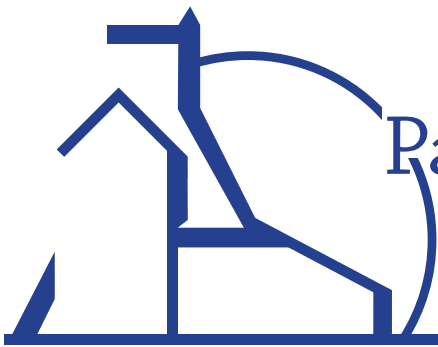




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Newsletter - Spring, 2026

President's Report By Michael Prast, President



In terms of construction work, the winter was fairly slow but has picked up quickly this spring. Starting at the top, our Captain's Office has had a few minor upgrades, mostly focused around organization. We have added some shelving to the back storage room that is used for administrative needs. This includes the storing of exhibit artifacts as well as extra gift shop items. We also restored an old display case that will be used to display some of our more delicate items. Looking forward, the office is going to be getting re-sided later in the fall. The wood shingle siding is very old and brittle; falling off every day. We will be replacing it with new cedar shingles.

The Shafthouse has had the most work done this spring. Adding to our tour experience, the last bit of floor decking on the rock crusher level has been completed. Visitors now have safe access to the entire 2nd, 3rd, and 4th levels of the building. In this new section, on the north side, visitors can get closer to the drop hammer used to break up large pieces of rock, peer into the upper ore bin, and view the ramp used to drop mass copper pieces out of the side of the building to be picked up by the trains below. There are also two restored windows in this corner of the room which let in a lot of natural light.

Less glamorous but essential, a portion of the roof where the pitch of the building changes has been

replaced. It had been leaking dramatically with every rainfall. New roof decking and metal was put up.

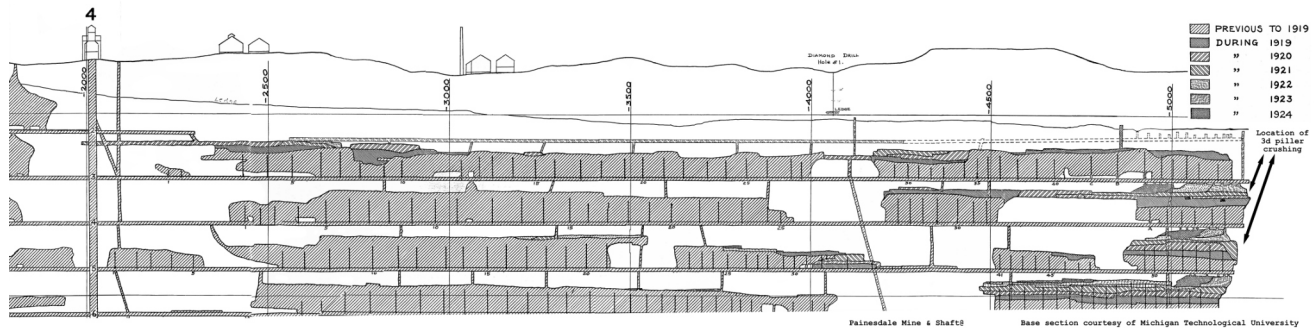
The largest project being undertaken in the building is a multi-year one. We have started the digging down through fill rock in the heart of the building that has buried the main building support columns; potentially since the first construction. This rock holds moisture that rots the columns and hides any of that rot from view. Repairing these columns is critical. The first step has been to dig down to expose the columns. With the first phase of that process complete, we are now moving towards the structural repairs of the columns. This will involve adding new steel bracing and lapping old steel with new steel. There will be more on this progress in later newsletters.

The Hexagonal Water Tank Building had its siding redone last year and this year we received a grant as part of the America250MI grant cycle to reroof it. Reroofing the building is the final major stage of stabilization on this structure. Since being donated to us in 2023, it has come a long way!

Beyond the buildings, the site is ever changing for the better. Our volunteers have already been hard at work to clear trees and vegetation that are overgrown and hindering views of the site. Trails are being worked on and cleared for off-hours visitors. We will soon have a new information sign that depicts the underground of the Champion #4, so be on the lookout for that!



The Water Utility: The Origin Story



This longitudinal section shows the upper levels at the southern most edge of the Champion Mine.

