

# Front-End Evaluation Report for the Union Building Interpretive Facility Keweenaw National Historical Park



Marcella Wells, Ph.D.  
Wells Resources, Inc  
[marcellawells@comcast.net](mailto:marcellawells@comcast.net)

December 30, 2008

# Contents

<b>Section 1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1 Project Introduction	
1.2 Purpose of the Evaluation	
<b>Section 2. Methods and Procedure .....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 Approach	
2.2 Recruitment	
2.3 Group Discussion Process and Logistics	
2.4 Inquiry Sets and Question Bank	
<b>Section 3. Findings and Implications .....</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1 Group Discussion Participants (p.6)	
3.2 Participant Introduction and Perspectives (p.7)	
3.3 Visitor Perceptions and Residents' Sense of Place (p.8)	
3.4 Schematic I Plan Alternatives (p.11)	
3.5 Suggested Exhibit Elements (p.13)	
3.6 Terms and Concepts (p.15)	
3.7 Relevancy Then and Now (p.18)	
3.8 Schools and Curriculum (p.19)	
3.9 Messages to the Park (p.20)	
<b>Section 4. Transition to Formative Evaluation .....</b>	<b>23</b>

# Section 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Project Introduction

Between 2008 and 2011, Keweenaw National Historical Park (KNHP) will embark on an exhibition planning and design project for the Union Building in Calumet, Michigan as part of a larger planning effort to interpret the Copper Country of Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula. The overall project purpose statement for the Union Building Interpretive Facility is as follows:

The integrity of the cultural resources (including architecture, landscape, artifacts, relics, oral histories, material culture) of Calumet provide unique access to the history of a hybrid company town shaped by corporate paternalism, immigration, and the business cycle inherent in the extractive industries.

The primary goals of the Union Building exhibition are:

- To orient residents and visitors to the copper mining region, its stories, and the interpretive facilities that work in partnership with the National Historical Park.<sup>1</sup>
- To develop an interactive interpretive exhibition that showcases Calumet as a prominent example of a corporate paternalism during the copper mining era of approximately 1880-1920 (where 1865-1968 represents the full lifespan of Calumet and Hecla, and where 1920-1968 represents the slow decline of that company).

Besides temporarily orienting visitors to the region, the Union Building Interpretive Facility will focus specifically on *Life in a Company Town* since there are a number of other locations and efforts that interpret the copper mining story in terms of mining technology, engineering, geology and so forth.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Evaluation

This document reports the result of a front-end evaluation conducted in the fall of 2008 to explore the ideas and expectations that potential exhibit visitors (both residents and area tourists) might have about:

- orientation and way-finding to and within the Union Building and to/from other partner facilities within Copper Country
- stories related to *Life in a Company Town* that might be told in the Union Building and possible methods for telling those stories
- current levels of understanding about Copper Country and life in a copper mining town
- perceptions about theme-specific terms and concepts relevant to life in Calumet at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- perceptions about the relevance of these ideas to the daily life of residents and visitors to the area

---

<sup>1</sup> Participants were informed at the beginning that this orientation and way finding function may eventually be moved to a different location but will be addressed on the first floor of the Union Building in the meantime.

As a front-end evaluation, the results of this study are intended to inform exhibit design and development from Schematic I forward.<sup>2</sup> As such, this report is organized into the following sections:

- a discussion of the methods and procedure used for the front-end inquiry
- a summary of findings with implications for exhibit development
- findings and implications that reach beyond the Union Building exhibit
- appendices that contain materials used in the front-end evaluation.

---

<sup>2</sup> Schematic I dated October 20, 2008, prepared by Krister Olmon, Inc.

## **Section 2. Methods and Procedure**

### **2.1 Approach**

A qualitative approach was used for this evaluation whereby six community discussions were arranged to share ideas related to the Union Building exhibit. A purposeful sample of respondents was used so that a diversity of interests across groups could be captured and idiosyncratic ideas of participants could be explored as much as possible.

### **2.2 Recruitment**

Participants were recruited from a list provided by the Park (Appendix A) that represented: (a) regional heritage areas, (b) Calumet K-12 public school teachers, (c) MTU and Finlandia University students and teachers, and (d) community leaders. Because diverse participation was the overall intent of recruiting, a snowball technique was employed. This meant that if a person on the list was not able to attend the discussions, he/she was asked to suggest another person who might be interested. In the end, recruitment efforts took a total of 4.5 person-days and a total of 56 people were recruited for six discussion groups.

Once recruited, each participant received an email or letter confirming the purpose, date, time, and location of the meeting. All meetings were scheduled for 90 minute time blocks. Local community meeting locations, specifically the Park Headquarters meeting room and the community room at the Portage Lake District Library in Houghton, were used as meeting locations. Food was provided for each group.

### **2.3 Group Discussion Process and Logistics**

At the beginning of each meeting, participants were greeted by both the evaluator and the evaluation assistant, provided with a name tag, and invited to help him/herself to the food provided. Once all participants had arrived, the evaluator convened the discussion with a brief overview of the project and then asked participants to introduce themselves by indicating which of several perspectives they felt comfortable representing in the discussion. The evaluator then proceeded with questions from the question bank. During the questioning, Schematic I Plan was used as a centerpiece for some of the inquiry. Each discussion group concluded with a thank you and a small token of appreciation for all participants.

### **2.4 Inquiry Sets and Question Bank**

At the outset of the project, a set of questions was developed by the evaluator in collaboration with the Park, the exhibit designer, the content developer, and other team members. These inquiry sets (Appendix B) were based on proposed exhibit and on desired visitor outcomes (Appendix C) drafted after the initial meetings. From the inquiry sets, a final question bank was developed prior to the on-site discussion groups. During the on-site group discussions, the evaluator drew from this bank of questions to guide inquiry within each group.

## Section 3. Findings and Implications

This section contains findings from all group discussions. With the exception of section 3.1, findings are presented in sub-section based on type of questions asked. Participant responses are categorized, and quotes from participants are provided in *italics*. At the end of each sub-section implications for exhibit design and development are presented in blue.

