



The Negaunee Historical Society

Quarterly Newsletter

January 2022

Issue #56

From the president...

Every year that slips past seems to reinforce what my Mom used to say: "The years fly by so quickly." 2021 seemed to live up to that, with COVID taking center stage for most of it. We couldn't watch TV, open a newspaper or listen to the radio without some reminder. While it dominated the news, there were positives that occurred in the Negaunee Historical Society as well:

- The City of Negaunee awarded its first water conservation grant to the society. The \$750 award will be used for two low-volume water consumption toilets in the museum.

- Once again, through the generosity of the Jean Nelson family, we were able to award the Frank Matthews Scholarship of \$500, this year to NHS graduate Zachary Ruele.

- Through the efforts of Dave Dompierre, NHS students volunteered for fall cleanup.

- The annual calendar sale was again successful and sold out in a short time.

- The society elected two board members at the November meeting—Esko Alasimi and Nancy Fosco, and granted emeritus status to Roland Koski. Thanks to Roland for his many years as a board member, and we look forward to his continued role as a volunteer.

- To those board members and volunteers who staff the museum during the summer months, those who set up displays, process donations and are the "face of the society," a huge thank you! You are our lifeblood.

- A very large thank you to benefactors who responded to our request for donations. We were overwhelmed by your generosity and invite your participation at our monthly meetings (March through December). Our meetings are open to the public and we invite anyone who has an interest in the history of Negaunee to become involved.

- To Kristy Basolo-Malmsten, Virginia Paulson and all contributing to publishing and printing the newsletter, many thanks.

- I am pleased to recognize Koskey Funeral Home as our partner for this newsletter. The Koskey family has been serving the Negaunee area since the 1920s. Thanks to Louie and Jeff for their support.

—Art Gischia, society president



From front left, Don Price, Dave Stromquist, Don Anderson, Coach Carey, Ray Trehwella, Lowell Johnson and Fred Northey. In back, James Cleven, Ron Maki, Ron Cardone, Ron Laitinen, Gordon Farragh, Ray Lindstrom and Jack Johnson.

Lakeview Gym turns 70 years old

On November 20, 1951, Lakeview Memorial Gymnasium was dedicated. Howard Lehto presented a bronze plaque from the John H. Mitchell American Legion Post 66. The inscription on the plaque reads: "This gymnasium is dedicated to Negaunee citizens who have served in the armed forces of the United States."

This plaque was placed in the lobby of the gymnasium. On behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Otto Korhonen presented the American flag to Leslie Richards, school board president. Also participating in the dedication were the Negaunee City Band, under the direction of John Violetta, and the Negaunee High School band, under the direction of Walter Daly.

The 1951-52 basketball team had the opportunity to play their first home game on the new gymnasium floor. This game was a contest between the Negaunee Miners and the Ironwood

Red Devils. Those players, shown above, were coached by Bob Carey.

The Miners beat the Red Devils, 48-36, in front of 3,000 fans. The five starters for that game were Don Anderson and Don Price as forwards, Lowell Johnson and Dave Stromquist as guards and Ray Trehwella had the center position.

The Lakeview Memorial Gym was a state-of-the-art gym when it was built 70 years ago, and it continues to be a jewel among school facilities in the Upper Peninsula. New modern seating has been installed on the lower section and handrails have been added to the upper sections. The gym floor has been transformed from its plain hardwood to a piece of art with the "N" at the center and the two Miner logos at either end. The lower lobby has been renovated to showcase the Hall of Fame.

—Virginia Paulson

Local skier grabs national spotlight

Wilbert Rasmussen, known to everyone as “Wil,” was born in Negaunee on June 26, 1930. He began skiing at the age of three.

His natural ability and love for sport became evident and motivated him to rise at 4 or 5 a.m. to practice ski jumping before he left for school.

He loved challenges, demanding hills, weather conditions and skilled skiers. Wil gained national acclaim on February 22, 1946, when he was fifteen and half years old. He broke the record at Ishpeming’s Suicide Hill with a jump of 250 feet, shattering the previous record of 236 feet made in 1941. It was widely published that no ski jumper of such a young age had ever accomplished such a feat. But this was just the beginning to an 11-year career of outstanding jumps.

A great human-interest feature of Wil’s career took place at Steamboat Springs, Colorado. The

Steamboat Club would not let him jump because of his age—he was 17 and participants had to be 18.

The Ishpeming Club protested and said “You have to let him jump, he has learned on big hills, he’s a big-hill jumper.” Steamboat consented to let him ride as an “exhibitionist.” Wil modestly changed numbers with another dissatisfied skier who had pulled No. 1 as the first starting skier, to break trail for all skiers of the day. He had the longest jump of the meet, outdistancing the entire Class A field.

In an era before the corporate and commercial sponsorship that we see for today’s athletes, Wil was forced to withdraw from competition, at the very peak of his career due to financial and family obligations. Although disappointing, Wil had already made a mark on the ski jumping sport in the United States.

—Virginia Paulson



AT THE MUSEUM

Dangerous Silver Street crossing replaced by underpass



Above, a load of ore pulled by a Baldwin 1907 steam engine goes through the Duluth, South Shore & Atlantic railway crossing on Silver Street in Negaunee.

The dangerous crossing was eliminated in the 1930s by the construction of a new underpass, shown at right.



