The Calumet & Hecla Mining Company Semi-Centennial Employee Service Medals of 1916: A Personal View

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In 1916 the prosperous Calumet & Hecla Mining Company celebrated 50 years of copper production from the conglomerate orebody on the Keweenaw Peninsula in Michigan. To commemorate the occasion, bronze, silver and gold medals were awarded to special employees for their many years of dedicated service. Those handsome medals today are prime historical collectibles from the glory years of copper mining on the Upper Peninsula.

On Saturday, July 15, 1916—over a century ago—the prosperous Calumet & Hecla Mining Company (C & H) celebrated 50 years of copper production from the conglomerate orebody on the Keweenaw Peninsula in Red Jacket, Michigan. The mines along the Calumet & Hecla conglomerate lode were idled as 5,400 C & H workers and their families took part in the festivities. The Gala began at 10:00 a.m. with a grand parade. The day was full of activities including an address by the Governor of Michigan, lunch for 19,000 people, games for 7,500 children, several band concerts, and an elaborate fireworks display prepared by trained mine workmen. It concluded with dancing at the Colosseum and Armory until 11:00 p.m. All the Calumet & Hecla employees had the day off—with pay.

But the highlight of the day was the awarding of medals “FOR FAITHFVL AND EFFICIENT SERVICE” to long term employees of the company: the bronze medal for service from 20 to 30 years, the silver medal for 30 to 40 years, and the gold medal for service of 40 years or more. The most
celebrated of the “Gold Medal Men” was Timothy O’Shea, who came from Ireland as a boy and started work at C & H on January 1, 1866, 50 years earlier. In all, 169 men were presented with gold medals, 375 with silver, and 806 with bronze (Keweenaw Miner 1916). The Calumet & Hecla Mining Company had only recently endured the long and bloody copper strike of 1913–1914 instigated by the Western Federation of Miners Union, and public recognition of those employees who had remained with the company through that violent period seemed appropriate.

Wendell E. Wilson, Editor and Publisher of The Mineralogical Record, in his introduction to Wilson and Dyl’s The Michigan Copper Country (1992) states, “The published literature on the Copper Country could fill a small library all by itself; hefty tomes have been devoted solely to bibliographies of this rich mining district.” Tom Rosemeyer (2001), in his comprehensive “The Copper-Bearing Conglomerate Lodes of the Michigan Copper Country”, the sixth in his series of articles for Rocks & Minerals on the mines and minerals of Michigan’s Copper Country, covers the Calumet and Hecla conglomerate lode in scholarly detail. And C. Harry Benedict (1952) devotes an entire volume to Red Metal: The Calumet and Hecla Story.

But aside from the Keweenaw Miner’s July 15, 1916 special edition on the Calumet & Hecla Mining Company’s Semi-Centennial celebration and a few other contemporary accounts, there is very little in print about the Calumet and Hecla employee service medals. This is surprising because these medals, now a full century old, are very collectible. And, not surprisingly, the gold medals are the most coveted of all of the Copper Country artifacts.
When I retired in 1991, I made a list of ten specimens I could never own, either because they were not available or were unaffordable or because they had disappeared. But a C & H gold medal? They were so ephemeral they were not even on the list. Five years later, I did obtain a bronze medal and in 1998 added a silver medal and another bronze. But at the time, I did not know anyone who had a gold. Moreover, I did not know anyone who had ever seen one. In fact, I did not know anyone who had even known anyone who had seen one. How many gold medals were still in existence? No one knew. Presumably, many were melted down during the great depression. Then, in 2001, Stanley J. Dyl II, then Director of the A. E. Seaman Mineral Museum at Michigan Technological University, got wind of an anonymous collector in the Keweenaw who was engaged in negotiations to obtain a gold medal from another anonymous collector. It took him over a year to complete a deal. After he had the medal, I contacted him to see if he was interested in selling it. He wasn’t. But he agreed to let me know if he were to change his mind. Then in 2003, Tom Rosemeyer called Stan Dyl and told him Ed Raines knew of a gold medal available in Colorado. Stan decided he could not justify spending several thousand dollars for an artifact when for the same amount he could obtain a good mineral specimen for the museum, so he passed Ed’s contact information on to me (personal communication, May 13, 2003).
Figure 3. Miners line up to receive medals for years of service to the mining company. Photo courtesy of Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections. Photographer unknown.

