The MittenN

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In 1841 state geologist Douglass Houghton visited the Upper Peninsula. He reported that copper existed on the Keweenaw Peninsula. However, he warned that the red metal would be hard to mine.

Native Americans had used copper from the area for thousands of years, but no one had tried to mine the copper **commercially**. That soon changed. A few years after Houghton's report had been published, hundreds of people journeyed to the Keweenaw to "strike it rich" in America's first mineral boom.

Most of these early pioneers knew little about mining. They used hammers, chisels and gunpowder to loosen the rock. Since most of the copper was underground, it had to be hauled to the surface in a bucket. The rock was then crushed to separate the copper from the waste rock. The copper was shipped to Detroit and other factory towns.

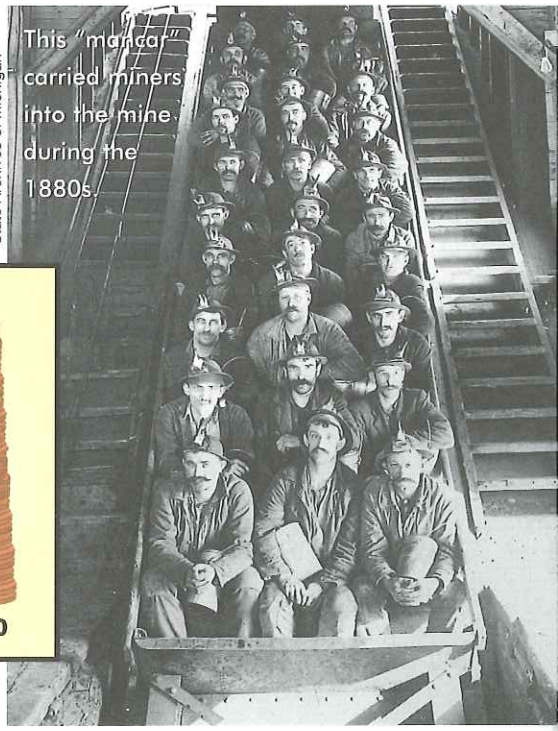
Life on the Keweenaw was challenging. The **isolation**, black flies and long winters made living in this part of Michigan difficult. This helps explain why most early mines failed to make money. One exception was the Cliff mine. Founded by investors from Boston and Pittsburgh, the Cliff was the first successful copper mine in the Western Hemisphere.

After the Civil War, copper mining on the Keweenaw expanded. For forty years (1847-1887), Michigan produced more copper than any state in the nation. One of the nation's biggest copper **enterprises** was the Calumet and Hecla (C & H) Mining Company. During the 1870s, C & H produced half the nation's copper.

Many immigrants from Europe, especially Finland and England, came to work in the mines. By 1900, the Keweenaw was one of the most populated areas of the state. Houghton County, which was at the center of the Copper Country, had the fourth highest population in the state.

By 1900, miners were working more than one mile beneath the surface of the earth to find copper. This was costly. C & H tried to cut costs but this led to a strike by the miners. The 1913-14 strike lasted ten months. Although the miners won some of their demands, they began leaving the Keweenaw. Many moved downstate to work in Detroit's new automobile plants where the pay was better.

After the strike, copper production increased for a few years. Then it slowly declined. In 1997 Michigan's last copper mine closed.



This "manca" carried miners into the mine during the 1880s.

State Archives of Michigan

BIG ANNIE CLEMENC

She was called "Big Annie" because she stood 6 feet, 2 inches tall. But it was more than height that made Annie Clemenc one of the most famous people to live in the Copper Country.

Born in Calumet, Annie Clemenc (pronounced Clement) was twenty-five years old when the Copper Country was rocked by a strike in 1913. The main disagreement between workers and management was the decision to switch from using a two-man drill to a one-man drill. As one miner recalled, with the two-man drill, "one guy was always watching out for the other. The one-man drill scared the miners." They called it the **widow** maker. The miners were also upset with their working conditions.

Shortly after the strike began in the summer of 1913, strikers gathered to march down Calumet's main street. A "tall, straight-backed woman" stepped forward. It was Annie. In her arms was a ten-foot-tall flagstaff from which flew a large American flag. Every morning from that day on, Annie led hundreds of strikers as they marched to the mines. When a reporter asked Annie about the weight of the flag she said, "I get used to it. . . . I love to carry it."

Sometimes, fights broke out between strikers and non-strikers. Annie was in these fights. On several occasions she was arrested and thrown in jail. When asked why she wouldn't stay home, Annie answered, "My work is here. . . . I'm going to keep at it until this strike is won."

State Archives of Michigan

Big Annie Clemenc around 1913

As Christmas neared, the Woman's Auxiliary, a group that was led by Annie and supported the striking workers, planned a holiday party for the strikers' children. On December 24, 1913, about 700 people, mostly children, gathered on the second floor of Calumet's Italian Hall. As the children stood in line to get their gifts of homemade bags of candy, scarves and mittens, someone yelled, "fire!"

Although there was no fire, people rushed to leave the building. They pushed and many stumbled down the stairwell. Annie tried to slow them down, but she failed. When rescuers arrived they found a tangle of crushed bodies in the stairwell. Seventy-four people were dead, all but 11 were children. Most had died of **suffocation**.

Whoever yelled "fire!" was never identified. Striking workers believed it was someone who was against the strike. Others believed no one yelled "fire!" Regardless, the Italian Hall tragedy weakened the strike. In April 1914 the strike ended. Workers won a shorter workday and a small raise, but the company refused to remove the one-man drill. As for Annie, she left Calumet and moved to Chicago.