An interesting document hoard that was scanned at the MI Tech Archives included a set of the Copper Range Company Annual Reports. These annual reports summarize the company's business for share holders for each year of its operation. When combined with one of the Champion Mines's longitudinal sections, you can see exactly where and why the water incursion into the mine occurred.

Prior to 1924, stoping approached to within 60' of the ledge (top of the basalt bedrock). Such a close approach undoubtedly weakened the pillars supporting the overburden. The slumping resulted in fractures in the bedrock that crossed the already mined stopes and drifts in the area. This slumping problem is probably the same issue that resulted in the eventual demolition of the Sarah-Sargent Memorial Library in 1962 due to an unstable foundation.

Below are excerpts from five annual reports that mention the Champion Mine's water problems and their eventual solution:

1924 – A heavy influx of water into the Champion mine during September reduced the September output to about two-thirds of the former monthly average. The same occurrence caused a reduction in Champion output for the last quarter. By the end of the year the flow of water was entirely under control. [Later in the same report...]

The south end of this mine is overlaid by a deep bed of water-bearing overburden. The crushing of the pillars over the 3d level stope underlaying this water-bearing ground and the extreme south end of the mine caused a heavy influx of water, which temporarily suspended mining operations until necessary dams and pumping equipment could be installed. The flow reached a maximum of 2500 gallons per minute, at which rate it now maintains.

Water is being pumped from the 6th level to surface; but it is hoped to intercept it later on the 3d level.

1925 – Champion's operating profit was \$497,764.43, as compared to \$709,276.53 in 1924. This reflects a drop in production to 17,957.605 pounds, or a decrease of 2,104,025 pounds, caused principally by the flow of water into the mine which prevents stoping in certain areas. This flow from the surface which developed suddenly in the fall of 1924 soon reached a rate of 2500 gallons a minute, and has diminished now to 1700 gallons a minute. If the places where the water is coming into the mine from the surface can be located and all of the water diverted to the third level, the difficulty will be largely overcome. This we hope to accomplish within a few months.

1926 – The flow of subsurface water entering the mine at the south end remains about the same as last year, and some progress was made in intercepting more of this flow at the 3d level. We hope eventually to intercept all of it here, which should materially reduce pumping costs.

1937 – Houghton-Hancock Water Line

During the year \$32,333.01 was expended in the construction of a water line between Painesdale and Baltic which connects with the line constructed by the WPA between Baltic and Hancock. The purpose of this line is to serve the Village of Houghton and the City of Hancock.

Water will be obtained from pumping operations from the glacial gravels overlying the southern stopes of the Champion Mine which, except for the amount used by the small towns nearby, is now wasted. The revenue from the sale of water to Houghton and Hancock should bring ample return on the investment.



Water Utility

Continued

1940 – *Houghton-Hancock Water Line*

The water system, which serves the towns of Houghton and Hancock and several smaller communities intervening, continued to function satisfactorily throughout 1940. During the year a water tank of adequate size was erected at the Champion Mine to reduce the volume of air in the distributing system. No important changes in this system are contemplated in 1941.

Tour Hours

The 2026 tour season started May 22. We are anticipating an even busier season compared to last year. We are once again offering tours on Fridays and Saturdays at noon beginning May 22 and running to the end of Color Season (Mid-October).

We continue to offer private tours by appointment. Because of the limited number of volunteers available to give tours, we encourage those who wish to arrange a private tour to do so as soon as possible. Are you planning a family reunion in the Copper County area for this summer? Are you looking for a fun activity to keep everyone busy? If so, consider a tour of the Champion as a family activity. If you are interested in arranging a private tour, please contact us at painesdalemine@gmail.com. For more tour information, go to our website at www.painesdalemineshaft.com and click the TOURS tab at the top.

Water Tank Restoration



Painesdale Mine and Shaft, in partnership with America250MI, is pleased to announce the final phase of preservation work on the historic Hexagonal Water Tank Building at the Champion #4. The project will include a new roof for the building as well as the installation of an informational sign sometime in the next year. America250MI is providing partial funding for the work as part of the nation's 250th anniversary.

The improvements to the Water Tank Building principally reflect America250MI's Guiding Theme of the Power of Place. To attract and retain employees in the remote copper mines of the Upper Peninsula, the mining companies needed to provide more than just a job, they needed to provide housing and services so workers could build a life. Providing clean water to the workers and their families is one example of this corporate paternalism. Built in 1940, the Water Tank Building expanded on Copper

Range's existing residential water service by providing a facility to store and distribute clean water sourced from an aquifer in the mine. Copper Range distributed this water to the residential areas near the mine, as well as to the nearby communities of Houghton and Hancock. This water service continued even after the mine closed in 1967 with Adams Township taking over responsibility for the Water Tank Building and the adjacent structures.