Figure 4. Several well-dressed children take a ride on the merry-go-round. Photo courtesy of Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections. Photographer unknown.
In the 1960s, when I was just starting to collect, I asked the late Paul Desautels what a person of limited means could accomplish by collecting gems. He said, “Nothing!” Prominent gem collectors were spending nearly $200,000 a year. So I asked what one could accomplish by collecting minerals. He said, “Everything! If you specialize, in 20 or 30 years a person of limited means could assemble a suite of minerals that any museum in the world would love to have because they would not be able to duplicate it.” But as a beginning collector, I was using the shotgun method of selecting minerals, so of course I did not take his advice.

Years later, in 1976, I obtained a very fine specimen of Michigan native copper from the American Museum of Natural History’s Clarence S. Bement Collection (1843–1923). It seems the museum, in keeping with the current trend, had decided to abandon the informative but austere horizontal cases which had housed the Bement collection since the turn of the century and transform the Gem and Mineral Hall into a more friendly and entertaining space. Once the Bement pieces were out of sight in the storage drawers, they became candidates for exchange, and wonderful, old, irreplaceable Michigan coppers began to disappear. I had the opportunity to buy a few of them, but I held back. As I explained to Boston area collector/dealer and friend Phil Scalsis, “I already have my copper!” He replied, “No, Bill, you don’t understand! If one’s good, two’s better, three’s better, four’s better, five’s better …”

When I heard of the availability of the gold medal in Colorado in 2003, I had accumulated a small suite of Michigan minerals and adding an exceptional artifact seemed like a good idea, so I purchased the medal. That summer, I visited the Van Pelt and Opie Library in Houghton, Michigan, and with the assistance of Eric C. Nordberg, University Archivist of the Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections, I was able to obtain copies of the Calumet & Hecla employee records of the medal recipients Thomas H. Soddy and Ansel P. Kumpula, as well as the records of Peter A Nordstrom. Recently, Library Assistant Georgeann Larson kindly provided available copies of the Calumet & Hecla employee records for David Spence, Frank Schulte, Joseph Pollard, and John Richards. Most of the personal information given below was obtained from these records.

The early employee records were kept on 3.75 inch x 6.25-inch index cards. There was no title: only an employee number, employee name and house number on the first line. Starting \textit{circa} 1894, C & H created a new legal size form “Calumet & Hecla Mining Company and Subsidiaries, Central Employment Office, Application for Employment.” Also in about 1894, a brief questionnaire was included. Each employee had either an early form or a later one. If he had an early form, there was usually no questionnaire. If he had a later form, there usually was. The questionnaire was quite interesting: Line 7 “Are you married or single?”; line 8 “If married, How many children have you?”; line 9 “How old is each of your sons?” C & H kept track of the boys.

Jeremiah Mason, Archivist at the Keweenaw National Historical Park, believes the records are incomplete. “An unknown number of the cards were destroyed when the old office burned in 1936. Other cards may have ‘walked’ as souvenirs over the years before the records came to Michigan Tech.” (personal communication, June 21, 2016).
Thomas H. Soddy Gold Medal

Ed Raines discovered this gold medal in a coin shop in Boulder, Colorado. The previous owner was said to be a grandson of Thomas H. Soddy. Ed tried to find out his name, but was unsuccessful. He found there was no listing for “Soddy” in either the Boulder or Longmont phone books and concluded a grandson, or more probably a great-grandson, was most likely a maternal descendent (personal communication, May 18, 2003).

Figure 5. Calumet & Hecla Mining Company gold medal awarded to Thomas H. Soddy in 1916 for 50 years of service. William Severance collection; Jeff Scovil Photo.

The obverse of the medal shows the dates 1866 and 1916, portraits of Quincy Adams Shaw, Sr. and Alexander Agassiz and the signature of the sculptor, V. D. Brenner Sc., the designer of the Lincoln cent. Quincy Adams Shaw was the Boston Brahmin financier of the Calumet & Hecla Mining Company who persuaded his son-in-law, Alexander Agassiz, to take over the failing venture from Edwin J. Hulbert, the nephew of Henry R. Schoolcraft and the discoverer of the Calumet conglomerate lode. Alexander Agassiz was also the son of the famed Harvard University naturalist Louis Agassiz and was a scientist in his own right. He led the company from Boston until his death in 1910 at age 74. Quincy A. Shaw died in 1908 at age 83. The legend on the reverse of the medal includes the name of the employee and his years of service.

