



Calumet: Queen City of the Keweenaw

Narration

Reminders of the once mighty copper mining industry are all around us in Calumet, but focusing on mining alone tells only one part of the area's history.

Copper mines needed workers and many brought families. These men, women and children came from all over the world, bringing their cultural traditions and creating a new community on the remote Keweenaw Peninsula.

“For another hour, we traveled across snow covered plains and tall chimneys loomed before us, the sign of more mines.

The train stopped before an old, small frame station, painted green. Calumet! – shouted the conductor. My long journey had ended. On May 2, 1903, I arrived in my new community.”

Ivan Molek, Slovenian Immigrant

Miners, along with their families needed places to live, food to eat and many of the other services we find today in our home towns.

The department stores, groceries, construction companies, breweries and entertainment venues that developed here not only supported the copper industry but also helped to develop a lively society.

Originally named Red Jacket, the town grew alongside the largest copper mining company in Michigan; Calumet and Hecla. During the early 1900s - some of the mining companies' most productive years - nearly 35,000 people lived around Red Jacket.

Many business owners expanded their stores to accommodate growing demand, and shopkeepers often learned several languages in order to serve their diverse customers.

Crowds packed the streets on festival days. Streetcars filled with passengers traveled through town and out to neighboring communities. At night, patrons wandered down sidewalks on their way to performances at the Calumet theatre, or perhaps to a gathering at a local saloon.

Inevitably, these prosperous years did not last; when the Calumet and Hecla mining company experienced declines in production, the town underwent difficulties as well. Many families left the area to find work elsewhere. The community's population dropped and by the year 2000, under 7,000 people lived in Calumet and the surrounding area.

Scene

Ranger walking beside sandstone wall.

Historic photos: Miners near Tamarack Mine, Women and children outside store on Fifth Street, Winter scene of Fifth Street

Historic photos: Mineral Range Railroad, and Tracks near Quincy Mine.

Historic photos: Train beside depot and Crowd beside depot.
Historic photo: horse and buggies on Fifth Street.

Historic photos: Houses near Swedetown, and Kids beside Ice Cream truck

Historic photo: Fifth Street in Calumet, Several historic ads appear.

Historic photo: 1881 Bird's Eye View Map then close-up of town portion
Historic photos: People on Fifth Street circa 1900 and Miner's Day Picnic

Historic photos: Ryan store and store owners outside store.

Historic photos: Fourth of July celebration at corner of Sixth and Oak Streets, Passengers on street car, Streetcars to Wolverine, Calumet Theatre at night, and Patrons inside saloon.

Historic Photos: Shaft-rockhouse at mine coming down and Sixth Street in 1950s

Modern photo: Sixth street today.

Narration (continued)

While it is smaller today, Calumet is still a vibrant community, filled with longtime residents, artists and business owners that are dedicated to both preserving the history of the area and fostering its economic growth.

Downtown Calumet was named a National Historic Landmark District in 1989, and is now part of Keweenaw National Historical Park.

During the summer, rangers provide guided tours of the downtown, or you can explore it on your own with a self-guided tour booklet.

The historic character preserved in Calumet – once the Queen City of the Keweenaw – embodies the story of a community shaped by intense industrialization, immigration and urbanization.

Scenes (continued)

Historic photo of Fifth Street fades into current view. Video of Fifth and Oak streets, Vertin Gallery and horse-drawn wagon.

Ranger Kristen on roof of Union Building.

Photo: Ranger giving tour. Inset of Calumet Self-guided tour booklet.

Ranger Kristen outside the Calumet Theatre.