### 3.1 Group Discussion Participants

A total of 45 of 56 recruited participants (80%) attended six group discussions between Thursday, October 23<sup>rd</sup> and Saturday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008. The two tables below summarize participants by discussion groups and demographics.<sup>3</sup>

Table 1. Discussion Group Participant Summary						
Group	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Date/Time</b>	Thursday 10/23/08 12n-2p	Thursday 10/23/08 5p-7p	Friday 10/24/08 9a-11a	Friday 10/24/08 12:30-2:30p	Friday 10/24/08 5p-7p	Saturday 10/25/08 9a-11a
<b>Location</b>	Portage Lake District Library	Portage Lake District Library	KNHP Headquarters	KNHP Headquarters	KNHP Headquarters	KNHP Headquarters
<b>Recruited:</b>	9	11	12	7	9	8
<b>Attended:</b>	8	7	12	7	6	5

Table 2. Demographic Summary of Participants	
<b>Where do you live? (n=42)</b>	18 (43%) in Calumet 6 (14%) in Houghton 5 (12%) in Hancock 13 (31%) elsewhere including: Dollar Bay, Baltic/South Range, Lake Linden, Houghton Canal, Mohawk, Chassell, Ontonagon
<b>How long have you lived here? (n=33)</b>	6 (18%) <10 years 13 (39%) 11-20 years 8 (24%) 20-49 years 6 (9%) > 50 years
<b>Gender? (N=40)</b>	16 (40%) = Males 24 (60%) = Females
<b>Age? (n=42)</b>	4 (10%) = 21-30 years 14 (33%) = 31-50 years 24 (57%) = > 50 years

Continued....

<sup>3</sup> Basic demographic descriptions were captured using a 1-page anonymous self-administered survey distributed at each meeting.

<b>Race/Ethnicity? (n=33)</b>	9 (27%) = Caucasian, white, white European 9 (27%) = Finnish, Finnish American, Yooper Finn, Irish Finnish 5 (15%) = with some German blood (German Norwegian, German Cornish, etc.) 10 (31%) = other including Italian American, Italian Polish, French-Hungarian-English, French Canadian, Native American, and other heritage.
<b>Education? (n=36)</b>	2 (4%) = some high school 6 (17%) = high school graduate 6 (17%) = college graduate 22 (62%) = post graduate education

### 3.2 Participant Introductions and Perspectives

At the beginning of each group discussion, participants were asked to introduce themselves by name, affiliation(s), and perspective. For the ‘perspective’ part of the introduction, participants were asked to indicate from a list (see Table 3 below) which perspective(s) they could fairly and confidently represent in the discussion.

The intent of this introduction was three-fold: (a) to ‘warm-up’ the group and help participants feel comfortable with each other, (b) to help participants recognize and value other perspectives around the table, and (c) to maximize the diversity of responses from all participants. The latter intent was important because the timing of the project necessitated an “off-season” evaluation (in the fall) that minimized actual tourist participation. In every group, the ‘visitor’ perspective was represented by participants who felt confident in speaking for visitors from tourism encounters, visits from friends and family, and otherwise observing and listening to community visitors over the years.

<i>Perspective</i>	<i># of Participants</i>
Parent/Grandparent	31
Educator	30
Student	21
First-time Visitor/Newbie	27
Community Leader/Volunteer	32
History buff/specialist/geek	40
Descendent of Miner/native/long time resident	26
Other • Arts/theater/library = 7 • Rotary/Lions = 3 • Military = 2 • Real Estate = 1 • State Parks = 1 • Media (radio/tv) = 1 • Native Yooper (from the UP) = 2 • Troll (from lower Michigan) = 4 • Trooper (Troll moved north) = 1	n/a

### 3.3 Visitor Perceptions and Residents' Sense of Place

A series of open-ended questions were posed to each of the six discussion groups to better understand motivations, expectations, and perceptions of potential exhibit visitors (residents and area tourists) about the area with the idea that this information would be useful in informing the design of way-finding and orientation portions of the Union Building (refer to Schematic I Plan, October 20, 2008).

From the discussions, there seem to be several reasons why **visitors** come to this area including (participant's comments are indicated by italics):

- to see and experience the natural environment and scenic beauty: *so much here for free, open space, beaches, water, nature, natural beauty, hills and dirt roads; what a different world*
- to recreate out of doors: *outdoor activities everywhere* (e.g., kayaking/boating, hiking, rock hounding, fishing, biking, skiing)
- to explore more about the history of the area: *the copper mining history, Quincy Mine, Fort Wilkins, the lighthouses*
- to find out about their own family history: *genealogy; researching family history*
- to attend college here or visit someone who is attending college here: *at MTU or Finlandia University*

From the group discussions it also seems that most visitors, in their explorations of the area, unless they are intentionally seeking their own family history, are drawn first to the natural beauty and outdoor recreation (e.g., Lake Superior, forests, trails, kayaking opportunities, State Parks) and then secondarily to the region's rich history.

While some first-time visitors expect more development (e.g., water parks, malls, big box retailers, 'something to do'), others relish the notion of getting away from it all and seeing something different. Because many visitors do not know what to expect, their first-time take-aways include the following (again, participant comments are in italics):

- Its beauty: *They don't realize how beautiful this part of the UP is. The cliffs are so rugged.*
- Its isolation: *Nobody comes here by accident! They don't realize how far you can go and still be in Michigan. Why would anyone want to live here? How could anyone live here? This is the final frontier...you leave Minneapolis and go into a time capsule.*
- Its pace: *Its like stepping back in time; the slow pace*
- Its big winters: *How do you get around with 300" of snow? What, no snow days at school?*
- Its big water: *Lake Superior is like an ocean! Is that sweet water? It has to be salt water – it's so big!*
- Its people: *Friendliness of the people; people are friendly here; the diversity of the people.*