My mineral collection catalog description of the Thomas H. Soddy gold medal states: “Near mint condition. 2.5 in Dia (6.35 cm), 5.74 oz of 93% gold.” (Assay from Stanley J. Dyl II, personal communication, May 13, 2003.)

Thomas Hill Soddy was born in Cardiganshire, Wales on June 9th, 1851. He started work for the company in November 1866 at age 15 in the Motive Power Department. By 1894, he had married Mary (or Martha) Phillips, and together they had three children: two boys and a girl. He lived in house No. 108 on Calumet Avenue. In February 1895 he was promoted to foreman at a salary of $120 per
month which was increased to $150 per month in July, 1898. Ten years later, on September 1, 1908 he was promoted to acting superintendent of Motive Power. He was promoted to superintendent the following year.

Thomas H. Soddy was awarded a gold medal in 1916 at age 65 for 50 years of service, but he continued to work for another 11 years. (His portrait is shown on page 45 of the Keweenaw Miner special edition.) He was pensioned on October 1, 1927 at age 76, after 61 years of service. He died two years later on November 10, 1929. At his death, he received $1,500 of life insurance as a lump sum payment. His uncle Frank, five younger brothers (John, Stephen, William, Joseph, and Francis), and two sons (Thomas Chester Soddy and Thomas Phillip Soddy) all worked for the company.

The elder son, Thomas Chester Soddy, was born on March 28, 1883. At age 16, he started working for C & H during the summer of 1899 as a “Temp.” helper in the Motive Power Department for $20 per month and later as an engine boy for $17 per month. He graduated from high school in 1903 and worked that summer in the lab at $44 per month. He then attended the Michigan College of Mines and worked the summer of 1904 as a helper in Motive Power at $35 per month. On September 23, he “Quit to return to college. Ann Arbor”. In January 1906, he was hired as a full-time worker at $42 per month. In 1907, his wages were increased to $57.20 per month, but he developed an ulcerated bowel. He received $23 from the Employees’ Aid Fund in May and $25 per month the rest of 1907 and $20 for January of 1908. The aid expired on January 5, 1908 and on January 29th he left the company and moved to Detroit. According to census records he was still unemployed in 1910, but as of 1920 and 1930 he was working as a bakery salesman in Detroit, where he died in 1933.

Thomas H. Soddy’s younger son, Thomas Phillip Soddy, was born in Houghton, Michigan on September 24, 1888 and also worked for C & H, but I do not have his employment records. According to census records, he was working as a machinist for C & H in 1910; as a mechanical mining engineer in 1920; and as superintendent of manufacturing for C & H in 1940. He married Dorothy May Burbank. He died in Pinellas, Florida, in January 1960.

Francis Soddy (Uncle Frank), his father’s younger brother, was born in 1836, 15 years before Thomas was born. He went to work in the Calumet Blacksmith Shop in January 1866. He was married and had a son born in 1882. He lived in House No. 715 in Red Jacket. In 1894, he earned $75 per month. He received $9 from the Employee’s Aid Fund in May of 1900, $28 in June, $25 per month the remainder of the year and $13 the following January. Aid expired on January 16, 1901. He died of cancer a year later on March 21, 1902 at about age 65 after 36 years of service.

