



View south on Sixth Street, Calumet Civic Core. NPS photograph

## NHL Executive Summary

**Name of Property:** Calumet Historic District  
**City, State:** Calumet, Michigan  
**Period of Significance:** 1867-1923  
**NHL Criteria:** 1, 5  
**NHL Theme:** V: Developing the American Economy  
 Extraction and production  
 Workers and work culture  
 I: Peopling Places  
 Communities and neighborhoods

**Previous Recognition:** 1971 Calumet Theater National Register  
 1974 Calumet and Hecla Industrial District National Register  
 1974 Calumet Downtown Historic District National Register  
 1974 Calumet Fire Station National Register  
 1989 Calumet Historic District National Historic Landmark  
 1992 Keweenaw National Historical Park National Register  
 HABS MI-276, 413 to 418, 423 to 426, 428 to 435, 437  
 HAER MI-2

### National Historic Contexts:

- X. Westward Expansion of the British Colonies and the United States, 1773-1898
  - E. The Mining Frontier
- XII. Business
  - A. Extractive or Mining Industry
- XVIII. Technology (Engineering and Invention)
  - F. Extraction and Conversion of Industrial Raw Materials



G. Industrial Production Processes

XXX. American Ways of Life

C. Industrial Towns

*Labor History in the United States (2022)*

**NHL Significance:**

- Under Criterion 1 the district is associated with the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company and the mid-nineteenth-century coming-of-age of copper mining in the United States. With copper's extensive use as a conductor of electricity, the United States changed from a dispersed, agrarian country to a complex industrial and urban nation.
- Copper production on the Keweenaw Peninsula, the country's first major copper mining district, differed from earlier copper mines in the country due to geologic variation, the grade of available copper ore, changes in copper processing technology, changes in management practices, and increases in capital investments.
- With the opening of the Calumet Conglomerate Lode in the late 1860s, Calumet and Hecla dominated copper production. The company represented over half the total US national production and built the most complete surface plant of any copper mining facility in the world.
- Under Criterion 5 the historic resources of the Calumet Historic District collectively comprise an intact landscape that outstandingly represents the development of an industrial community and the practice of corporate paternalism in the United States.
- Unique among the copper mining operations on the Keweenaw Peninsula, Calumet and Hecla's mining operations were contiguous and integrated with residential, civic, and commercial areas, such that there was little separation between life and work in Calumet. The system of corporate paternalism as practiced by the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company, together with the complex relationships that developed between company leadership, local management, workers, and other citizens of the community, represents a unique and important aspect of the history of copper mining and community development in the United States.

**Integrity:**

- Since the original 1989 NHL designation, Calumet Historic District has not substantially changed. Its seven aspects of integrity remain high overall, and the district continues to retain resources and landscapes representing a complete mining company, including copper ore extraction, company administration, the development of an associated residential and commercial community, and the practice of corporate paternalism in Michigan's Copper Country.
- The Industrial and Mine Management Core, the Commercial Core, and Agassiz Park are integral to the character of the historic district. The Industrial and Mine Management Core contains unused industrial buildings in varying conditions, from foundations to intact buildings. The use of some of these buildings by Keweenaw National Historical Park and other entities has maintained them with a



higher degree of integrity than in some other areas. A few non-contributing buildings have been added on the periphery of the character area, but these have not substantially impacted integrity.

- The company housing locations are integral to the character of the historic district. The overall form, massing, and pattern of buildings on the landscape continue to identify them as original or acquired Calumet and Hecla company housing, with distinctions in lot size and density, and design. Regarding materials and design, some houses have been modified with garages, new windows, and replacement siding. Some outbuildings, fences, and small-scale features have been removed. New housing infill is limited, and their scale, massing, and placement are compatible and do not detract from the overall character of the district.
- The district boundary has been amended to exclude locations where there has been substantial new development, or extensive deterioration or loss of historic resources since 1989 such that location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association has been greatly impacted. The largest reduction in the boundary is southwest of the Sixth Street extension due to commercial development, the loss of mining buildings and associated landscapes, and extensive removal of poor rock piles.

**Owners of Property:** Private, Village of Calumet, Calumet Township, Houghton County, State of Michigan, Keweenaw National Historical Park (National Park Service)

**Acreage of Property:** 321.8

**Origins of Nomination:** This update to the original 1989 NHL nomination was completed on behalf of the Keweenaw National Historical Park and the Keweenaw NHP Advisory Commission. It provides an expanded and up-to-date inventory of contributing and non-contributing resources, a revised significance statement and expanded context, and a revised period of national significance that reflects current historical interpretations and meets current NHL guidelines. The NHL boundary has been revised to include additional resources directly associated with Calumet and Hecla's operations.

**Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:**

- The update provides a more detailed description of the historic district, as well as an inventory of all contributing and non-contributing resources. This information can aid the National Park Service, its partners, and private property owners in planning, resource management, and interpretation.
- The revised statement of significance and expanded context offers an up-to-date interpretation of copper mining history in the United States, reflecting current scholarship.
- Technical assistance from the Keweenaw National Historical Park and Keweenaw Historical Commission provide opportunities for property owners to preserve their resources or develop sensitive new infill.



**Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:** Low. A public open house held on June 12, 2023, generated relevant questions about the benefits of NHL designation and the roles of the Keweenaw National Historical Park and Keweenaw NHP Advisory Commission.

**Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of December 19, 2023):**

- Representative Gregory Markkanen, District 110, Michigan House of Representatives
- Megan Haselden, Manager, Village of Calumet

**Landmarks Committee Comments:**

- Revise to ensure a more balanced approach to discussions of labor relations, corporate paternalism, housing, and worker communities. Identify ways in which workers exercised agency within the framework of corporate paternalism by choosing housing options and summarize the grievances that immediately precipitated the 1913-1914 strike.
- Provide succinct overview of the ethnic and immigrant groups among workers, working conditions in the mines, living conditions in company housing, and the adequacy of wages paid to workers by the companies.
- Add small section on the broader national recognition of Calumet's architectural significance.
- Note nature of relationship between the Calumet and Quincy copper companies, which were competitors and had differing management practices, but colluded regarding worker pay and benefits.

**Landmarks Committee Recommendation:** The Committee recommends that the National Park System Advisory Board recommend to the Secretary of the Interior the acceptance of the NHL updated documentation for the Calumet Historic District National Historic Landmark in Calumet, Michigan, with any additions and corrections as noted by the Committee being made prior to the nomination being forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior for action.

**Advisory Board Recommendation:** The National Park System Advisory Board recommends to the Secretary of the Interior the acceptance of the updated NHL documentation for the Calumet Historic District National Historic Landmark in Calumet, Michigan.