In addition, many visitors puzzle about,

- The local history: *What is this place about? Who built all these beautiful buildings? What is all this (and why are we keeping it?) Why did they come here? Why did they leave? Why are they still here? What were they mining?*
- Life here today: *What do people do here? How do they make a living? How do they survive here?*
- Local offerings and opportunities: *What is the KNHP? Where are the boundaries? Where is the Park? Where can I find out more about this place? There's lots of information but where can I ask a question? What else is there to do?*

For **residents** of the area, their sense of place is firmly associated with:

- The area's history: *Copper Country and the industria/social history of the area; the past is so alive here, cool buildings from the past, site of the first Copper boom in America – tells the story of the industrial revolution*
- The character of the place: *rural, small town, unique, old looking, like driving around in the 30's and 40's, economically disadvantaged, lack of industry, the glory days are gone, more homes here that are over 100 years old than anywhere in Michigan*
- The spirit of the people: *friendly, proud, independent, hard working, pioneering spirit, tough... and sisu ("stubborn" in Finnish), sense of community, sense of responsibility for each other, close knit, people know you by your first name, people notice...they remember; ethnically diverse*
- The lifestyle: *isolated, rugged, traditional, slow, laid back, remote, tough*
- The natural (but harsh) environment: *the summer is beautiful, the winter is long, cold, lots of snow; trees, Lake Superior, water*

### **Implications for Orientation and Wayfinding (O/W)**

Clarify the purpose of O/W: It will be important to ensure that the orientation and way-finding function:

- introduces the story of the place ('Life in a Company Town' for the Union Building, but also the Copper Country story for the region),
- conveys a strong sense of the place as described by residents (see findings above),
- provides answers to people's questions. As one participant noted, *visitors are often bombarded with information, but where do they ask questions?* and
- serves as a touchstone for residents' sense of place *and sense of pride*, so that residents, their guests, and visitors, want to return.

Remember the need for pre-visit information. Several participants noted that: *most people have to journey to get here; the Park has an obligation to help people with information before they get miles into the site*. Although the Park's website currently contains maps and information about the Park, pre-visit information will be a critical part of orientation and way-finding, especially

until the planned primary visitor center at the Quincy Unit is open.

Distinguish exhibit orientation from regional orientation: Based on all design alternatives, the first floor of the Union building will likely serve both a temporary regional orientation function and an orientation to the Union Building's 'Life in a Company Town' story.

- **Union Building exhibit orientation:** There was some discussion about orientation for the Union Building exhibit (i.e., the social story) that would be the executive summary of the social story, told in about 10-15 minutes, that provokes/invites visitors to get the longer story upstairs.
- **Regional orientation:** The regional orientation then would be a film, map, and/or timeline that might answer fundamental visitor questions such as: *What is this place (town/region)? How does it all fit together in a larger context (of copper mining)? What else is there to do around here?* Visitors will need to leave the Union Building with clear understanding of where to go next and what other places of interest there are to visit in the region. There was some suggestion about identifying options for 1 hour, ½ day, 1 day and multiple-day adventures that include but are not limited to the Union Building.

Formatively test the regional orientation. Recognizing that the O/W function may be moved to a different location in the future, there is an ideal opportunity to formatively test what works (or doesn't) in terms of orienting visitors to the region and its stories, helping them find their way around the region, and planning their experiences.

Include a map. Maps seem to be a critical tool for visitors (and for residents who help others learn about the place). Ensure that map(s) of the area and region are available and consider a series of maps (perhaps even electronic options) that zoom in/out from the Union building (and the Calumet/Quincy units) so visitors understand distances, access roads, boundaries, etc. As part of this initiative, indicate what the KNHP is, where its boundaries are, and explain that it is not a Park in the typical sense but that because the Park interprets this place in collaboration with 19 heritage site partners; that the entire region tells the Copper Country story. Also include/introduce the partner sites on the map (and include mention of them in the exhibits as appropriate).

Recognize genealogy and history research. Because history is important to visitors and residents alike, be clear about who has records and how they might be accessed. Clarify location of and access to the Ross collection, for example. Clarify access to the NPS archives and differentiate the archives at MTU from those at the Park. Perhaps include information about how to find Lakeview Cemetery and mention the fact that many of the churches maintain their own records and that each church has their own policy for history and genealogy research.

Showcase the uniqueness of this place. There is a clear "sense of place" among residents (summarized above) and this should be apparent in the welcome and introduction to the Union Building. Aim to capture the concepts of diversity, friendliness, independence, toughness and even stubbornness of the locals. This might be done by welcoming visitors in different languages (Finnish, Cornish, etc.), including and explaining the origin and meaning of colorful place names and perhaps using the vernacular language (Yooper, Troll, etc) in the orientation/ interpretive materials.

Carefully consider staffing. Staff the building as much as possible so visitors can easily get

their questions answered. Consider staffing the building on weekends and holidays when visitors and residents are likely to visit and the need for information will be high. A few participants suggested training residents as docents or volunteers so they can be involved with both this exhibit and their community.

### 3.4 Schematic I Plan Alternatives

During each group discussion, participants were provided an 11”x17” sheet of paper for each of the three alternatives (A, B, and C) presented in Schematic I Plan. Each ‘Alternative’ sheet contained the respective elevation drawing (for Alternatives A, B, or C) and brief supporting narrative describing that alternative.<sup>4</sup> In the discussion, the evaluator briefly described each alternatives by reading some of descriptive language from the Schematic I Plan (Alternative A – p.7; Alternative B - p.13, Alternative C - p.19). Every attempt was made to present the alternatives in a fair and equal manner to avoid influencing participant discussion of the alternatives. The following summarizes participant comments about the three alternatives. Again, exhibit implications are presented at the end of this section in blue.