After sitting unused for decades, Adams Township donated the Water Tank Building to PM&S in 2023 for future preservation and interpretation. PM&S subsequently completed several stabilization and environmental cleanup projects. With support from America250MI, the installation of a new roof and interpretive sign will put the finishing touches on this important building. The Water Tank Building will serve as an ideal introduction to the how the mining companies had influence beyond the immediate workplace; the building will help illustrate the challenges the workers faced in their daily lives and how the companies worked toward providing solutions.

America250MI is Michigan's statewide initiative coordinating programs, partnerships, and storytelling for the United States Semiquincentennial. Together with communities across the state, America250MI celebrates Michigan's past, present, and future through the 250th anniversary and beyond. Learn more at www.America250MI.org.



Last Miners at the Champion

An interesting payroll record that can be found in our digital archives is a set of records that identifies the men who worked underground at the Champion from 7/11/1966 to 12/19/1966. The mine closed for good in September, 1967. So these are probably the last men who worked underground at the Champion Mine.

These records provide us with the first initial, last name and the job(s) of each worker. We have been able to fill in a few first names and even some nicknames but most remain a mystery to us.

If you can identify the first names of any of these workers, or if you can verify any of the names we are unsure about (indicated by asterisks and italics, for example: **name**) please let us know and we will update the list. The current updated list can be found using the QR code.



- **Charles Aho** – Trammer, Hoist Engineer
- **William Andrews** – Stope Miner, Mucker
- **John Austin** – Trammer, Mucker
- **P. Beljan** – Trammer, Mucker
- **R. Bishop** – Trammer, Stope Miner
- **G. Bogren** – Trammer, Stope Miner, Mucker
- **R. Booker** – Trammer
- **R. **Ronald** Budweg** – Trammer, Stope Miner
- **Michael Bukovich Jr.** – Trammer, Stope Miner
- **Michael Bukovich Sr.** – Trammer, Stope Miner, Mucker
- **John Butina** – Trammer, Mucker, Ladders
- **J. **Lowell John** Caspary** – Trammer, Mucker
- **Walter Chinn** – Hoist Engineer
- **Edwand Chopp** – Trammer, Stope Miner, Mucker
- **Joe Deforge** – Trammer
- **George DeRosier** – Stope Miner
- **Francis Destrampe** – Trammer, Stope Miner
- **C. Fox** – Trammer, Mucker
- **J. Fredianelli** – Trammer, Mucker
- **Matt Gerzetich** – Trammer, Mucker
- **J. Gregorich** – Trammer, Mucker
- **Edward (Ed) Hagwell** – Trammer, Mucker, Ladders
- **Herman Hartell** – Stope Miner, Mucker
- **Raymond Hendrickson** – Trammer, Stope Miner
- **William Hitchens** – Trammer
- **S. Hollett** – Trammer
- **K. **Gordon K.** Huhta** – Stope Miner, Mucker
- **D. Huot** – Trammer
- **Richard Immonen** – Trammer, Mucker
- **A. Jalkanen** – Ladders
- **D. Jalkanen** – Trammer, Mucker, Ladders
- **Vaito (Veets) Juopperi** – Stope Miner
- **John Katalin** – Hoist Engineer
- **A. **Aale/Abram/Arvo** Kempainen** – Stope Miner
- **Victor Keranen** – Trammer
- **Wilbert Keranen** – Trammer, Mucker
- **Allan Keto** – Trammer, Stope Miner, Mucker
- **Matt Kiviniemi** – Stope Miner
- **Robert (Bob) Kiviniemi** – Stope Miner
- **Mathias Korpi** – Hoist Engineer
- **E. Kuopus** – Stope Miner
- **Alan Kyllonen** – Stope Miner
- **H. Kyllonen** – Stope Miner
- **W. **William** Kyllonen** – Trammer
- **M. Lammi** – Trammer, Stope Miner, Ladders
- **James (Jumbo) Laru** – Trammer, Stope Miner
- **Dennis Lorenz** – Trammer, Stope Miner
- **Tony Marino** – Rock House
- **Uno Mattila** – Trammer
- **D. Mattson** – Trammer, Stope Miner
- **D. **David** Michelac** – Trammer
- **Jacob Mickalich** – Trammer, Stope Miner, Mucker
- **Henry Mickalich Jr.** – Stope Miner
- **Henry (Smoky) Mickalich Sr.** – Trammer, Stope Miner
- **D. Mihelac** – Trammer, Mucker
- **H. **Harry/Harold** Niemi** – Trammer, Stope Miner, Mucker
- **Alfred Paananen** – Trammer, Stope Miner
- **A. Paavola** – Trammer, Stope Miner, Mucker
- **R. Parkinen** – Trammer, Mucker
- **John Pasuk** – Trammer
- **Joseph Persha** – Trammer, Stope Miner
- **Milton Peterson** – Trammer



