

We tell it like it was at the IRON COUNTY MUSEUM



IRON COUNTY Museum & Park DIRECTORY



1. Original Engine House, c.1921
2. Research Building
3. Bernhardt Cultural Center
4. LeBlanc Wildlife Art Gallery
5. Pioneer (Baumgartner) School, c.1896
6. Carrie Jacobs-Bond Home, c.1890
7. Toit Tavern
8. Crossing House
9. Stager Depot, c.1890
10. Gas Station
11. Shop Building
12. Scrapper-Drift
13. Headframe, 1921
14. Machinery Shed & Barn
15. Young Firehall
16. Storage Barn
17. Soderquist Barn, Shed & Blacksmith Shop, c.1890
18. Poutinen Log Barn, c.1890
19. Beechwood Log Cabin, c.1890
20. Koski Log Cabin, c.1913
21. Maki Sauna
22. Peterson Log Cabin, c.1890
23. Johnson Homestead Cabin, c.1906
24. Sharrard Logging Camp, c.1920
25. Shingle Mill Barn & Sleigh Shed
26. St. Mary's Church, c.1912
27. Giovanelli Home & Studio Art Gallery

28. Irvine Playhouse
29. Outhouse

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(Second Edition)

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Museum Guide

Explore 20+ buildings, 100+ exhibits & 2 art galleries
sprawled across 9+ acre park

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How We Got Here: Museum Timeline

SIXTIES

- Museum Society established. ('62)
- Caspian Mine site deeded to County for a museum ('63)
- Museum opens with first exhibits ('68)

SEVENTIES

- Peterson Mining Hall added to the Engine House ('70)
- Brule Cabin moved to the grounds ('71)
- Beechwood Homestead c. 1890 moved to the grounds ('72)
- Stager Depot moved to the grounds ('72)
- Johnson Homestead and Sharrard Lumber Camp - the last standing in Iron County - moved to the grounds ('73)
- Soderquist Barns brought from Bates Township ('76)
- Carrie Jacobs-Bond home moved from Iron River ('78)

EIGHTIES

- Kline House assembled as a barn ('83)
- The "Shops" added ('85)
- Puotinen log barn circa 1900 joins the homestead area ('87)
- Baumgartner Pioneer School moved to the grounds ('88)
- St. Mary's Church built in 1911 is brought from Gaastra ('89)
- Maki Sauna added to log cabin collection ('89)

NINETIES

- Leblanc Gallery built ('90)
- Mining Memorial Hall built ('95)
- Red Barn & shed built ('98)
- Brandon Giovanelli Gallery & Studio brought ('99)

A NEW CENTURY

- Toti's Tavern moved from the Virgil location ('03)
- Young Firehall brought in ('04)
- Museum Research Center opens ('05)
- Rock & Mineral exhibit re-opens ('23)
- Iron County Timeline opens ('24)
- WIKB & IRARC exhibits installed ('25)



History is a Hoot...and a LOT of work!

For nearly seven decades this Museum has been a beacon of Iron County history. Through carefully curated exhibits and thoughtfully planned events, we've worked hard to honor the stories, culture and contributions that shaped this region. Much of what you see at the museum today exists because of the generosity of our community; generations of people who gave of their time, talents and money to help preserve the past and inspire the future. We are especially grateful to those who built the foundation that became the Iron County Historical & Museum Society.

But times have changed and the landscape of community involvement is shifting. The number of people able and willing to give of their time and resources has decreased while the effort to maintain this historic site grows each year.