#### Alternative A – Chronological (Timeline)

- *It’s important to have a timeline; people like the idea of timelines; timeline is good*
- *Kind of dry; facts; ‘normal’ (i.e. typical/traditional exhibit); the chronological approach is tired*
- *Gives the history story but not the ‘feeling’*
- *Easier to get through*

#### Alternative B – Thematic (Doorways)

- *I like ‘thematic’ – it puts you in a space, (you can) experience history; feel it around (you); matches things you’d see walking around Calumet; feels like walking into the whole scene; I’m a visual person – this one gives you things to walk through; it’s a time warp, it transports you back in time*
- *Cool, 3-D, interactive; you’re in there (not an observer); touchy feely of B is good; have an interactive with each doorway*
- *It’s kid oriented; good for kids/families; I want my kids to have the chance to understand local history*
- *Very visual*
- *Alternative B is good, but whose version of the story will you tell?*
- *This is the one that popped – the Grand Rapids History Museum is set-up this way*

#### Alternative C – Experimental (Personal stories)

- *Shows the theme of the exhibit best.*
- *This seems to strike at the heart of the social, personal story; home life is good, looking at the people*
- *This one focuses on social side of what’s going on – room (to discuss) women, children, schools, benevolent groups*

---

<sup>4</sup> The brief narrative included a paragraph description taken from the Schematic I Plan and bullets of the proposed exhibit elements for the first and second floors.

- *I like the concept of interactives, but learning with headphones and buttons to listen doesn't stick. It needs to be stuff and pictures; hands-on is good for kids. Touchy-feely is a necessity; experience is good.*
- *When you come in the front door you have an experience then leave by the back door – the experience should change your life.*
- *Seems austere; so large you can't tell the story; little snippets – not a story; Who's family will you recognize? Least interesting; visually least interesting; stand around and look at exhibit.*

## **Implications for Exhibit Development**

In general, Alternative B received the strongest overall support, although Alternative C received very strong support in one group, and a number of ideas for hybridizing some of the exhibit elements were endorsed. For example, one participant recounted his experience at the Holocaust Museum in DC. *“It was outrageous – it was a combination of all three; difficult to pick just one – you move from chronological to thematic, back to chronological then to experimental.”*

Based on all six group discussions, implications for selecting and developing the preferred alternative are suggested below. Relevant comments from participants are included as appropriate.

Overview/Introduction: For the introduction consider a brief film or video overview. One that provides a broad overview of the copper story. At least two participants mentioned Gettysburg and the new film there used as an orientation for the visitor experience. As participants suggested, *you need to get the story fast (on the first floor) then go deeper if you want; the orientation would be like a helicopter tour where you see the whole story then see where you want to settle in; Alternative A makes a nice outline (overview).*

Timeline: Integrate a timeline into the final exhibit design. As discussion participants suggested, *elements of chronological (Alternative A) can go here (into Alternative B); a timeline is important; within B (Thematic) you can do chronology.*

Personal Stories: Focus on personal stories but be cautious about selecting those stories and evaluate story selection/treatment during the formative evaluation stages. One group strongly endorsed Alternative C, and did so because of the personal stories. Others hinted at this same idea: *Focus on unique stories – we can go into 100 kitchen exhibits, but what is different about a Calumet kitchen? Alternative B puts you in Calumet. Alternative C seems more about the peoples' lives and empathizing with the historical people – how/what they felt.*

Changing/temporary exhibits: Temporary exhibits are a good thing. Residents need to want to come back and bring their friends and family with them. Make periodic changes in exhibits so they are not stagnant. As one respondent put it, *...you're dealing with a tapestry that is huge - a canvas a mile long and you'll never get it all. You're trying to take a tiny bit to represent the whole story, the whole area; the whole history. Social life is (a) good (theme), but don't force it into a limited space. It needs to be evolving.*

Address the issues and stories of women and children: regardless of the alternative, participants were interested in seeing stories of women, children, and families; *weave women and children into each theme. For example, immigrant women had to change the types of clothes they wore, the types of food they ate, and all other social things, but the men were working in the mine*

*which was familiar to them; only 1% of the men died in underground mines, but yet how many women died in childbirth?*

Italian Hall: The most adamant comments by participants related to Italian Hall. In three of the groups, participants suggests that Italian Hall has received the most attention of all the stories and yet it was only one of hundreds of events that tell the Copper Country story: *There is so much more than Italian Hall...tired of people making money on that disaster. Focus before and after 1913.*

Cautions: Other cautions were also offered and should be heeded during design-development:

- *What if Alternative B is too authentic and visitors won't want to go see the real thing?*
- *[You] don't want to be redundant with other museums; don't repeat what's told at other places. Use this exhibit to entice them to other (heritage areas).*

### **3.5 Suggested Exhibit Elements**

Throughout the discussions, participants offered a number of suggestions for making the exhibits exciting, engaging, and appropriate for the story. These comments and their implications for exhibit development are summarized by category below. Italics represent participant comments. The narrative below is blue as the exhibit implications are integrated in this section.

Carefully consider the overall format of the exhibit - Several participants offered suggestions about the 'adaptability' of the exhibit. The most frequently mentioned metaphor was the internet. This is entirely consistent with some of the visitor studies research that is exploring how technology may be changing the way people learn. Some sources suggest that technology is moving us from linear learners to network learners. If this is the case, visitors will increasingly be seeking maximum flexibility in exhibit design. The design of the exhibitions and its element may want to be structured to maximize opportunities for connecting to content in a variety of ways. Some of the participant comments elaborate this notion.

- *Think 'database' ...and the fact that the entire collection is the data...how many ways can we sort it? You can add stories. You can add a timeline. You can add places. You can add particular people. Now you can sort it by this person at this time or all type of artifact at x time. Visitors could do a virtual tour of the inside of a mine...let's go down to the 13<sup>th</sup> level...its 1910 (we had this sort of drill) vs. a different time when different equipment is available. We recognize that the Union Building exhibits will focus on the social story, but this latter comment is relevant for understanding how participants were envisioning a very versatile and flexible exhibit format.*
- *Let the exhibit create a framework or a hub to which other organizations can connect as they grow their own interpretive programs the same way the internet's structure serves diverse groups.*
- *It needs to be electronically interactive with the ability to compare to other places and your own life experience (synthesis); compare past to today.*
- *Searchable database of miners; people need to be able to sort and research based on their interests (see Appendix E)*

- *Provide varying levels of detail to meet the interests of diverse audiences...the 15 second version vs. the 20 minute version to allow the visitor to zoom in or zoom out like a Google map.* This might be accomplished via computer, flip signs, or video clips, or audio recordings.

