



The Negaunee Historical Society

Quarterly Newsletter

July 2020

Issue #52

From the president...

It's graduation time again, and we are pleased to announce the recipient of the 2020 Frank Matthew's Scholarship is Rylie Nummela. The applications revealed that the 2020 graduating class has outstanding individuals who display initiative and leadership. They volunteered hundreds of hours in our community serving those in need. We are fortunate to have good leaders producing good leaders. Congratulations to all graduating seniors, teaching staff and administration. Congratulations Rylie!



Under normal conditions, the Historical Society Museum would be open for the 2020 season. This year we are under orders to remain closed to the public. Strange times indeed! Our hope is that you remain in good health and, perhaps we will be open for business soon.

Our organization is run by volunteers, and we can use your assistance. If you are willing to help staff the museum during normal business hours, please call 475-4614 and leave a message. Even if it's a couple hours per week, it will be a huge help! Normal activity includes greeting visitors, escorting them through the museum or assisting with some research they are interested in. We have an increasing amount of Negaunee and Mining Historical objects on display, volumes of pictures, and memorabilia, access to the Negaunee Cemetery database compiled by Roland Koski, tools, automotive and household displays. I encourage you to become involved; volunteers are the lifeblood of this organization.

Board officers were re-elected for another term. Thanks to all for your service.

Enjoy this summer! There will be additional challenges ahead; together we'll get through. Looking forward to seeing you at the Museum.

—Art Gischia, society president

Negaunee's own opera house

Negaunee once boasted of its MacDonald House—a large building erected in about 1883 of yellowish brick with a wrought iron balcony in front.

The building was on the corner of Jackson Street and Pioneer Avenue, with the front facing Jackson Street. The first floor was designed for business purposes. One of the businesses was a tobacco store where pipes and cigars could be purchased.

The upstairs had a huge stage and large auditorium. The wide entrance to the auditorium was on Pioneer Avenue. Negaunee's first flicker moving picture "The Wonderland" was opened upstairs. It was operated by Clarence Holmburg, who read the script to the movie. Live geese were given out as door prizes. A play, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," was presented annually on the stage by professional traveling groups. It never lost appeal.

For many years, "MacDonald's Scot," stood on the wrought iron balcony of the opera house. This life-sized wooden statue had a colorful history. It was carved out of one white pine log by Angus MacDonald from Canada. He was a carpenter, and a brother of Donald MacDonald, the

owner of the opera house. Times were bad in Canada, so Angus crated his half-finished statue to Negaunee via the Soo. When the crate arrived at the Negaunee station, it was delivered by dray to the MacDonald residence. It was said that some pious folk lifted their hats in respect.

Angus finished his wooden Scot in Negaunee. The pedestal of the statue advertises pipes, cigars and tobacco. It represents a kilted Scotsman, instead of the traditional cigar store Indian. The wooden Scotsman also stood on the porches of the third Donald MacDonald, who resided on Case Street and also Owaissa. Donald MacDonald III was a principal at the Central Grade School and his wife Helen taught in the Palmer School.

The statue became weathered and was about to be done away with when Helen called the Negaunee Historical Society to see if they wanted it. With a grant from the Detroit Institute of Art, it was refurbished at a cost of \$5,000. Now called "Angus," the statue is at home in the Negaunee Historical Museum.