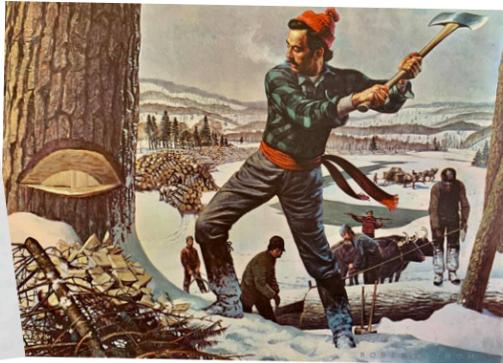
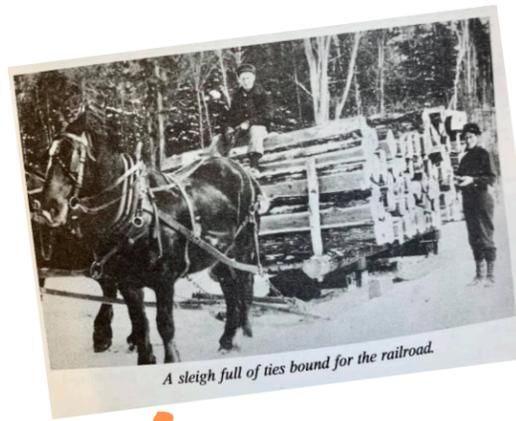
As the current stewards of this hidden gem, we beseech you to support us. Yes, there is much that is in disrepair, but there is also much that is new or recently repaired. It costs significantly more to maintain this museum than we could ever make in admissions or annual memberships. While these do help, and we are grateful, they are not enough. We have an Endowment fund that covers about 75% of our salary expenses. Even by UP standards though, our staff are underpaid. In addition, we need to hire more people to do what volunteers used to do. It was volunteers, not paid staff, who created the exhibits you see today. Volunteers, not paid staff, who put on festivals and plays, socials and re-enactments. It was volunteers, not paid staff, who maintained our historic buildings and log cabins. We still have AMAZING volunteers doing some AMAZING things, but as you will see as you walk these grounds, it is not enough.

Please consider making donations to our Endowment which supports salaries or to the Museum which allows us to preserve what we have and build new what we can. Most of the 'new' exhibits you see are made possible by monies donated specifically for them. You can do the same. For instance, it is our great hope to finish work on Heritage Hall and then tackle the restoration of the Mining Memorial. The repair to the Mining Memorial roof is an estimated \$12,000. That is contingent on finding the monies while the volunteer willing to do the work is still willing and able. Other projects we need help with include painting the Pioneer School House, freshening up the exhibits and signs in the Engine House, repainting and doing maintenance on the large outdoor mining equipment, and keeping up with the continual need to excavate/landscape the property to keep moisture away from our historic buildings. This is only the short list.

If you would like your grandkids to be able to walk through Iron County history, we need your active and ongoing support. And we need you to pass that passion on to the next generation. Inquire at the front desk for ideas on how you can support us. Or visit our website, follow us on Facebook, sign up for our newsletter.

-Sincerely, Iron County Historic & Museum Society, Board, Endowment, Volunteers & Staff.

**Please support us in Our mission:
To Preserve the Past, Inspire Lifelong Learning &
Encourage Cultural Engagement!**



Homestead & Logging Camps

Log Cabin Capital of Michigan Did you know Michigan is the only state with a designated day to honor log cabin history? Since 1987, the last Sunday in June has been celebrated as Log Cabin Day, a time to commemorate the vital role these humble structures played in Michigan's earliest days.

Here at the museum, we're proud to be home to 13 historic log buildings more than any other site in the state! Thanks in large part to the efforts of longtime museum friend and historian Betty Petroski, we were officially recognized in 2014 as the Log Cabin Capital of Michigan.

Logging The importance of logging to our region's heritage cannot be overstated. By 1900, Michigan produced an estimated 170 billion board feet of lumber -enough to cover the entire state in one-inch-thick pine boards... with wood to spare! Logging camps were a way of life throughout the Upper Peninsula and Northern Michigan.

The museum preserves this chapter of history through authentic exhibits. One such highlight is the Sharrard Logging Camp, which features a striking display of antique saws. Our maintenance team lovingly cleaned each one and built a custom display to showcase them with care and authenticity. While the wood stoves might be slightly fancier than those used in real camps, they help bring the exhibit to life. (While these three logging exhibits are impressive, don't miss the Monigal Miniatures in the Engine House.)

Homesteading The third major draw to early Iron County was homesteading. Each of these cabins was painstakingly dismantled from somewhere in Iron County and reassembled here. These give us a glimpse into a by-gone way of life where clothes were washed on a washboard, butter was churned in the kitchen and just about everything a family needed to survive came from the land. Early settlers to Iron County found the ground rich for farming, the lakes and rivers vibrant with fish and the woods full of foraging and hunting opportunities.

