and on the surface. The data also includes workers from Champion Mill and the Trimountain Hospital.

## Treasurer’s Annual Report By Vince Kanthak

As you can see by reading Michael’s President’s Report, the past year has been a busy one. One might even say breathtaking!

All of this preservation comes at a cost... quite literally! It is hard to believe, but over the past 12 months we have spent over \$82,000 on our preservation efforts. We will be continuing this initiative through the coming winter with the upper level work in the shafthouse. This preservation money has come from a variety of sources. We have been fortunate to have received grants from the Keweenaw Tourism Council (DBA Visit Keweenaw), the Leuthold Family Foundation, Keweenaw National Historical Park, and the Keweenaw Area Community Foundation

Last and definitely not least, are our members and private donors. Many of the grants that we receive require that the grant funds be matched by the receiving organization. It is because of our generous donors that we have been able to apply for and receive these matching grants.

Revenue	Total
Tour Donations/Tickets	\$2,658
General Donations	\$4,478
Membership	\$4,315
Memorials	\$400
Premium Sales	\$1,007
Copper Sales	\$478
Total Income from Operations	\$13,335
Preservation Grants/Donations	\$74,866

Expenses	Total
Maintenance/Grounds	\$3,254
Newsletter	\$1,236
Office/Supplies	\$1,529
Insurance	\$2,788
Premium Cost	\$347
Conference/Membership	\$125
Promotional	\$1,044
Michigan Sales Tax	\$139
Total Operational Costs	\$10,462
Building Preservation	\$82,738

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## Treasurer's Annual Report Continued

Asbestos abatement for the hexagonal building is in our sights for next year. We have begun the process of identifying environmental hazards in and around the building. Next, a plan will be developed to hire an asbestos removal company. We are currently working with The Mannik & Smith Group to oversee this complex process.

The impact of inflation can be felt every time we buy groceries. PM&S has also been affected by inflation. We will be increasing the cost of annual membership to \$15.00. This increase in dues will help us cover the rising costs of our newsletter. The cost for all other membership levels will remain the same.

Balances	08/31/22	08/31/23
Checking Account	\$35,568	\$43,451
Money Market Account	\$12,440	\$0
I-Bond	\$10,000	\$11,032
Total Cash	\$58,008	\$54,483
Gross Income	\$88,202	-
Gross Expenses	\$93,200	-

I want to remind our readers that we continue to collect Tadych's Marketplace receipts. If you live in the area, we encourage you to drop them off at the brown donation tube located across from our Captain's office. It is weather proof and we check it regularly until the snow flies.

### "Grandpa's Story" By Thomas M. Pintar



The following stories were excerpted from "Grandpa's Story" by Thomas M. Pintar about his father, Martin Matt Pintar. Additional excerpts from this book can be read in our Spring 2012 newsletter (use QR code to find it on our website).

*I worked with the timbermen on the 21st level of the Copper Range Mine, Champion No. 4 Shaft starting in 1937. We would start at one end replacing*

*the timber and continue to the other end, and then would start over again as there was so much pressure at that level. I worked for a couple of years and then had my accident.*

#### **My Accident**

*My accident happened one week before Christmas. I was actually working with a miner at that time. We would set off a series of fuses to detonate the dynamite and then would count as the fuses went off and after a half hour, we would check the site. I was looking up where we had blasted and had my hand on a rock, when a boulder, a loose as it was called, came down and hit my head and landed on my hand, smashing my thumb and fingers. With my fingers hanging only*

*by the skin, my mining partner wrapped my hand in an oily rag and took me to the surface.*

*I had a cut on my forehead above my eye that was bleeding, my nose was swollen and my helmet was smashed. I was taken to the Trimountain Hospital by ambulance. From the accident I lost my little finger, ring finger and part of my thumb. While I recovered I spent my time reading Western magazines. When I was released from the hospital, I took a bus to Painesdale and then walked home. The mining captain told me to come back to work when I was ready. I was off of work until April and when I returned to work, I was put on the electric pumps that removed water from the mine. The pumps were on 6th, 13th and 21st level - there were seven levels between pumps. The 29th and 42nd level had pumps also while the 37th level had a dam.*

*I also remember the time the "skip" came loose down the shaft. The skip is the car that takes the miners and ore up and down into the mine. After coming loose, it eventually got wedged and stopped at one of the lower levels. I don't recall what level I was on but I heard the noise and rushed to see what happened. Someone told me that the skip let loose. My mouth was so dry that I could not even spit. We had to climb up the timbers in the shaft to get out that day.*



## Shafting Bucket



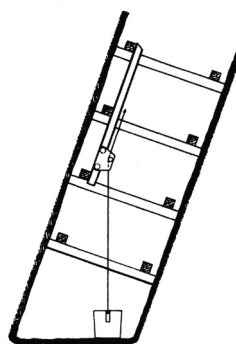
One of the large artifacts on display at the Champion #4 is a shafting bucket. This bucket is made of riveted iron plates with a hoop for attaching a hoist rope and a ball & chain hanging from the bottom. This bucket was used to lift rock that was being removed from the bottom of the shaft as it was being dug. The ball and

chain served to trigger the bucket to dump its load.

In 1931 the US Bureau of Mines published a report<sup>1</sup> detailing the mining methods used at the Champion Mine. Below is an excerpt from this publication that describes the process of excavating the very bottom of a new shaft. Use the QR code to view the full publication.

