

## First Impression of Keweenaw National Historical Park

Posted At : July 18, 2012 9:56 AM | Posted By : Kevin Ruth

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When I first found out that I was going to work for the National Park Service, my mind was instantly filled with thoughts of zany adventures with a lovable gang of talking bears. After realizing that this assumption was mainly based on my exposure to Yogi Bear as a kid, I decided it was probably best to revisit my expectations. I then imagined that I would be in the middle of a giant forest where I would live in a cabin on a cliff with a perpetual sunset out on the horizon, but then I realized that this too was a little farfetched and had almost nothing to do with fire protection engineering (the reason I had gotten my internship).

Finally, I formed a more realistic expectation for what I was to expect. I had figured I would be in a forest somewhere designing and inspecting fire protection systems in secluded lodges, forts and other similar structures. Though I am sure that this expectation may be similar to someone's duties in the NPS, I was to soon find out that it was not exactly what I would be doing. I had braced myself in the weeks before my departure for a land of seclusion where there would scarcely be cell phone service let alone internet connection, but what I found surprised me.

When I arrived at Keweenaw National Historical Park I found that there was indeed excellent cell phone service and that instead of a thick forest, the park was surrounded by a quaint village. I was also, by no means, going to be some form of secluded mountain man as I had imagined in my various day dreams of my summer internships. Instead I found myself with my own office and working with a group of amazing and amiable people. I also found that I was not, in fact, going to be protecting forts or lodges, but instead I was going to be assessing the existing fire safety systems in several of the park's existing buildings as well as reviewing the Emergency Action Plan of the park and lend a hand in further developing the subsection of the plan that deals with fire. So overall it is not what I expected, but it has been fun so far regardless.

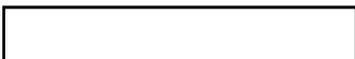




The community that surrounds the park is called Calumet and during its heyday was a huge mining town that rivaled many of the surrounding communities in the Upper Peninsula complete with a theatre and several large department stores. Yet since the closing of the mines, the population of the community had drastically fallen from around 30,000 to under 3,000. Because of this drastic population drop there are too few people to occupy all of the buildings in the community which has left many houses and stores vacant. Yet, though these stores and houses aren't filled with people, they are teeming with the history of the people that once lived in Calumet. This history is so saturated in every locally quarried sandstone foundation that the excess history flows through the streets.



At least, this is the only way I can explain how the locals all know so much about the history of their town. Every resident of the area adjacent to the park seems to be an expert in some facet of the areas vast history. I have had the pleasure of meeting people that have told me about a large variety of topics ranging from the politics of mining to the existence of a speakeasy beneath a local bar. Yet, no matter what their expertise of local history is, the one universal constant that I have found in all of the residents of Calumet I have met is that they are all genuinely nice people. If I were to get a dollar for every time I met someone in Calumet that didn't greet me with a warm



smile I'd be pretty mad because I would not be receiving any dollars at all.

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Besides the history and beauty of the small town itself, the park is also surrounded by wonderful places to see. Within 10 minutes I can drive from my apartment building to the shores of Lake Superior where I can take pictures and go rock hunting to my heart's content. On the other hand, by driving 25 minutes in the other direction I can find myself in the city of Houghton. Since Houghton is next to Michigan Tech University, the city has everything a college student could need including a music shop where I have decided to take weekly guitar lessons with a really engaging instructor. One thing I was very surprised to find was that although Houghton has two pretty nice coffee shops, the best ones that I have found in the Upper Peninsula so far are right in Downtown Calumet. To date, I have spent countless hours sitting outside of these shops drinking a coffee or sipping an espresso while reading a book and cannot think of a more enjoyable way to spend my free time. Though, when I do want to do things other than reading and drinking coffee I have found that I have many activities to fill my time with such as mountain biking, camping or just hanging out with the amazing group of friends that I have made so far.

So if there is any merit in the notion that the first impression is the most important than I would have to say that Calumet and Keweenaw National Historical Park have made an amazing impression on me and I look forward to the rest of my time here.