Let your imagination run wild as you contemplate life without electricity or plumbing, let alone radio, television or cell phones! Imagine coming to a new country, learning a new language and finding ways to integrate what you knew from your homeland into this new and exciting young community.

It takes a great deal of work to preserve these cabins using skills that few people possess in today's modern world. Imagine how difficult it was without the winches and power tools we possess today; when every log was cut by hand and painstakingly wedged into place, when every row in the field was created by hand or ox and there was no convenience store down the road for milk or bread.

Please consider donating specifically to the preservation of the Museum's hisotric buildings as their upkeep is quite expensive and requires a great deal of time.



Site History: The Caspian Mine

For nearly a century, iron ore mining was one of the main economic engines of Iron County. At its peak, the region was home to 78 operating mines, a testament to the industry's power and importance. The last of these, the Sherwood Mine, closed in 1978, marking the end of an era. The museum complex you're visiting today sits on the historic grounds of the Caspian Mine, which was opened by the Verona Mining Company in 1903. Named after the Caspian Sea, the mine operated until 1937 producing an impressive 6,623,320 tons of iron ore during its lifetime.

The headframe (pictured left) still towers above the original mine shaft, which plunges 539 feet deep and is now flooded. This headframe is the oldest of its kind still standing in Michigan, making it a rare and significant piece of mining heritage. Unfortunately, without a major influx of cash and labor, it will continue to deteriorate eventually disappearing from our landscape.

Today, the museum features 25 buildings and over 100 exhibits. Aside from the headframe and engine house, all other buildings were either relocated from various parts of Iron County or constructed on-site, creating a rich, immersive experience honoring the region's hardworking past.

WIKB & Iron Range Amateur Radio Club Exhibit

New in 2025 is the opportunity to delve into the golden age of broadcasting with our new exhibits honoring WIKB and the Iron Range Amateur Radio Club (IRARC). Discover the history of local communications and radio and explore the stories behind the station that connected the community for generations.

One of WIKB's most enduring programs is "Telephone Time," a live call-in show that began on January 5, 1965. Created and hosted by Jay Barry, who dedicated 44 years to the station, the show became a daily ritual for many residents, allowing them to buy, sell, trade and discuss local happenings. Barry's commitment to community broadcasting left a lasting legacy in Iron County.

The Iron Range Amateur Radio Club (IRARC), based in Iron County, Michigan, has been a cornerstone of the local amateur radio community since its affiliation with the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) on September 10, 1983. With several regional repeaters and active community outreach, IRARC plays a vital role in both preserving radio history and advancing local communication efforts. If you see a member at the radio, ask if you can talk to that guy from Guam!



<<< Bill Leonoff, Jay Berry & Jerry Hautala

Dan Waters, Scott Strom, Jonah Penkivech, Paul Penkivech, Sandie Nies and Mike Nies >>>



Famous Iron County Artists

Iron County has been home to a number of talented artists, many of whose work you can see in greater detail throughout the Museum. Be sure to investigate these talented locals.

Mary Lundin, known professionally as Lundin Kudo, was a gifted sculptor and painter with deep roots in Stambaugh. Her talent led to major commissions, including sculptures for Palm Beach International Airport and Disney World's Swan Hotel—yet she never lost her love for Iron County. Several of her works are proudly displayed throughout the Museum. Near the Cultural Center, you'll find Rachel & Izzy (pictured right).

Notice the woodcut art by **Mary Kale**, displayed near the stage in the Cultural Center, showcasing yet another facet of the region's artistic talent. Some prints of these pieces can be purchased in the Museum Gift Shop. Born in Iron River, Mary studied at the Art Institute of Chicago. Her works are in collections throughout the US, Canada and Mexico. Our exhibit shows the intricate process of the art form.



Lundin Kudo (1947-2006) with Rachel & Izzy

Explore the homes & studios of three famous artists:

Lee LeBlanc (Building 4): A 1931 graduate of Iron River High School, LeBlanc studied art on the East Coast and went on to work as a freelance animator in Hollywood, contributing to Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies. He returned to Iron River after retiring in 1962, where he became celebrated for his wildlife art.