Last Miners Continued

- **Nels Peterson** – Trammer, Stope Miner, Mucker
- **Joseph Plesha** – Stope Miner
- **Nick Podner** – Rock House
- **Richard Podner** – Trammer, Mucker
- **Heimo Pulkkinen** – Stope Miner
- **Milton (Duke) Pyykkonen** – Stope Miner
- **Clarence (Indian Pete) Pyykkonen** – Trammer, Stope Miner, Mucker
- **R. Roth** – Rock House
- **E. Smith** – Hoist Engineer
- **H. Snell** – Rock House
- **Edward Sormunen** – Trammer, Stope Miner, Mucker
- **Paul Sporaliski Sr.** – Trammer
- **Erich Sporbert** – Mucker, Ladders
- **Charles (Chuckie) St. Clair** – Trammer, Stope Miner
- **R. Tapio** Trammer
- **B. *Burton* Thomas** – Trammer, Stope Miner, Mucker
- **V. Verran** – Hoist Engineer
- **Douglas Vettori** – Trammer, Hoist Engineer, Mucker, Ladders

August S. Kauppila



Biography by John Blom:

August Samuelinpoika Kauppila was born on March 24, 1881 in Jalasjarvi, Lansi-Suomi, Finland. He emigrated in 1901 to Hancock, Michigan. He

married Hilda K. Korpinen. In 1910 August worked as a laborer at odd jobs in Franklin Township. By 1920, he and Hilda had six children and he was working as a trammer at the copper mine in Painesdale. He continued to work as a miner until his death on August 13, 1931, by a rockslide in the Champion #3 shaft. His last child died in 2010.

Inquest Report on Accident No. 11 Champion Mine, August 13, 1931:

Official examination into the causes of the death of August Kauppila, in Champion Mine, August 13, 1931, held by Mr. Matt Ollila, Mine Inspector for Houghton County, August 14, 1931.

After investigation of this accident, Mr. Ollila's findings were as follows:

August Kauppila, miner, came to his death while working on the 26th level, 86 mill, No. 4 shaft, Champion Mine, at about 2:10 P. M., August 13, 1931, when he was crushed beneath falling ground caused by an "air-blast".

Digital Archive

Over this past winter the final cache of documents that were recovered Copper Range Company Mine Office (Pay Office) building have been scanned. In 2007, just before the building was demolished, five boxes of documents were recovered by the NPS staff at the request of PM&S Board. These documents were made available for scanning and are now available to anyone who is interested.

The cache included an eclectic collection of topics. There are insurance policies from the 1920's that show how the company divided the risk among a large number of insurance companies. There are miners contracts from the 1930's that record the miners and their work schedule.

If you are looking for information on a specific person who worked in the last half of the 1930's, you will probably find them recorded some place in this collection.

There were also 300 additional paychecks that have been added to our paycheck collection. These checks were dated 1951 and 1952. These years were not previously represented in our collection of 7,200 pay checks.

Here is a QR code that links to the collection with index:



Member Comments

Please accept the enclosed donation for Painesdale Mine and Shaft Incorporated. My grandfather, Charles Blewett (1892-1971, worked in Shaft #4 throughout most of the early 1900s, until about 1923 when he followed his extended family downstate to work at Chevrolet in Flint. He married my Grandmother, Cornelia Carlson (1895-1988, in Painesdale in 1917. She was the daughter of Lend Carlson who I believe was a timber boss in one of the shafts (possibly #4. I have a number of photos and information which might be of interest to you. Just let me know.

– Bill Blewett

Enjoying your seasonal newsletter. I visit friends just up the hill from the shaft on Cherokee St. every fall for the past 30 years. My brother and I have been able to tour the shaft early-on in the restoration. We are so glad to see all work as yet completed.