*A shaft-sinking crew consists of four men and one puffer boy on each of the two shifts. These four men drill, blast, muck, and timber. The timber is kept down within 12 feet of where the men are working. Shaft lines are set by the engineers and the head mine timberman.*

*Fractured ground frequently causes the holes to cave in, and for this reason light machines which can be easily raised or lowered by the miners while drilling*



*are used. Drill steel is handled in and out of the mine in bundles. Blasting is done with fuse and cap, using 1-inch Giant Gelatine, 40 per cent powder.*

*Mucking its being done at present by hand into 1000-pound capacity buckets; see Figure 10b, which shows the shaft-sinking method. These*

*buckets are dumped automatically into a flop pan controlled by the puffer boy, the rock running into a bin of 30 tons capacity. Loading from the bin into the skip is done by means of a sliding chute. The bucket carriage runs on an 8-inch I beam.*

*Present practice is to sink 300 feet before letting out the main hoisting ropes to bring the skip down. A rock pentice 6 feet thick, is left under the skip pit to protect the men engaged in sinking operations. When 300 feet of sinking has been completed stringers are put in and the level stations cut. Then the pentice is blasted out, and the skip roads are connected.*

<sup>1</sup> United States Bureau of Mines, *Mining Methods and Costs at the Champion Copper Mine*. 1931. Page 13, 24



## Want to Help?

Are you looking for something COOL to do in your spare time? Do you have a special skill that might help our efforts to preserve the Champion #4 and its history? We are a very small group of volunteers and need help expanding our preservation efforts and visitor experience. We are looking for people who have a few hours every month to do the following...

- Light maintenance.
- Managing our gift shop
- Setting up and managing the displays in our buildings
- Participate in our monthly board meetings.
- Historical research on the Champion Mining Company.
- Managing our Facebook page.
- Acting as a greeter during our tours.
- Editing video in our archives

Do you have ideas of your own on how you can help? Send us an email at [painesdalemine@gmail.com](mailto:painesdalemine@gmail.com)

## New Video



PM&S recently acquired a 1990 video tape that was filmed by Duane Coponen. It stars Gene Johnson, Bob Bergdahl, and Ron

Paulson. In this video, we get a tour of the third level (300') of the mine. You can see the water pumps operated by the Adams Township Water Utility. A tour of the hoist house is also included.

You can find the video by using the QR code. We apologize for the technical problems with the rolling frames at some locations in the video. This problem was present in the original recording.



# Thank You Donors

## New Annual

- William Bond
- Wes Thompson
- Sue Desrochers
- Henry Lehtola
- Mike Josephson
- Stormy & Gail Mickalich
- James & Nancy Uhelski
- Greg Stewart
- Carl Koerschnert
- Steve Bonicattot
- Mike Boumant
- Copper Range Railroad Historical Society
- Jim Bonicattot
- Carl Cravent

- Dale Wuokko
- Blair Orr
- Deanna Niemi
- Martin Pintar

## New Life

- Glen & Karen (Mattson) Bryan
- John Miller
- Brian McGunegle
- James Schutz
- Karen Siekas
- Karen Johnson
- Bruce Lammers
- JoAnn Haven
- Eric Peterson

## Renew Life

- Harold Wilson
- Nanette Schulte
- Marian Mattila
- Jane Dykowski
- Jim Enright
- Garrett Stark
- Joe & Sue Sergey
- Gail Armstrong

## New Patron

- Frederick Sterk
- Travis Teusink
- Frank & Luan Huber
- Anthony and Kay Briski

## Renew Patron

- George & Janet Hackbradt
- Frederick Sterk

## In Memory of

- In Memory of Janet (Korpi) Hackbrandt & Matt Korpi (by George Hackbradt)
- In Memory of Captain John Broan (by JoAnn Aldrich Haven)

## Renew Annual

- Donna Karuonen
- Todd Taskila
- Ruth A. Katalin
- Bill Manderfield
- Ed Cowling
- Sandra Mahr
- Donna Laux
- Sharon and Jim Tronti
- Deborah Frontiera
- Otto Dickow
- James Nelson
- Teresa Savastano
- Jim & Sharon Tronti
- Sandra Mickalich-Mahr
- Jodie Schmidt
- Otto Dickow
- Bonnie Wolff
- Jean Pemberton

## Donate/Become a Member

Become a member and support our efforts to preserve the Champion #4 Shaft-Rockhouse.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Donations can be sent to: Painesdale Mine & Shaft  
PO Box 332 Painesdale, MI 49955.

You can also donate digitally. This QR code will direct your mobile device to our website's donation page.

\_\_\_\_ Yearly Member \$15

\_\_\_\_ Life Member \$100

\_\_\_\_ Patron \$1,000

\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_



# Jeffers Tour

On September 27, volunteers gave a tour to Ms. Amanda Andress's middle school class. It was a beautiful fall day to be immersed in the history of the Champion Mine. Here are excerpts for the many thank you notes that we received from the students.

*Thank you for giving us a tour of the shaft house. One really interesting fact that I learned is that our drinking water goes all the way from the shaft to Hancock.*

~Vayda K.

*Thank you for giving us a tour of the shaft house. It was cool to learn about all of the different jobs in the mine. My dad wanted to hear about the field trip and now I can tell him some facts. ~Aubrey H.*

*Thank you for giving us the awesome tour of the shaft house. I learned that a lot of the miners that died there were Finns. ~Redik R.*

Drawing by Carter H.