Brandon Giovanelli (Building 27): One of Iron County's most unique and beloved artists, Giovanelli transformed his former home into a work of art. His detailed murals adorn the walls and ceilings, which can be closely admired thanks to the building's low profile. The Brandon Giovanelli Studio & Gallery now honors his remarkable creativity and legacy.

Carrie Jacobs-Bond, while not from Iron County, she spent the "seven happiest years of my life" in Iron River. The home her beloved husband built for her is now located in our courtyard. Be sure to explore the fascinating legacy of this amazing woman.



Lee Leblanc (1913-1988)



Brandon Giovanelli (1937-1994)

Toti's Tavern

Built in 1912, Toti's Tavern stands as one of the last remaining physical links to the once-bustling Virgil Location, a vibrant neighborhood that, at its height, boasted a grocery store, barbershop, bakery and clothing store. As the area changed over time, Toti's remained a cornerstone of a tight-knit, predominantly Italian community.

More than just a bar, Toti's was a social hub. It sponsored local ball teams, hosted community gatherings and served as a gathering place for first-generation immigrants who would play cards and smoke Toscano cigars. Summer nights were lit by outdoor lights strung above the bocce court, welcoming friendly competition and camaraderie.

The tavern was opened by Joseph Toti and later run by his twin sons, Ronald and Donald. During World War II, while both brothers served their country, a trusted family friend kept the bar running. Toti's eventually closed its doors in the 1980s, but its legacy was preserved when the building was moved to the museum grounds and restored in 2003.

Today, visitors admire its ornate tin walls and ceilings, as well as the long mahogany bar that has seen generations of stories and laughter. Toti's Tavern now lives on as a beloved setting for museum programs like History Happy Hour. It is also available to rent for special events.

So come on in, take a seat, and soak in a piece of Iron County's living history!

The Stager Depot

Now quiet and still on the Museum grounds, the Stager Depot was once a lively hub of activity as a key entry point for those arriving in Iron County. Originally located near Stager Lake in Crystal Falls, the depot operated well into the 1960s, welcoming a steady flow of passengers, immigrants and freight. For decades, the Stager Depot was the first stop for many immigrants who came to settle in Iron County's various communities, making it a vital part of the county's early development and population growth. It stands today as a powerful symbol of movement, hope and new beginnings.

Also featured in this exhibit are artifacts from local aviation history, including helicopter parts designed and built by Rudy Enstrom, a visionary from Crystal Falls. Enstrom began his career as a mechanic in the mines, but his dreams reached far higher. In 1957, he began building helicopters, and after six prototypes, he finally achieved flight—marking the start of a remarkable local contribution to aerospace innovation.

Together, the Stager Depot and aviation exhibit celebrate the spirit of travel, ambition and transformation that helped shape Iron County's rich and diverse story.



In 1959, investors helped Rudy Enstrom form the R.J. Enstrom Co., bringing in skilled aviation designers to grow the business. Just six years later, in April 1965, the FAA certified Enstrom's first helicopter, the F28, with deliveries soon flowing from his Upper Peninsula factory. Over time, Enstrom helicopters found success around the globe, marking a remarkable legacy that began right here in Iron County.

Baumgartner Pioneer School

Built in 1896, this one-room schoolhouse is the oldest school building still standing in Iron County. At one time, more than 80 similar schools served the area. Later, the Pioneer School became the Pioneer Mission Covenant Church—part of that history is reflected in the exhibit’s administrative office. It is also a nod to the Yooper spirit of waste-not-want-not, the origin of ‘up-cycling’.

The school was moved to the museum grounds from the Baumgartner Location in Iron River in August 1988. It has since been restored and furnished to its original design.

School districts in Iron County began forming around 1881, when the area was part of Ely Township, Marquette County. Communities rapidly grew around mining operations in Iron River and Stambaugh, attracting settlers from many nationalities, with Scandinavians being the largest group.

Among these were Andrew G. Stromberg, Charles and Frank Erickson and Gust Abrahamson, who divided land near Iron River. Stromberg organized a meeting at his home to establish a school. It was decided to build the school on land donated by Abrahamson. Miss Maude Moses was hired as the first teacher, earning \$45 per month, and classes were initially held at Stromberg’s cabin until the school was built. The school was built for \$348, with the bell costing \$20, the front platform \$17, and a privy \$15. Originally known as District No. 3 School, it later became known as the Baumgartner School, named after the local community or ‘location’. Around 1910, it was renamed the Pioneer School to distinguish it from the newer Edison School.