Include auditory experiences – *Include audio tours for kids and adults; include auditory elements in the exhibits so that visitors can listen and move on or listen and read/explore the narrative/artifacts; cooperate with the heritage sites for creating/using audio resources; use existing oral histories.* In one example, a participant described an exhibit (about Pompeii) where *every room was painted in such a way that it took you to that place, there were sounds of the town life, lighting made you feel that it was different times of day, then a volcano rumbling at end of exhibit...at end they show you what the ash was like...and you can touch it.* This immersion approach seemed appealing to some participants.

Use and display old photographs - *use the Foster collection at Park Headquarters; incorporate very large photographs like they do at the National Native American Indian Museum in Washington, DC.*

Include real artifacts – Although some of the suggested artifacts were more appropriate to technology/engineering themes, participants used these examples to support the notion of including real artifacts in the exhibits. For example, *get a working steam drill; see things (power equipment) operating in front of you (real or video); use historical artifacts – the real things.*

Carefully consider mannequins, murals, and stage sets – Participants disagreed a bit about the use of mannequins and stage sets. On the one hand, some participants suggested *no murals, they are distracting. Minimize the faux facades – don't de-authenticate the experiences; no stage sets – don't fake it up; keep it real and authentic; the exhibits need to provoke visitation to see the real thing. No cheesy mannequins – they look so fake.*

On the other hand, however, some participants seemed to like the doorways idea presented in Alternative B and still others supported the use of (good) mannequins. For example, *...imagine sitting at the bar next to a miner; having a good mannequin or sculpture would provide a great photo opportunity (consider Douglas Houghton, Big Annie, etc.)* The design team will need to reconcile this disagreement about presenting faux environments, but the main message here is that participants seem to support immersive environments if (a) they don't look fake or 'cheesy', (b) they don't detract visitors from visiting the real thing, and (c) if they provide an entree to the story being told.

Incorporate interactive elements - *Include stuff for kids (e.g., dress up, sticker book scavenger hunt, make and take activities); include things where you do it, lift it, feel it - exhibits where you actually get to do something; do stuff beyond headphones; include [kinesthetic] experiences like shoveling snow, comparing rocks weights, etc.*

Provide material that has cross-generational appeal – This exhibit is about families that cross multiple generations, and one that will be visited by people from different generations. Interpretation that engages visitors inter-generationally is highly appropriate here. This means including universal concepts in the interpretation about which generations throughout the ages can relate.

Incorporate oral histories - A number of participants mentioned oral histories and their potential value to the exhibit. *We understand the Park is doing oral histories – get those out for public consumption now. Get the story from the old codgers – the ones who were actually there. That generation is almost gone. Get their oral histories before it is too late.*

### **3.6 Terms and Concepts**

Four terms deemed essential to interpreting the theme of this exhibit were discussed with each of the groups. Summary of these discussions and implications for content development are included below.

#### Union Building

There seems to be a fairly prevalent misperception about the Union Building as a ‘labor union’ building. Several participants were surprised to learn that the Union Building name had nothing to do with labor unions and rather, was a name given the building much prior to labor unions in Calumet to capture the idea ‘union’ (i.e., partnership, collaboration) between fraternal organizations under one roof. For some (perhaps even many) the colorful labor union history of Calumet has influenced more recent perceptions of that Building.

#### **Exhibit Implications:**

Explain and Clarify ‘Union’ - It will be imperative that the name ‘Union Building’ be explained as part of the exhibit. Several participants even suggested that the name of the building be changed due to the fact that most visitors and many locals assume that ‘Union = Labor’. This misperception however, may provide an opportunity to clarify the sequence of events in the history of Calumet (i.e., the collaboration or ‘union’ of fraternal organizations happened much before labor unions), and to tell the story of this building in the large context of Life in an early Company Town. Recognizing and correcting a common misperception in the interpretation may actually help visitors remember facts associated with that topic. The interpretation can actually validate the fact that others have had the same thought thus reducing the frustration of feeling ‘dumb’ or ‘stupid’ for having an erroneous thought.

Consider Union Building Stories - If the story of this building is integrated into the Union Building exhibit content, the following stories are important to consider based on comments by discussion participants:

- Specifics about the two fraternal organizations (Odd Fellows and Masons) – who they were, what they did here, why/when did they decide to ‘collaborate/partner’ in this building.
- Characteristics of fraternal order ‘secret society’ including stories of coercion, ritual, secrecy, and brotherhood.
- The role of women, for instance, (a) why were women not allowed in the upper floors of the building, (b) were there women who cooked or cleaned in this building?, and (c) when/how/why did women’s clubs (auxiliaries) form in Calumet and how/when did they use this building?

## Company Town

For participants, the phrase ‘company town’ suggested not only a common architecture but also a communal (and perhaps socialist) philosophy. *Cookie cutter houses, trunk houses, lunch box houses, Sears and Roebuck houses, houses that looked all the same* came to mind immediately, as did the notion of paternalism (see more below), one industry (mining), and one company (C&H). Throughout the discussion however, other, more subtle concepts were also mentioned. For example,

- Segregation: *ethnic segregation, class segregation (rich vs. poor); job segregation (superintendents, foreman, laborers) - some of this was self-imposed (e.g., ethnic groups evolved into nationality based areas because of culture and language) but that some was “encouraged” by the company.*
- Community structure: *houses, schools, churches, libraries, hospitals and health care were all built and managed by the company. As one person noted, the socialist approach aimed to create and keep a contented and healthy workforce and a healthy workforce resulted in a healthy company.*
- Class hierarchy: *a structured society based on status – miner vs. merchant vs. manager; because the primary employer is a single company, most all people’s lives were influenced by that employer; a company town shows the contrast between the haves and have nots; the homes of the owners/managers vs. homes of merchants (Burton House) vs. homes of the miners (cookie-cutter houses); there was poor vs. rich but immigrants came with the desire to improve their lot, to do good by their family, even to become wealthy – there was upward mobility (e.g., Vertin Family in Calumet, Gartner Family in Hancock).*

