



Museum Insider

Calumet & Hecla Inc. Records Processed

World renowned for its purity, Keweenaw copper was in a class by itself. So too was Calumet & Hecla Inc. (C&H), a company who mined that copper for over one hundred years. Although there were over four hundred mining companies formed to mine Keweenaw copper, only a handful were truly successful. Of those, the Quincy Mining Company and the Copper Range Mining Company, along with C&H, were considered the three big companies of the Copper Country. But C&H surpassed them all, by any standard. It had richer ore, more property, a larger workforce, a bigger surface plant, and made more money than any other company in the Lake Superior copper district.



HAI processing archivist Stefanie Caloia is shown here with some of the recently processed Calumet & Hecla Inc. records at the Keweenaw NHP archives facility in Calumet.

C&H also produced more records than any other company in the Copper Country. Most of the records that survive are held at the Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections in Houghton. Michigan Tech holds 697 linear feet of C&H records. Most of these records were donated to them by C&H successor Universal Oil Products (UOP), and the Coppertown USA Mining Museum in Calumet. UOP regarded many other records as sensitive or worthless, and destroyed them. However, some records remained in former C&H buildings which were later purchased by Keweenaw NHP. Other records were given to C&H employees and others who purchased furniture and equipment from the C&H buildings. Still other records were rescued from the trash by those who appreciated their historic value. Many of these records have since been donated to Keweenaw NHP.

The material from these various sources totals about 153 additional linear feet of C&H records held by Keweenaw NHP. Other collections held by Keweenaw NHP, such as the William John “Jack” Foster collection, also contain records that originated with C&H.

The C&H records had been cleaned and housed in archival folders and boxes, but as of 2011, hadn’t yet been fully processed; that is, arranged and described so that they could be made available to researchers. These records made up a substantial portion of Keweenaw NHP’s archival processing backlog. Starting in 2011, the National Park Service funded a nationwide archives backlog project contracted through the Washington office. After a competitive bidding process, this contract was awarded to History Associates, Inc. (HAI) of Rockville, Maryland. HAI archivists Annelise Doll, of Hancock, and

Stefanie Caloia, of Royal Oak, Michigan, started processing the C&H records in August of 2012. They finished the project in June of 2013. As part of the project, a finding aid was produced for the collection, enabling researchers to understand the content and context of the C&H records.

“The Michigan Tech Archives is the best place to start doing research in the C&H records,” said park Archivist Jeremiah Mason. “But having our material processed will be very helpful to researchers as well,” he said. “We expect there are still more C&H records out there,” Mason continued. “I hope folks will consider donating them to one of the professional repositories in the area, too.”

For more information, please contact park Archivist Jeremiah Mason at (906)483-3032.

Donating to Keweenaw NHP

Keweenaw National Historical Park was established in 1992 to preserve and interpret the nationally significant resources related to copper mining in the Keweenaw Peninsula, historic and prehistoric.

Some of these resources are too big to miss – including shaftrockhouses, commercial blocks, poorrock piles, and parks – but Keweenaw NHP also preserves smaller-scale resources such as miners' lunch pails, fraternal regalia, personal letters, and family photographs.

The park's primary purpose in collecting these items and others like them is to preserve them for posterity. The objects and archives are also available for research use, and contribute to educational exhibits, such as the *Risk and Resilience* exhibit at the Calumet Visitor Center. However, these secondary uses are always carefully managed so that the primary goal of preserving the museum objects and archives is not compromised.

Many items in the collections were donated by current and former Copper Country families who wished to see their own family history preserved, and wanted to contribute to the broader understanding of the history of the Copper Country overall. The NPS is very grateful to donors for their foresighted generosity.

Donating material to a professionally managed museum or archival repository will ensure that the donated items will be properly cared for in years to come. Professional repositories in the Copper Country include Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections, found online at <http://www.mtu.edu/library/archives/>, Finlandia University Finnish American Heritage Center Archives and Museum, found online at <http://finlandia.edu/FAHAM>, and Keweenaw National Historical Park, found online at <http://www.nps.gov/kewe>. Each institution has a different mission, and a different policy for selecting material they will collect. Please contact them directly if you have any questions.

If you are interested in donating material to Keweenaw NHP, please contact Chief of Museum and Archival Services and Museum Curator Brian Hoduski at (906) 483-3026 or brian_hoduski@nps.gov, or Archivist Jeremiah Mason at (906) 483-3032 or jeremiah_mason@nps.gov.

Italian Hall Prints Acquired

The strike of 1913-1914 is arguably the most significant period of time in the history of the Copper Country, and the Italian Hall disaster the defining event of the strike period. The disaster occurred on Christmas Eve, 1913, at the Italian Benevolent Society Hall in Calumet, when a false or perceived cry of fire caused a panic at a party for the children of striking mining company employees and their families. At least 73 people died in a crush on the stairs as they tried to exit the building, most of them children.

As time passes, our connections to the disaster fade and are lost. All of the people who survived have since died. The Italian Hall itself was demolished

in 1984. Few artifacts from the building remain. However, in this centennial year, Keweenaw NHP acquired the prints which hung on either side of the stage in the hall at the time of the disaster, with the assistance of the Keweenaw NHP Advisory Commission and the Isle Royale and Keweenaw Parks Association.

While we will never know for sure exactly what transpired at the party that tragic Christmas Eve, these silent witnesses of the disaster will be preserved in the Keweenaw NHP museum collection and provide a tangible connection to the disaster for generations to come.