It is fun to imagine what it must have been like to have kids of all ages learning in one room, with one teacher helping kids add while other kids learned long division. Notice the piano, globe and other items that would have been standard to most one-room school houses. The small individual chalk boards could be thought of as the ‘tablets’ of the day!



Iron County Fire Departments

Unfortunately, our Fire Hall building sustained damage over the winter and is currently closed. We do pull our 1948 engine out and place it on the property for special occasions. We hope you are lucky enough to be here on one of those occasions. Please visit us again to see this exhibit which we will update when we do repair work.

Of note, to this day, all Iron County fire departments are volunteer departments. If you have the opportunity, please thank them for keeping us safe, and support them if you are ever given the opportunity.

Stambaugh F.D. Ford Fire Engine ca. 1948
Converted into a water truck for Young's Golf course and now on display in the Firehall building.



Iron River F.D. ca.1925 (Genesee St)



Iron River F.D. ca.1910 (Genesee St)



Famous Iron County Artists (cont'd)

Look for author, **Aileen Fisher’s** “Found Art”. This selection was formerly displayed at the University of Colorado. A renowned poet and author, publishing more than 100 writings in her lifetime, Fisher was born in Iron River and drew much of her inspiration from her life here. "We always had cats and dogs to play with. I have written so many verses about them and we had horses that knew how to twitch their skin to scare off flies, and cows that knew how to turn green grass into white milk and yellow cream and chickens that were experts at making eggs," said Fisher.

On our Artist’s Island in Heritage Hall you can see the unique works of **Frank Rawnick, Sr.** Born in Yugoslavia, he immigrated to America in 1912 and made a living in the mining industry. He is very well known for his talents as a carver. You can also see his work at the Iron River post office.

In coming years we hope to feature the talents and works of others:

- Viola Turpeinen who was an American-Finnish polka accordion player who performed all over the world to large and faithful audiences.
- Marlene Ekola Gerberick who’s work has been exhibited in New York, Michigan, Maine and Finland which features mixed media interpretations of dreams and natural surroundings.
- Jean Mack, writer and poet has been a fierce advocate of the arts, conservation and all things Iron County. You can find her books of poetry in our gift shop.



Viola Turpeinen



Maxine “Packy” Eckola



Can you find Marlene Ekola’s painting?

- Maxine “Packy” Eckola, co-founder of the Orion Art Center, known for her paintings and murals, also authored many books, performed in the Crystal Falls Variety show, volunteered at this museum and was active in the Crystal Falls Downtown Development Association.
- Janet Rohde, local author made her career as a reporter for the Iron County Reporter. She has written four mystery novels which take place in the UP. Her books can be purchased throughout Iron County, including our Museum Gift Shop. Janet continues to donate her time here at the Museum. Be sure to get her autograph if you see her roaming about!
- Alisa Nelson whose pottery can be bought throughout Iron County and beyond, including our Museum Gift Shop is an up and coming artist of note. As a veteran, she has reinvented herself and continues to inspire those around her.
- Douglas McGraham, mentored by Brandon Giovanelli, was a budding artist. Tragically, he lost his life a month before receiving his art degree from U of Michigan. In loving memory of Douglas and his talent, several of his pieces are on display in the Giovanelli studio.

Temporary Exhibits 2025

80th Anniversary of WWII, June-Sept. 2025

In recognition of the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, this powerful exhibit pays tribute to the 112 men from Iron County who made the ultimate sacrifice in the global fight for freedom. These individuals were among the approximately 2,200 Iron County residents who served in World War I and World War II combined, representing a region defined by duty, patriotism and resilience.

The exhibit features wartime memorabilia, personal documents, photographs and military artifacts that bring to life the stories of these brave soldiers. Designed to be interactive, we encourage you to leave a note or poem in the journal and/or purchase a flower to be placed in any of the vases distributed throughout the exhibit.