– Richard McCrate

My grandfather, Erkki (Erick Karna, was killed (cave in in the Painesdale Mine in December of 1929. My mother, Irene, was 5 at the time. She said it was a bleak Christmas that year. She remembers hiding under the kitchen table as neighbors came to call. My grandfather's casket was laid in the living room. The Karna family was able to remain in the company house after his death because the two oldest sons of

Erkki had already quit school in order to supplement the family income. After all, it was company housing and if you didn't work for the mining company, you couldn't live in a company house. Rent was one dollar for each room in the house, per month. My grandmother was pregnant with their 9th child when he passed. Their son, Paavo, was born three months later in March 1930. They had a small shed/barn in the back yard. It had burned to the ground with their cow in it, a month before my grandfather was killed. A bleak Christmas indeed!

I'd also like to thank you for your help in getting a piece of copper from the Painesdale mine to take to Italy this past summer. Wesley Karna, son of Erkki, was killed in action in 1944 in Italy, at the age of 22. In June of 2022, the Karna family had been notified that a history enthusiast in Italy had found (with his metal detector, Wesley's military canteen with the name KARNA scratched into the bottom of it. They tracked the family down, and my son, Brad Uren, and I went to Italy to tour the area and the Gotica Toscana WWII museum there, near Ponzalla. The copper we brought there was a little piece of the Copper Country and the mine that Wesley, his father, and brothers worked in, as a thank you to them for their efforts to locate Wesley's family.

It meant a great deal to the remaining Karna family. Thank you for making that possible.

– Susan Kokko Uren

Help Wanted

Are you interested in helping to preserve the history of the Champion #4? Are you looking for something fun and yet productive to do in your spare time? Would you like to learn more about mining history in Copper Country?

We are looking for volunteers to help out with our Friday and Saturday noon tours. Having someone as a greeter helps the guides focus on giving tours.

A deep knowledge of the Champion Mine is not needed. Only a willingness to be part of our team.

If you are interested in learning more, please send us an email to painesdalemine@gmail.com. or better yet, stop by early on a tour day and have a chat. Summer residents are encouraged to join.

L.L. Hubbard

The following is another installment of excerpts from the letters L.L. Hubbard, who discovered the Champion Mine, wrote to his wife.

The shafts are going deeper each day and all look well. We have lately had a great deal of snow which makes our surface work expensive. We have had to lay a water pipe from below the saw mill up to the location, and the inhabitants are overjoyed because they do have to go to the spring for their supply. We are extending the pipe to D shaft because we fear a shortage of water there, and a consequent stoppage of the machinery.

Houghton, Mich., March. 4th, 1900



Thank You Donors

(Accurate as of May 1, 2026)

Grants

- Keweenaw Heritage Commission 2025
- Leuthold Family Foundation
- Keweenaw Community Foundation
- America250MI
- Keweenaw Heritage Commission 2026

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- Christopher Timonen
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- Mark & Lynn Langenfeld
- Anonymous

- Anonymous
- Michelle Schumacher
- Judy Albee
- Deborah K. Frontiera

In Memory Of

- Ruth Katalin: In Memory of John Katalin Sr., John Katalin Jr., Jim Katalin
- David Allen: In Memory of my grandfather Victor Tuominen who worked in Champion #1 & #3
- Vince & Retta Kanthak: In loving memory of Cynthia Moon, née Sandra Sten
- Susan Feira: In memory of Dennis Walikainen
- The Stevens & Kubicki Families: In memory of our beloved aunt, Arlene Beverly Peterson
- The Red Hat Group: In memory of Arlene Peterson, a fellow Red Hatter
- The Peterson Family: In memory of Arlene Peterson
- Sandra Mickalich-Mahr: In memory of Smoky & Brian Mickalich
- In memory of your good neighbor, long time resident of Cherokee Street, Painesdale: Michael E. Johnson by his wife, gifted to Susan by the Wyandotte Hills Women's Golf League, Twin Lakes, MI

Donate/Become a Member

Contact Information

Name: _____

Email: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Notes/Comments

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

Donation

- ☐ \$15 Yearly Member
 ☐ \$1,000 Patron
- ☐ \$100 Life Member
 ☐ \$_____ Other
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Donations can be sent to:
Painesdale Mine & Shaft
PO Box 332 Painesdale, MI 49955.

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