—Virginia Paulson



Cornish bring work ethic, pasties to local community

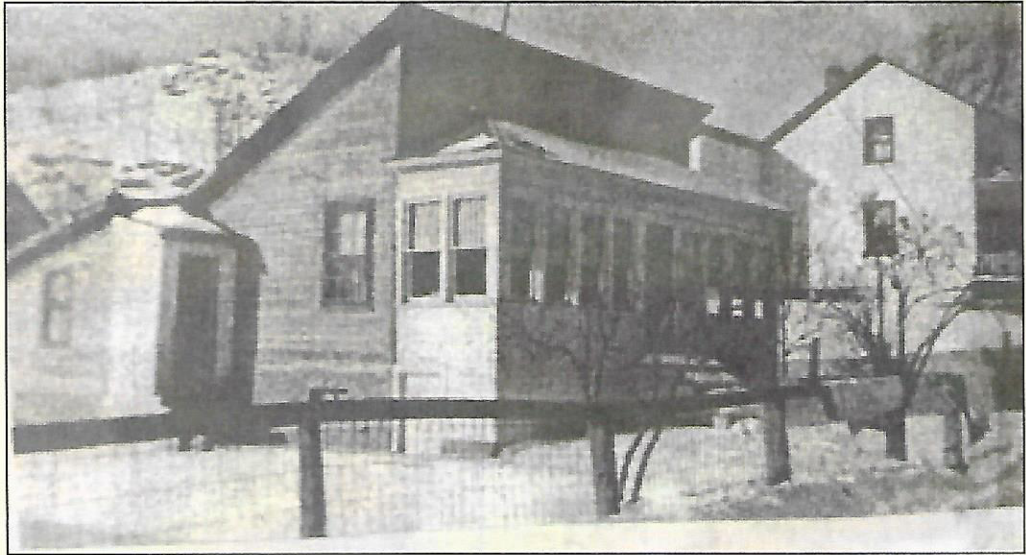
The best of the early miners came from Cornwall, England to Negaunee. They came here because they were natural miners and had experience in the tin and copper mines of Cornwall.

When the bottom fell out of copper market in England, thousands of families faced disaster and had no alternatives but starvation or migration. They had a roving nature and could endure great hardship, and loved to delve into the "bowels of the earth," with a sixth sense to follow the veins of ore. It was fate that at just about that time, iron discoveries occurred in the Upper Peninsula and the mines desperately needed skilled miners.

The Cornish became people of tough endurance and had the ability to withstand hardship, hunger and poverty. They had the will to overcome adversity, and fit in well in primitive Negaunee.

The Cornishmen were known as "Cousin Jacks" and the ladies as "Cousin Jennys." They made a great contribution to the local flavor by bringing us the "pasty"—a meat stew, baked in a crust made of suet. It was a complete meal for the miner, who warmed his pasty on a "miner's stove," which was a common shovel held over two candles.

During the heyday of the Cornish miner, the area around the Jackson Mine was called "Cornishtown." This neighborhood, in what is now referred to as



Old Town, was mainly made up of houses on Michigan Street that runs from County Road (M-28) toward the Jackson Mine Pit, and circles a small band of trees that are the original site of the monument depicting the discovery of iron ore. The monument is now located in Miners Park along US-41.

Cornishtown was abandoned in the 1960s when some houses were moved and others torn down due to ground stability concerns from mining.

Pearl Brailey, who was known for her pasties, lived most of her life in Cornishtown within site of Michigan's first iron mine, the Jackson.

Robert (Nob) Rogers, was born and raised in the first house that was built in Cornishtown, shown above. His parents bought the house in 1931 for \$600. The house was more than 100 years old when it was torn down in 1973.

Another name significant to the area was Russell Rogers, Negaunee's first motorcycle cop, and maybe the only one. Other family names include Borlace, Collins, Elvetici, Farrar, Hampton, Maki, Melka, Mitchell, Paulson, Polkinghorne, Reichel, Rice, Sandberg, Smith, Stanaway, Trembath, Trewhella, Walimaa, Warren and Wickland.

—Virginia Paulson

IN THE MUSEUM

Local historic home, church display completed

Over the winter, the museum staff completed a new display highlighting historic home tour stops and churches.

The photo gallery is in memory of Suzanne Method Morris, the coordinator of many home tours over the years.



"This is something Suzanne was passionate about and it was a nice way to pay tribute to her work by finishing it," said Virginia Paulson, historical

society board member.

One highlight of the display is the story of the home in which the museum is located on the corner of Main Street and Brown Avenue.

The house—which includes a double residence and barn on two lots—was built at the bequest of Mrs. Maria Barabe in 1896, after the death of her husband. It was occupied by Isaac Rosen and Ernest Klein families while she owned it.

Mr. Tom Pellow (Sr.), grandfather of Tom & Dick Pellow of Pellow Printing, bought the home in 1905. The family moved out of the area before they ever

lived there, and Mrs. Mary Pellow sold the house to Cleveland Cliffs in 1927 with the stipulation that the home be donated to the American Legion to be used as a meeting place.

The Negaunee Historical Society acquired the property in 1990.

Also in the newly completed display are pages of information about the churches still standing in the area, as well as those which no longer exist.

—Kristy Basolo-Malmsten

Editor's Note: For more information, visit the Negaunee Historical Museum, where the display is located.