In September, the entire exhibit will be placed in a time capsule to be opened in twenty years. Your words of gratitude in the journal and the flowers placed will help future generations appreciate what was purchased with these precious lives. Whether these young men are your relatives or strangers, we are connected in our acknowledgement of their sacrifice.



Peterson Mining Hall (cont'd)

War Memorial

The diorama depicts a World War I trench scene featuring a water-cooled machine gun, a captured German weapon donated by the city of Caspian. The adjacent case displays memorabilia and artifacts from the Civil War onward, including a Civil War cap, a pencil sketch of WWI barracks life, a propeller piece from a WWII Army plane that crashed in the Porcupine Mountains, a paratrooper parachute, newspaper headlines, a unit patch collection and facsimiles of WWII peace treaties. Approximately 2,200 men from Iron County served in World War I and II, with 112 losing their lives in WWII combat.



Group of World War II soldiers from Iron County.

Back Row:
Sy Fiorani,
Harry Pociopa,
____ Johns,
Frank Ballon,
John Caine

Front Row:
Bernard Kondro, Louis
Rizzardi, Herman Taittsch,
Oscar Norkoli



Extraordinary Women of the Upper Peninsula, July

Originally curated by the Beaumier Upper Peninsula Heritage Center at Northern Michigan University, Extraordinary Women of the U.P. is a traveling exhibit that celebrates the remarkable women who have shaped Michigan's Upper Peninsula through leadership, creativity and determination. From educators and artists to athletes and activists, the exhibit highlights a wide range of accomplishments that have often gone under-recognized in traditional historical narratives.

This year, we are proud to expand on this powerful exhibit by featuring additional profiles of women from right here in Iron County. These local additions include trailblazing educators, community builders and cultural contributors who have left lasting legacies in our region. Together, their stories inspire and remind us that history is not only made in grand gestures, but also in everyday acts of courage, kindness and resilience. Through photographs, personal artifacts and archival research, this exhibit uplifts the voices of women whose influence continues to resonate across generations.



This exhibit will be here at the museum for the month of July. We hope this exhibit will inspire you to do what you can for your community. The smallest of deeds, especially when repeated over time, can leave a positive and lasting impact where you live, work and play.

Did you miss this exhibit? Follow as it travels the UP and beyond. It is worth the trip, wherever it might be! It will be a little different at each location it visits.

The Engine House

As you make your way out of the mining hall and into the brick building known as the Engine House, you will see replicas of shops & storefronts that give you snapshots of life in early Iron County history. The Engine House is the only building (besides the headframe) left standing from the Caspian mine. Here you will see:

- Molly Pryne's Dress Shop
- The Carpenter's Shop
- MacDonell's Blacksmith Shop
- The Beechwood Mercantile Store
- The Barber Shop
- Dr. Vilas' Drugstore & Dental Office
- The Pioneer Home
- The Operating Room
- The Chapel
- The Dugout Canoe Collection
- "Coming Out of the Wood" carvings by Unto Jarvi & Charles Dzarnowski

In the Lumbering Hall, you'll find the Monigal Miniatures Logging Camp—a diorama of a logging camp and the largest of its kind in the world. It was built by William Monigal, who spent eight years carving the model figures after a sawmill accident injured him.

Do you recognize the tall man and his ox painted on the large doors?

The Wine Rebellion Cellar



Relive Iron County's bold stand during Prohibition with original wine barrels, stills, and the story of a community that resisted federal seizure. This exhibit highlights the local defiance and the cultural importance of winemaking traditions.

This display is representative of the February 25th, 1920 event called the Wine Rebellion. Merely one month into the National Prohibition Act, federal agents packing 600 rounds of ammunition descended upon the city of Iron River to seize eight barrels of red wine. National headlines declared Iron River was defying the U.S. government with its "liquor" production. As the drama played out for 14 days, this rebellious community captivated the nation.

In the early decades of the 1900s, Iron River was a full-tilt iron mining town, and the promise of jobs had, since 1851 when iron was discovered there, attracted hundreds of miners – many of Italian descent. By the time Prohibition laws passed in 1920, a strong Italian community, along with its heritage of home winemaking, was thriving here.