NPS, KNHP, C&H, Strike Album, #244, Italian Hall by Nara, Dec. 25, 1913



Hand-colored prints depicting the founders of the modern Italian state and the Italian royal family are shown at the Keweenaw NHP museum facility in Calumet, and hanging on either side of the stage at the Italian Hall the day after the disaster.

1913-14 Strike Commemorated

In the centennial anniversary year of the 1913-1914 strike, many commemorative works have utilized material from the museum collections at Keweenaw National Historical Park. Although the sequester cuts to the federal budget greatly curtailed Keweenaw NHP's plans for their own temporary exhibit on the strike, a scaled-down exhibit was installed at the Calumet Visitor Center for the duration of the strike centennial months. *Uncommon Ground* featured large prints of lesser-known photos of the strike and objects illustrating various aspects of the strike. Included in the exhibit were the only Western Federation of Miners (WFM) membership ledger known to still exist for a Copper Country local, a Waddell- Mahon souvenir medallion produced to commemorate their involvement in the strike, a ledger of over 5,000 C&H employee signatures documenting their gift of an expensive watch to general manager James MacNaughton, in "gratitude" for ridding the Copper Country of the "scourge" of the



NPS, KNHP, C&H, Strike Album, #134 [National guardsmen on duty at] Kearsarge, 1913, as used in *Uncommon Ground*.

WFM. Also included in the exhibit was a WFM parade ribbon that belonged to John Laitila, who died after being shot by replacement workers in an altercation near Dodgeville. His ribbon was presented to his widow at his funeral, and the family kindly agreed to loan it to Keweenaw NHP for the exhibit. Although the exhibit was neither comprehensive nor in-depth, it is hoped that visitors found it compelling and thought-provoking, and that it inspired them to learn more about the strike from other sources.

Other recent strike-related projects that utilized material from Keweenaw NHP museum collections included the Saybrook Productions documentary *Red Metal: The Copper Country Strike of 1913*, which aired nationally on PBS in December of 2013, the book *Community in Conflict: A Working-Class History of the 1913-14 Michigan Copper Strike and the Italian Hall Tragedy* by Gary Kaunonen and Aaron Goings, the book *Annie Clemenc and the Great Keweenaw Copper Strike* by Lyndon Comstock, the exhibit *Annie's Legacy* by Joanne Thomas at Coppertown USA Mining Museum, and an exhibit on the history of the buildings and businesses in downtown Calumet, called *Red Jacket 1913: Windows into the Past*. The *Red Jacket 1913* exhibit was developed by Keweenaw NHP in collaboration with Main Street Calumet, business owners, and about 90 Calumet High School students. About 36 businesses displayed posters that included historic photos, general history, and information about what was happening at each location during the strike in 1913.



National Park Service
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Keweenaw National Historical Park's museum and archival collections are open for research by appointment. Please contact the park archivist to make an appointment:

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The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Comments? Suggestions?

If you have comments on this newsletter or suggestions for future issues, or if you wish to be removed from our mailing list, please contact Jeremiah Mason at the address above.

Doing Research at Keweenaw NHP

Archival collections at Keweenaw National Historical Park include Calumet and Hecla Mining Company and Quincy Mining Company records, other business records, records from fraternal organizations and churches, personal and family papers, and photographs. For a guide to our collections, researcher forms, and additional information, please visit the Keweenaw NHP website at <http://www.nps.gov/kewe>. Click on History and Culture, and then on Collections.

If you are interested in doing research using the collections at Keweenaw NHP, please contact the park archivist to make an appointment. Contact information is located in the sidebar at the left.

The Keweenaw NHP Archives are located in the Keweenaw History Center, in the former Calumet and Hecla Mining Company Public Library building at the southeast corner of Red Jacket Road and Mine Street in Calumet. Plans for the rehabilitation of the historic C&H Public Library building include changes to allow for universal accessibility. In the meantime, please notify park staff if you are not able to navigate stairs, and they will arrange accommodations for you in another building.

If you are interested in doing family history research in the Keweenaw, the best place to start is Michigan Technological University Archives. Michigan Tech holds the majority of the records available from the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company and the Quincy Mining Company, including employment records. They also have the most complete run of Houghton County directories available in one location, in addition to many other collections. The Michigan Tech Archives are open Monday through Friday from 10AM to 5PM, and are located in the lower level of the J. R. Van Pelt and Opie Library on the Michigan Tech campus in Houghton. Walk-ins are welcome. Please visit the Michigan Tech Archives website at <http://www.mtu.edu/library/archives/> for more information.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Keweenaw National Historical Park
25970 Red Jacket Road
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From the Collections of the National Park Service:



The Calumet and Hecla Mining Company was very good at documenting its operations. They also took care to record related events, including the 1913-1914 strike.

Reproduced at left is an image from a C&H glass plate negative that documents a hand-drawn cartoon montage from the strike period. At first glance, the cartoonist appears to be evenhanded, doling out equal amounts of derision to strike supporters, managers, National Guard troops, townsfolk, and the law. However, the cartoonist's use of broken English is suggestive: did he, like many at the time, believe that strike supporters were foreign, with un-American values? Or was it his express intention to promote that belief to the people who viewed this illustration?

The questions raised by this unusual montage illustrate the difficulty of understanding the strike one hundred years later, from within the very different context of our own time.

Visit Keweenaw NHP to see this and other primary source documents, and come to your own conclusions about the history of the strike.

Keweenaw NHP, Foster, Photographs, GP#143, Strike Cartoon, 1913