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Negaunee Historical Society Donation Form

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

___ \$10 Yearly Membership ___ \$100 Lifetime Membership
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Please include your email address if you would like the newsletter via email:

Thank You!

Male Chorus turns 90; concert postponed but history lives on

The Negaunee Male Chorus would've celebrated their 90th anniversary with their spring concert of 2020.

Plans were to invite former members and accompanists to this event, but due to the coronavirus pandemic, it was postponed until next year.

In the fall of 1930, Joe Phillips (who sang with the chorus for 60 years) Eino Hutander and Augie Marso gathered a group of 16 men together to sing, and the Male Chorus was born. Raymond Lamieux, a music teacher at Negaunee High School was "hired" to direct the group, although unpaid at that time.

A collection was taken at each rehearsal to pay Genevieve Sedlock, the groups first accompanist, which amounted to about 75 cents. The pay wasn't bad; the Great Depression was well underway, and hamburger cost 25 cents for three pounds.β

The first concert was in the high school auditorium in June 1931. To this day, concerts are still held in the school auditorium and rehearsals are in the school music room.

The chorus became official in 1934 when it adopted a constitution and bylaws, and elected officers. The first president was William Belstrom. In 1938, a music concert was held in Escanaba, and the chorus won second place. Not to be outdone, they entered the



following year and won first place.

In 1940, the chorus joined the Associated Male Chorus's of America, becoming a member of the Wisconsin District, later to be the Wisconsin Upper Michigan District.

That same year they recorded a record. "Lead Kindly Light," written by James Belland of Marquette. A 12-inch record sold for 75 cents and a 10-inch sold for 60 cents.

Each year the district hosts a "Big Sing" in which all choruses of the district participate, with one group being the host. The 1940 Big Sing was held in Appleton and the men took the Chicago Northwestern train at a cost of \$4.95 per person round trip. It was said, "a good time was had by all."

The wives formed an auxiliary in 1950 and served lunch once a month. As time went on, the auxiliary also served as ushers and sold tickets at the door. They held

various sales to help raise money to support and assist the chorus.

The chorus has sung in Grand Rapids, St Paul, Buffalo, NY and venues ranging from the Pabst Theater in Milwaukee to St. Peter's Cathedral in Marquette. In 1939, they sang in the Marquette Branch Prison. Contrary to rumors, they came out with the same number of men as they went in with—none were detained.

The chorus formed a group called, Strictly Gospel, a group that has gained a well earned reputation. It has been in existence for more than 50 years.

The chorus was created by men who loved music and enjoyed singing and have become a source of pride for the City of the Negaunee and the county.

The song styles have changed, but the purpose of the chorus has not. The Negaunee Male Chorus will continue as long as men love to sing.

—Virginia Paulson

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For the Record: COVID-19 & Negaunee

There have been many changes and cancellations to “life as normal” in Negaunee during the pandemic.

At the museum, there may be some limited hours in July; admission continues by appointment and many research requests can be handled over the phone. Call and leave a message for details. Right now, the society asks that no unaccompanied youth enter the museum.

All city buildings and parks were closed for the duration of the pandemic, with parks opening at the beginning of June. Lakeview Apartments was also closed to visitors and their common areas were closed.

Negaunee High School’s Class of 2020 held their graduation ceremony on the football field, with proper social distancing measures in place and limited attendance for family members in the grandstand. Others watched from the train tracks and around the park. A parade followed.

Pioneer Days festivities were cancelled for the first time in its history. Other festivals in the area were cancelled

or postponed until next year, including Marquette’s Fourth of July festivities, the Pine Mountain Music Festival, the Ski Hall of Fame in Ishpeming induction ceremony, Hiawatha Music Festival in Marquette and many more.

In an effort to help those in need during this time, local businesses stepped up. Jackson’s Pit in Downtown Negaunee gave away more than 5,000 meals to school kids who were fed at no cost, with no questions asked.

Outside of Smarty’s Saloon, a table was set up every day weather permitted with non-perishable food free for the taking. Teal Lake Pizzeria offered inexpensive grab bags that they even offered to deliver, which included essential items—milk, bread, fruit, juice, toilet paper and more. Many people paid it forward and bought grab bags for someone in need.

The United Way, Marquette Community Foundation and local health foundations all offered grants for COVID-related expenses to local non-profit and social work organizations.

—*Kristy Basolo-Malmsten*



Museum Information

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Fall & Winter hours:
By appointment only

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