## **Exhibit Implications**

Clarify the definition of company town since Calumet is somewhat atypical of other copper towns on the Keweenaw Peninsula. As one participant noted, *Calumet was company-dominated but not a company town.* There was no company store for example. Another said, *I don’t think that ‘company town’ is perfectly accurate over time in Calumet. It may have been a company dominated town, but C&H wasn’t the only game in town. Several other mines and companies operated here prior to eventually being absorbed by C&H. Calumet wasn’t really a one-company mining town until sometime after the turn of the century.* Other participants suggested that in a company town everything is controlled by the company which is at least perceived by some as the way it was in Calumet. The subtle differences over time in what was perceived to be a company town will be important to interpret.

Recognize and interpret the complexities and interrelationships between Company Town and Corporate paternalism (see more below).

Help visitors ‘try on that time’ which is to say that people made decisions based on the context at that time. It is easy for us today to look back and have varying perspectives and even judgments about those decisions based on our context of today. It will be important to interpret some of the actual (factual) influences on decision-making throughout the history of Calumet.

## Corporate Paternalism

One respondent indicated, *I don't know what [this term] means*. For most others corporate paternalism meant *total care- total control – the company knows what is good for you; the company took care of everything; it was control, complete control; and like Larry Lankton writes, you were born in a company house, go to a company school, married in a company church, play in a company park, and buried in a company cemetery*.

In some cases, respondents focused on the positive aspects of corporate paternalism by suggesting it was *the most benevolent paternalism around, they took care of everything; a portion of the miner's salary went to health insurance... and it was good care; and the company treated his workers like a father treats his children; there were more benefits than drawbacks*. One participant even said how amazing it was that *they took miners and educated them so the next generation could move up*, thus recognizing the concept of upward mobility.

Not everyone was so charitable, however. For example, one participant used the word *entrapment* to describe paternalism. Some offered terms like *bribery, spies, helpless feeling, and heavy handedness* as descriptors. Others indicated that paternalism was *conditional... that you had to walk the company line. If it benefited the company then it was ok; the company provided opportunities but also controlled everything; [the company] knows what is best for you and thus will make decisions for you*.

## **Exhibit Implications**

Explain corporate paternalism - Corporate paternalism is a complex concept about which not everyone agrees. This provides a perfect opportunity to engage visitors in the interpretation of what it was like in a town influenced by corporate paternalism. There are no absolutes about this concept so the exhibit material should not come down on any one side or perspective. Rather, the context should be presented in such a way that visitors can speculate for themselves what they might have thought or done in similar circumstances. This could play out in a narrative that presents different perspectives-or by using oral histories that portray real but different stories. One technique that has been used often is life-size cutouts of various real people that each convey a different perspective on the same topic or issue. This can be done with audio/video enhancements using living history quotes or by interpreting the various perspectives in 2-D.

Clarify terms and them in proper perspective - Because the terms 'company town' and 'corporate paternalism' are so interconnected (in fact, not everyone was clear about the distinction) it will be important to clarify these terms but also to use a variety of sources, perspectives, and examples to elaborate on these concepts. As one participant suggested, *what alternative was there [given the situation] at the time?* It will be important to recognize that visitors will interpret the exhibit based on their own 21<sup>st</sup> century perspectives and so the more the interpretation can present the realities and limitations of the time, the easier it will be for visitors to make their own sense of the exhibit. For example, the paternalistic approach was attractive to some immigrants who needed some guarantees as they risked it all to come here and work in the mines. Yet the stratification/segregation that resulted for many immigrants was another side of that same coin. These complex and tangled issues should definitely be explored in the interpretation.

## Immigration

The concept of immigration is also a rich, value-laden concept that seems central to the story of Life in a Company Town. Simply stated, one participant suggested immigration is ‘*waves of nationalities’ coming to the area*. Respondents associated churches, bars/saloons, cemeteries, occupations, languages, food, place names, political persuasions, attitudes, and numerous other life ways with the concept of immigration and the resulting diverse ethnicity of the region.

## **Exhibit Implications**

Provide context for ethnic diversity - It will be important to summarize the incredible number and types of ethnic groups who immigrated to this region over time and why. For example, the Italians worked as masons, the Cornish and Germans as skilled miners, the Finnish as mine laborers, the Norwegians as merchants, the Chinese as launderers, and so forth. The stories of opportunity and sacrifice are rooted in cultural diversity. How each culture assimilated into a new life in Calumet is a critical part of the story here.

Infuse personal stories - If ‘personal stories’ are infused into the final exhibit approach, it will be critical to include universal concepts such as: opportunity, sacrifice, risk taking/personal risk, freedom and independence vs. control, and diversity (of language, food, culture, life ways/customs, philosophy, politics and activism, religion, etc). In addition, it may be important to allow residents some input about which stories are selected to best represent the interpretive themes.

More specifically, the contrast of churches/religion vs. bars seems to be a salient concept among locals. The concept of Calumet having over 90 bars and only 35 churches came up more than once. Whether this is fact, folklore, or just an easy way to summarize history 100 years later, it is difficult to say. The fact that this notion has persisted may be worth exploring as personal stories are developed. Interpreting the roles of men vs. women, the ideas of spirituality and discretionary time in early Calumet, and socialization and companionship are also reasonable ideas to explore.