Iron River merchant John Scalucci, and his brothers Stephen and Joseph, owned a grocery store that catered to Italian miners and their families. The three-story building, which John bought in 1914, had a basement that stored the family's grape press and wine barrels. The family lived in the third-floor apartment. From the first floor, the Scalucci family sold staples like bread, cheese and their homemade Chianti-style wine.

Miners often swung by the grocery store for food and drinks for the workday. Wine was often the beverage of choice, since miners knew the quality of the wine, which was much better than the water as this was before public water systems.

They were undeterred by the prohibition laws and when the government caught wind of their operation, Internal Revenue agents, supported by national guardsmen, were sent to Iron River from Chicago to seize "without due process of law" barrels of wine from their Virgil location cellar. Martin McDonough, a local attorney, fought and won the case. Nationwide reports showcased McDonough's heroic defiance and stand in the rebellion. On February 28, Michigan dropped its investigation into the Iron River Rebellion and McDonough was hailed a hero.

Michigan Corridor

Brick Wall - Not Just a Wall ...

Notice the brick wall to your right. This is the 'front' of the building in the photo. This building is called the Engine House. The equipment in the Engine House held all the equipment that ran the elevator system located in the Head Frame. You will spend more time in the Engine House later in your tour. The building you are standing in now was built around the Engine House in 2005.



Timeline

One of our newer exhibits, the timeline project was begun in 2021. This collaborative effort came together in bits and spurts as staff, volunteers and vendors came back online after Covid. We think our timeline is a bit different than most. The larger middle section speaks to notable events in Iron County history while the upper and lower sections show Iron County residents making an impact on national and state levels respectively. You will also note the beginning of the timeline is the more recent point in time. As you work your way towards Heritage Hall you walk back in time. We end at the beginning when it is surmised that Etienne Brule was likely the first European to interact with the local residents; The Ojibwe. We have no proof that Etienne walked in our woods as we have no proof he interacted with local Ojibwe. We have named a couple notable places after him: Brule River, Ski Brule, a couple roads and so on. We think it is quite possible and easy to imagine. We hope you enjoy this 'walk through time'.

Heritage Hall

Built in 2005, Heritage Hall was designed to be a meeting space and is where most museum activities were held until the Cultural Center was built. It started as a large hard-packed dirt area that became a concrete slab. Eventually a roof was put up making it an open-air space and finally walls were put up. In 2024, Connor Sports Flooring donated the hardwood floor you see today. By then, the cement slab was in such bad shape, it took two levels of subfloor to make the floor level enough and accommodate the movement that occurs throughout the change of seasons. We are hopeful this room will look this fantastic for decades to come.

Heritage Hall is an ongoing project that will likely take a couple years to finish. One of the driving forces behind the exhibits we build is to show the history and lives of the 'ordinary' people who did the 'extraordinary' to make Iron County what it is today. We have streets and rivers, etc. named after our high profile ancestors. In Heritage Hall we want to tell the stories of the moms and pops of Iron County.

Our hope is to inspire, especially our youth. If our ancestors could come to this raw wilderness with only what they could carry, and carve out a community that still exists today, what can our youth do with their lives? Early immigrants came here to find work. They created a way of life that is so special that today, people come here just for the way of life. They figure out how to find work that allows them to stay. We think that is pretty special.

As you enter Heritage Hall, you will begin to move forward in time again.

Heritage Hall (cont'd)

The Ojibwe

We are excited to share with you the refreshed exhibit highlighting the Ojibwe people who have long made Iron County their home. Within the exhibit you will see artifacts and murals that truly represent the lives of the Ojibwe from the past and the present.

Harold & Marcia Bernhardt and George & Mary McGeshick set the stage long ago in building an authentic replica of an Ojibwe home. They also oversaw the building of the spirit house replica. The museum is happy to continue this tradition of collaboration with local families and the Lac Vieux Desert Tribal Historic Preservation Office. With this support, we have been able to update our exhibit to showcase artifacts that reflect the Ojibwe culture.

The various artifacts have been graciously donated from various community members over the decades. Note the use of natural materials in the construction of these items. Whether you are looking at the canoe or handmade fishing net, or you are enjoying the regalia you can clearly see that the natural world is appreciated in every piece.