Today, the stone archway from the Italian Hall doorway stands in Calumet as a memorial of one of Michigan's greatest tragedies.

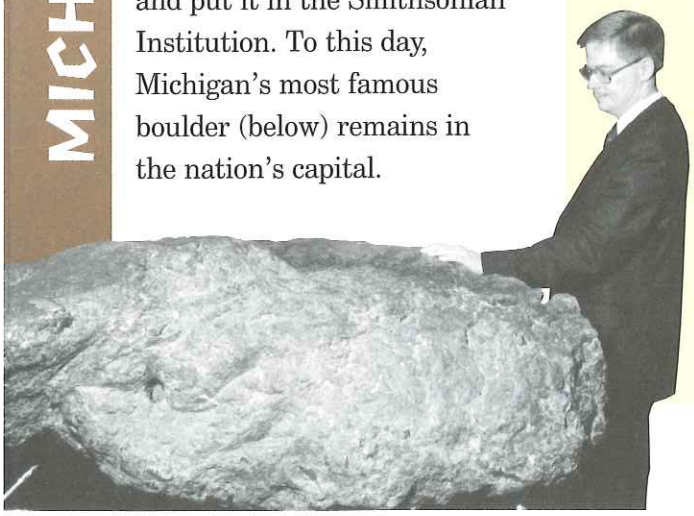
MICHIGAN'S MOST FAMOUS BOULDER

To Native Americans it was a boulder with a special spirit. To people who knew something about minerals, it was copper worth many dollars.

The Ontonagon Boulder weighed almost 4,000 pounds and helped start the copper boom in the western Upper Peninsula in the 1840s.

Native Americans told British explorers about the huge boulder of pure copper in the early 1770s. Located near the Ontonagon River, the boulder was too big to be moved by hand. In 1843, Julius Eldred, a Detroit businessman, used a small railroad car with wooden tracks to get the unique mass of copper to the river. There, it was floated on a barge to Lake Superior and then placed on a larger boat.

At Detroit, Eldred charged people a quarter to see the boulder. But the U.S. government said the boulder did not belong to Eldred. They moved it to Washington, DC, and put it in the Smithsonian Institution. To this day, Michigan's most famous boulder (below) remains in the nation's capital.



Where to Take Your Family

Touring the Copper Country

Many places on the Keweenaw Peninsula still look a lot like they did during the copper boom. Here are a few of the best places to visit.

Calumet was once the booming hub of the Copper Country. Today, the Keweenaw **National Historic Park** headquarters are housed there in the old Calumet & Hecla (C & H) Mining Company office building. The park partners with cooperating sites to preserve and promote the area's history. For information, telephone the Keweenaw Tourism Council, (800) 338-7982.

The 1898 **Calumet Theatre** in Calumet was the only theatre between New York and Chicago that had dressing rooms with electric lights and hot and cold running water. Visitors can tour the restored theatre or see a play there. For information, telephone (906) 337-2166 or visit on-line at: *www.portup.com/~calthea.*

Continuing north, stop at **Eagle River** to see the Douglass Houghton memorial. On October 13, 1845, the state geologist was touring the area in a small boat just west of Eagle River. A sudden storm capsized the boat and Houghton drowned.

At the tip of the Keweenaw in Copper Harbor, **Fort Wilkins** was once an active U.S. Army post built to keep peace in the Copper Country. Today, nineteen restored buildings and costumed interpreters bring history to life. For information, telephone (906) 289-4215 or visit on-line at: *www.sos.state.mi.us/history/museum/musewil.*

Head back down U.S. 41 to the **Delaware Copper Mine** where tours go to 110 feet below the surface. For information, telephone (906) 289-4688 or visit on-line at *www.copperharbor.org/Business/ads/delawaremine/home.html.*

Back in Houghton, the **A. E. Seaman Mineral Museum** on the campus of Michigan Technological University has a large collection of minerals on display. For information, telephone (906) 487-2572 or visit on-line at: *www.geo.mtu.edu/museum.*

What Did You Learn?

BONUS:

How many millions of pounds of copper were mined in 1885?

a. 12
b. 72
c. 200

Vocabulary WORDS

commercial: to operate a business that makes money

isolation: alone or without people

enterprise: a project that can be complicated or risky

widow: a woman whose husband has died

suffocation: to die by being unable to breathe

1. ***Who was responsible for beginning the Keweenaw copper boom in the 1840s?***

a. Annie Clemenc
b. Douglass Houghton
c. William Calumet

2. ***The center of the Copper Country is what county?***

a. Marquette
b. Cliff
c. Houghton

3. ***What was one of the main causes of the 1913 strike?***

a. The mines were too dark
b. The fear of the one-man drill
c. Women weren't allowed to work in the mines

U C P Z U G K G P A R K C Y H Y W H E X
G A D K M K T Y A R E P W K O Y J E A V
M S E L G Y X Y T P N T G R I H Y K C J
K E W E E N A W O X I D R N S G N A L X
R O N T A G H M N N M F T M T R L H I I
C T J D W L Q Y B C O P P E R U K P O H
S Q W Q I Y Z L A N N I E Q M B X D O K
F Z G L R F X W L O B G I E L G Q U L I
O J O K V U B R G W Z W T N U K Y A X X
J N D G T M J N O T H G U O H M N Z Y I

Find the following MINING words

COPPER
MINER
HOUGHTON
HOIST
CALUMET
ANNIE
KEWEENAW