## **3.7 Relevancy Then and Now**

A question about the relevancy of Calumet’s past stories for today was posed in each group. In some cases, participants easily indicated how issues of 100 years ago were still relevant today. Examples included:

Immigration: *what it’s like moving from another country; newcomers are looked at with certain amount of suspicion, like, you’re going to take my job. It is the same today. Also, similar is the documentation needed to immigrate; legal vs. illegal immigration; need for workers to fill jobs we don’t want to do.*

The lure and exploitation of natural resources: *copper was extracted with the notion it would never run out, that it would never become unprofitable to mine, or that there would ever be negative side effects to the mining; now there are people who consider the vast quantities of water in the region to be a similar commodity.*

Segregation and ‘separateness’: *it was and is sometimes self-imposed and sometimes political; keeping the cultures separated in the past has preserved the diversity in cultural heritage for today; cultural segregation is not always a bad thing – locals are proud of their diverse cultures and it draws people in; often segregation was seen with religions [and still is today]; people don’t want to consolidate churches (or schools) to eliminate bureaucracy, people want to maintain the identity of their cultural institutions.*

Unions: *necessary vs. discouraged (throughout 21<sup>st</sup> century); fairness and workers rights; labor unions then and now*

Social status and opportunity: *social status and equal opportunity over time; it hasn’t changed much; much of the mining business was directed from Boston by the [rich] owners; some immigrants had opportunities to move up in status (e.g., miners to merchants).*

Paternalism: *still lots of folks trying to tell us what is good for us; MTU is the new paternalism here; the Park is a paternalistic organization – money comes from the outside and impacts the area; one day they will leave and the next wave of people telling us what to do will come in; the government/the company will decide what is best for you in terms of health care.*

Cycles of boom and bust: *like Detroit, the auto industry – it is boom and bust; Copper Country is like a 3<sup>rd</sup> world country – they came and exploited us and then left*

Although these topics were readily identified, relevancies were not always evident to participants. This may be because area residents, many of whom are natives and/or descendants of the miners are too close to their own history, making it difficult to step back and see history repeating itself. Nonetheless, it will be important to feature issues and ideas that have contemporary relevance in the interpretation of the Union Building.

### **Exhibit Implications**

Integrate Relevancy into the exhibit interpretation - *As much as possible, exhibit interpretation should explore the relevancies noted above and others as appropriate. Many of these ideas contain universal themes that can be woven in as well. But as one participant noted, the tendency is to project our modern day conflicts of labor and management on this story – this may color the interpretation. Stay true to the stories.*

### **3.8 Schools and Curriculum**

Two of the six groups were comprised of local public school teachers – one elementary group and one secondary group. Discussions in these groups were similar to all other groups although additional questions were explored about the teaching potential of the exhibit.

Many teacher responses were complimentary of the Park’s efforts to support teachers and the public schools, for example, *they (the Park) have been so good to us – they’ll do anything for us – proximity helps I’m sure, since our school is right behind their office; they’ve been good at developing curriculum; the Park has an awesome opportunity regarding the Michigan history curriculum – they just need more staff – it’s just Kathleen.*

Page 30 of the Schematic I Plan was also used to stimulate discussion in both teacher groups although that curriculum guide was more immediately relevant to the elementary teacher group.

Apparently, state history has recently shifted from being taught in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade to being taught in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Teachers commented that, *now [the Park] just needs to work with the State Department of Education as they are developing new lessons [appropriate to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade]; we could be a case study [in mining history] for the state.*

In the end, teachers felt there should be a couple of changes to the curriculum integration sheet. First, U.S. history should be considered across all schemes (or alternatives), not just the 3<sup>rd</sup> alternative. In addition, citizen involvement (at the bottom of p.30) should be considered in the 2<sup>nd</sup> as well as the 3<sup>rd</sup> alternatives.

Finally, the secondary teachers were interested in some guidance for their history curriculum.

### **Implications for Working with the Schools**

The school audience (teachers, students, and parents; public, private, and home school) is an important audience for the Union Building exhibit. The exhibit development team should consider:

Keep teachers involved - Keep teachers involved throughout the exhibit development process. This might also involve working with 1 to 2 teachers to understand the specifics of state history moving from 4<sup>th</sup> grade to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and what implications that might have on exhibit content and approach. This may also include involving teachers, students, and their parents in the formative evaluation of exhibits.

Help teachers correlate exhibit material to the state standards - at both the elementary and secondary levels.

### **3.9 Messages to the Park**

A final question in each group solicited overall comments for the Park. The following summarize these comments:

Italian Hall and the 1913 Strike: *The 1913 strike was not the only thing that happened here. There are lots of people making money off it still and yet there is so much more to the story; I'm so done with Italian Hall (and I'm Italian). There is so much fiction and people make money on it – let it go! Don't over-do Italian Hall – don't try to cast blame. The [Italian Hall] site is still there – the true location is where the Italian Hall should be interpreted.*

The Exhibit Interpretation: *Be practical, use common sense, don't be wasteful. Make the interpretation palatable for locals.*

The Union Building: *Keep the doors to the Union Building open now whenever possible, put up a sign – don't wait until 2011. Use the building now for public events to let people know what's going on with the exhibit development.*

Regional or area-wide thinking: The idea of living history was proposed in more than one group. For example, *consider this place like a Williamsburg or Greenfield Village - a living history area to give a feel of what it was like then. Could we turn Keweenaw Peninsula into a stage – rebuild what was there – Electric Park, the trolley car, period dress, civic and economic vitality?* One participant used the metaphor of an Amusement Park to suggest that *it's about the whole park,*

*not just one ride. They might drive here to see the “story of mining” when they understand there are 19 sites to see, whereas they might not come just to see one historic building.-*

Public Involvement: *thank you for asking us about the exhibit; we’re willing to be involved, just ask us.*

Park Identity: *the Park needs to establish their identity; KNHP...who are they, what do they do? When most people think of a national park there’s an entrance, there are boundaries. The park is here....but where? Many don’t know where headquarters is. Where is the gate to the Park? The Park is a bulging behemoth of bureaucracy.*

Park Visibility: *The Park is not visible – they need to do more than 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday. They have a great community room but it is not used frequently. The average person thinks Park staff are in there earning big bucks but what are they doing? The park staff could be more visible. Residents and visitors need to be inspired and to see there is a shared vision. We want tourists to come back and see us. There needs to be tangible evidence of all the work now, not just talking about planning.*