Michael White's Ojibwe/Potawatomi Dance Regalia

Regalia is an outward reflection of one's authentic self representing one's religious beliefs, values and life experiences. Unlike a uniform or costume, regalia is a unique set of clothing created to represent the wearer. The individual's values, life experiences, religious beliefs and even dreams are reflected in each choice from color, pattern, design and texture to the particular material used. The regalia is worn at religious ceremonies, special events or Pow-Wows.

Traditional dancers use natural items and colors with designs based on nature. Michael White incorporated different shades of blue to represent the Great Lakes and the beautiful blue skies, along with a hint of green symbolizing the earth, plants, and spiritual growth. The red used symbolizes energy, power and success.

The regalia is paired along with some of Michael's favorite accessories: The breast plate, eagle feather bustle, arm cuffs, angora fur anklets, breech cloth, beaded moccasins, fur turban worn on his head made from otter/beaver skin and the eagle feather fan. The Potawatomi, like many other tribes, believe that eagles can carry messages and prayers to the creator.

Michael wore his regalia with responsibility and pride, representing his community traditions and personal taste.

Artist's Island

Currently, our Artist's Island contains the handiwork of local miner Frank Rawnick, Sr. Rawnick came to Iron County as a young man from Yugoslavia. He made a career working in the mines. However, his real talent and love was creating things. He was adept and resourceful as you can see from his furniture made from things he found in the woods. He was also a very gifted carver. It is said he carved Grandfather clocks for each of his grandchildren. There are pieces of his art throughout Iron County and with many of his family members. Visit this exhibit again as we continue to populate it with Rawnick's art and life stories as we gather them. Likewise, we will finish building the backside of the island and will populate it with carvings, music, paintings and other art pieces from other artistic Iron County residents from the past and present.

Peterson Mining Hall

The Mining Hall is named in honor of Harry and Cecelia Peterson, whose generous contributions made this important museum expansion possible. Harry served as an engineer at the Caspian Mine and is credited with designing its first underground ventilation system a significant advancement in mine safety and operations. While the mining exhibits in the Mining Memorial Hall are currently under renovation, we look forward to unveiling the completed displays at a future date. Stay tuned for exciting updates as we continue to preserve and share Iron County's rich mining heritage.

Rock & Mineral Exhibit

Most of the specimens you see here were generously donated by Brian Greenlund and Michael Riesch, included are local treasures as well as samples from other regions. Enjoy exploring them!

The Blue Wall

Affectionately dubbed "The Blue Wall" by staff and volunteers, this new exhibit depicts the geological history of Iron County. Be sure to visit again and watch our progress as we continue to work on it.

Superintendent's Office

A Mining Superintendent held a key role in the mining company, often overseeing several mines. This recreated office displays some of the items that might have been found in a typical superintendent's workspace. Note the over-sized ledgers. Ours are genuine artifacts. Indeed all the items seen here have been donated from Iron County businesses or families who found themselves in possession of these items years after the mines closed.

Oberg's Saloon

The saloon next to the wine cellar was assembled from pieces of historic Iron County businesses. The bar back mirror came from the Dascola Barber Shop in Caspian. The standing bar's middle panel once served as the front of the Gibbs City Post Office (circa 1915). The large red dice were salvaged by a fireman from the Alpha Hotel after a fire around 1930. The table, jug, and beer pitcher are from the Boyington Hotel, while the chairs originated at the Tri-City Drugstore in Stambaugh.

Fire Alarm System

Notice the two different versions of early fire alarm systems, both made by the Gamewell Fire Alarm Telegraph Company. They transmitted signals using telegraph technology. The large bell on the left was typically placed in a firehouse or important town building. When a fire was reported, someone would go to a call box located elsewhere in town and follow its instructions. Each call box was assigned a unique number, which was transmitted as a series of bell rings corresponding to that number. This alerted firefighters to the exact location of the fire. The bell would continue ringing until the call box was reset. On the right is a code wheel box or fire alarm transmitter. This device used a wheel with notches representing call box numbers. When the handle was cranked, the notches sent a coded signal to a central station.

Both systems significantly improved communication speed compared to the older method of simply ringing a town bell. By using telegraph signals, firefighters could quickly and accurately pinpoint fires, leading to faster responses, less property damage, and saved lives.