Negaunee Historical Society Board

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Negaunee Historical Society Donation Form

P.O. Box 221, Negaunee, MI 49866-0221

_____ \$10 Yearly Membership _____ \$100 Lifetime Membership
_____ \$5 Annual Student Membership _____ General Donation

Name _____

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Please include your email address if you would like the newsletter via email:

Thank You!

Cascade Riders embraced winter

The Cascade Riders snowmobile club was organized in 1967.

The club was the only one in the U.S. to hold classes for youngsters concerning the state laws for snowmobilers.

Community schools put on three classes with the club's assistance in the winter of 1971. Several outings were held each season—an open house at the sugar shack, a trip to the clubhouse at the Cascade Junction, a beans and franks dinner and a poker run.

For the poker run, each member registered a machine and was given a map with seven points. Each rider picked up an envelope with playing cards inside at 5 or 7 of the points. The envelopes were brought back, and the best "poker hand" won.

A treasure hunt each season had riders looking for gifts hidden on the trail. Proceeds went to Bay Cliff Health Camp.

An informal group of snowmobilers also met at the cottage of Tapio Neste at Big Shag Lake, and each woman brought a pot of stew made at home. Each stew was put into a common pot to create a "community stew."

—Virginia Paulson

Tragedy strikes at the Maas Mine

You were going down, but you never knew if you were coming back up.

May 5, 1935 was a beautiful day at the Maas Mine when Blackie was working in the crusher and he witnessed two of his co-workers get buried alive.

"I witnessed the tragedy, and it's hard to forget," he said.

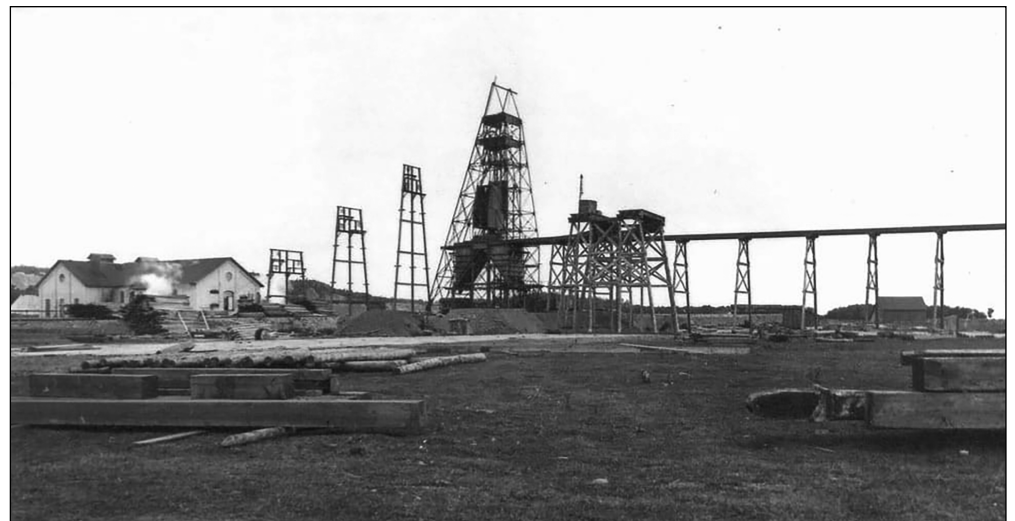
Two men, John Levaniemi and his partner Leo Field, were at work preparing for loading at the trestle, drilling holes to blast the stockpile which was frozen. What they didn't know was that with the warm weather, the top of the pile was not frozen and when it let go it pulled the two miners into the stockpile and burying them.

The mine was shut down and the fellow miners were called up from their jobs underground to begin the long process of digging for the trapped miners. The tragedy happened at 1:15 p.m. on a Friday afternoon and the bodies were not recovered until Sunday.

Leo Field, the youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Field of Ann Street, was born in Negaunee. John Levaniemi, age 50, was a native of Finland, who had resided in Negaunee for 25 years. His home was on Prince Street. He was survived by a widow and one child.

The Maas Mine was located at the end of Prince Street.

—Virginia Paulson



Negaunee Historical Society
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Family gas stations provided excellent customer service

In the early years, the Negaunee businesses were family oriented. Some had worked in the mines at one time, and thought this kind of work was not for them and pursued a business to their liking that would serve the community.

Some of those who chose to operate service stations were Walt Neely, Adolph Violetta, Ted Smedman, Ernie LaCosse, Percy Datson, Harold Kauppila, Terry Talo, Paul Poutanen, Gordon Vincent, Clark Gravedoni, Sr., and Barney Wainio.

Adolph's Sinclair gas station, run by Adolph Violetta, was located at 387 Silver Street. The station became known as Terry's Arco when taken over by Terry

Talo in the 1970s.

It was a time when you could drive into these service stations and really get service. When you drove up next to the pump, someone was right there to fill your tank for you.

Your windows got washed, the radiator and oil were checked and tires checked upon request. These services were done for you while you sat in the car.

Before you drove off you heard, "Thank you, come again"—a word of appreciation for your patronage. Or maybe it was a day for some of the men to just go inside and get the town gossip.

—Virginia Paulson



Museum Information

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By appointment only

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Layout & editing donated by
Kristy Basolo-Malmsten,
Plan B Publishing

Thanks to Koskey Funeral Home for covering the cost of this newsletter!