Communicating with the Park: *How do we engage with the park? Who do you call – where’s the number?*

Frustrations: *What do I get for my tax dollars? What’s going on here? If we as residents don’t know, how are visitors supposed to know? Share more information earlier; the community needs to know what they are doing. What are they doing over there? It took years to open the headquarters, now it looks like it will be years before they open the exhibit. The Park has been here since 1992 – it took them 4 years to plan a sign. We need to see actions and concrete stuff. The Headquarters could be used for community purposes after hours to connect with us more.*

Heritage Partners: *There needs to be a clear understanding that Park has professional staff and heritage sites often only have volunteers...the Park can’t expect the same from us to attend lots of meetings, especially multi-day ones. We need help! They are the coordinator of the heritage sites.*

## **Implications for Interpretation and Exhibits**

Engage locals in this process - Clearly, some residents would like to be involved in the exhibit process...and they appreciate it when asked to do so. See more below under Transition to Formative Evaluation.

Consider docents - Develop or enhance a docent program to help staff the Union Building, especially on weekends, holidays, and summer evenings.

Communicate about the exhibit early and often - Many participants were a bit surprised that the new exhibition would not be open until 2011. Whereas the front-end evaluation has engaged their input early in the process, it will be critical that the Park not lose that good will and momentum. Posting periodic updates, changing the ‘big window display(s)’ at the Union Building, hosting occasional open houses related to the process, and otherwise communicating about the process will be critical over the next 24-36 months.

Continue working with the Heritage Organizations – Recognizing that this is one of the first substantial and professionally curated exhibitions by the Park in Calumet, there is a tremendous

opportunity to model excellence in exhibits and interpretation as well as to model contemporary processes of professional exhibit planning, design and development. For example, the mannequin/stage set is a decision that might demonstrate contemporary thinking in modern exhibit design. Creating immersive experiences in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with bronze life-like sculptures instead of ‘cheesy’ mannequins, infusing appropriate technologies, and/or incorporating innovative (and modern) design element are all possible with this exhibit. In addition, involving (through training, mentoring, show-and-tell) the heritage organizations in the planning-design-development process not only models contemporary practice but also helps create a healthy collaboration for the future. Use this opportunity to occasionally walk partners through the process, discussed lessons learned, and problem solve together. It is the old adage, *if you teach a man to fish he will eat for a lifetime.*

### **Implications for the Park**

Enhance Park Visibility: The Park is 16 years old and has seen 3 superintendents and various staff come and go. From the local perspective, the Park has been intermittently visible over that time. With the launch of the area’s first professionally curated exhibition, the Park’s visible role will become increasingly important. Visibility might include:

- being more visible at community events,
- initiating periodic open houses and other events that involve local citizens,
- providing guidance to the heritage organizations (partially described above),
- working with schools (public, private, and home schools) on curriculum and special events,
- Considering/anticipating an overall sign/wayfinding strategy for proximal and regional roads (and tourism facilities) as plans are formulated for eventual orientation and wayfinding at the Quincy Unit

The concept ‘*managing while walking around*’ comes to mind. Seeing Park staff in the community, meeting with civic groups and heritage organizations, and participating in local events, sends the message that the Park is an integral part of the community.

Strengthen Communication: Although the Park does have an active program of outreach, communication with the local community is essential for long-term sustainability of community engagement and respect. Continued and perhaps strengthened outreach and communication will be necessary to addresses some of the concerns described above.

Plan Regionally: Although legally, the KNHP comprises the Calumet and Quincy Units, the Copper Country story comprises much of the entire Keweenaw Peninsula. As group participants indicated, many residents and visitors associate this National Park with a ‘capital-P-Park’ – one that has clear borders and an obvious entry gate. This is not the case with KNHP, yet many residents see the opportunity to consider the broader peninsula as a cohesive ‘small-p-park’ – an all inclusive experience that reflects collaboration among multiple units who together tell the Copper Country story. KNHP is positioned (politically, financially, professionally) to lead this charge; to help create this vision. This is a long-term goal, but the Union Building project provides an opportunity to catalyze this effort. The opportunity for vision, leadership, and true collaboration is ideal.

## Section 4. Transition to Formative Evaluation

This front-end evaluation effort was designed to inform decision-making following the development of Schematic I. Recognizing that eventually proposed exhibition ideas will be formatively tested, the following ‘notes for the record’ are offered.

- The recruitment effort for the front-end group discussions required 36 hours (4.5 person days). Although current thought about formative testing in 2009 will likely involve some form of community open houses, participants will have to be recruited in some way. The Park, the Designer, and the Evaluator should discuss recruitment efforts at least 2-3 months prior to any formative testing to allow enough time for reasonable recruitment.
- Meeting space for the group discussions was excellent. Comparable space requirements will likely be necessary for the formative testing and again, should be considered in collaboration between the Park, the Designer, and the Evaluator.

In addition, the following ideas for the Summer 2009 formative evaluation effort are suggested for consideration, whereby all three or any combination of the following three ideas might be developed to explore resident and visitor reaction to emerging exhibit elements and interpretation.

Level I Analysis - host open-houses or other social gatherings for the purpose of communicating progress on the exhibit to the community at-large. Include some sort of mechanism for visitors/residents to provide written input and feedback. The front-end evaluation effort demonstrated clearly that when residents are asked their opinions they become enthused and they begin to feel engaged.

Level II Analysis - creation of a 6-8 member *visitor panel* of local residents that might stay engaged more intently throughout the design-development phase (and even throughout fabrication. This group of individuals could easily be recruited from participants involved in the front-end effort. The group would not have decision making authority of any kind, but they might offer informed input to that effort. This group might also serve as a manageable mechanism for organizing feedback from heritage organizations and other civic groups.

Level III Analysis – plan and organize a set of on-site proto-type testing sessions to formatively evaluate specific exhibit components and interpretive content. This effort would be organized and facilitated by the evaluator in concert with Park staff, the exhibit developer, and other team members.