Younger brother John Charles Soddy was born in Pottsville, Pennsylvania, on February 4, 1856, about five years after Thomas was born in Wales. The family lived in Rossie, New York, for about five years (ca. 1858–1862) before settling in Michigan. He began work for C & H in “about 1873” at approximately age 16. He was single and lived in House No. 1501 on “Old Torch Lake Road, Hecla”. By February 1895, he was an engineer for underground steam pumps earning $62 per month. He received $8 in aid in May of 1908, $29 in June, $25 per month for the rest of the year and $13 the following January. Aid expired on January 16, 1909. He died of
“Diabetis” [sic] three years later on January 21, 1912 at age 55 after about 39 years of service. Stephen Soddy was born in Rossie on April 18, 1862. On April 29, 1876, just after his 14th birthday, he went to work for C & H. In 1894, he was an “Engineer on Superior Engine”, reporting to his older brother foreman Thomas H. Soddy. He later married Clara and lived in House No. 202 in Calumet. He had three sons and a daughter. In February 1895 he was promoted to engineering supervisor at a salary of $90 per month. By January 1907 he was earning $111.37 per month, but two years later, in 1909, this was reduced slightly to $100 per month and then converted to a daily wage of $5.80. Stephen Soddy was awarded a gold medal in 1916 for 40 years of service at age 54, but he continued to work for nearly 17 more years. (His portrait is shown on page 41 of the Keweenaw Miner special edition.) On May 14, 1921, at age 59, he was laid off. He returned to work seven months later as a stationary engineer earning $2.90 per day. Over the next ten years, this increased to $4.90 per day, but by June 16, 1931 his salary was $4 per day. The following year, in May 1932 when he was 70 years old, his wages were reduced to $2.40 per day. He was laid off again on March 31, 1933 just before his 71st birthday and after almost 57 years of service and given a pension on April 1st. His pension was set to expire three years later on April 1, 1936, but as was often the case, he did not live to collect all of it. He died on March 27, 1935 just before his 73rd birthday. On April 9th, the Employees’ Aid Fund Committee approved funeral expenses of $200.

William Soddy was born in Calumet, Michigan on March 30, 1864. He joined C & H in 1880 when he was about 16 years old and worked, like Stephen Soddy, in Motive Power for Thomas H. Soddy, his oldest brother. He later married and had two sons and two daughters: William C., Norma, Edna, and Russell J. Soddy.

In 1894, William lived in House No. 521 in Blue Jacket and was earning $58 per month. In July 1916, after about 36 years, he was earning $87 per month as a mechanic, but this was later changed to a daily rate of $4.80. His wife died in 1918. For the next 15 years, his daily rate fluctuated. By June 16, 1931, his wage was $3.80 per day, but the following year, in May 1932, at age 68, it was reduced to $2.30. On March 31, 1933 he was laid off at age 69 after about 53 years of service. He was given a pension the next day, April 1, 1933, which he collected for three years until it expired on April 1, 1936. He was then 72 years old. During his long years of service, he was apparently injured twice, because he collected Workmen’s Compensation in June, July, and August in 1929 and again in December 1929 and January, 1930. (Michigan Workman’s Compensation became law on September 1, 1912.) William Soddy was awarded a silver medal in 1916 for about 36 years of service and a gold medal in 1920 for 40 years of service when he was about 56 years old, but he continued to work for almost another 13 years. (His name is listed on page 49 of the Keweenaw Miner special edition.) He died in Houghton in 1943, at 79 years of age.

William Soddy’s elder son, William Charles Soddy was born on December 27, 1896 and worked several years for C & H. He worked in the Motive Power Lab for less than 2 months in 1912 when he was 16 and quit, and again in 1914 for just over two months and quit. He was hired again as an oiler in 1916 at $43 per month, but quit a third time just one day short of three months. He signed on again
two years later in 1918 as a “Rep Hand” at $53 per month, but quit less than two months later to join the U. S. Marine Corps. He served in the Marines for just over 14 months, from May 23, 1918 until August 13, 1919. He then returned to C & H in September as an Assistant Operator for $3.50 per day. He quit for the fifth and final time the following April 7, 1920.

William Soddy’s younger son, Russell John Soddy, was born on February 16, 1899. He attended the Michigan College of Mines and worked for C & H during his summer vacation in 1918 as an oiler in Motive Power. He returned as a helper on January 15, 1919 but was laid off in May and moved to Cadillac, Michigan. He settled finally in Kenosha, Wisconsin in the late 1920s, where he lived and owned a gas station there at least into the 1940s; he died in Kenosha in 1987.

Joseph Stephen Soddy was born on January 17, 1866. In 1880, when he was 14 years old, he went to work for C & H as a helper in Motive Power. He quit five years later in 1885 but signed on again in 1890. In 1893, he received $28.88 from the Employees’ Aid Fund. By 1894, he had married and had two children, both girls. He worked in the machine shop reporting to H. Messmer. His oldest brother Thomas H. Soddy was foreman. He lived in House No. 4082 in Yellow Jacket. Beginning in July 1896, he was paid $57 per month. (It appears that by 1901, he had a third child and had moved to 3979 Scott Street in Newtown.) In October, 1901, he was promoted to Engineering Machinist at $72 per month, which was increased to $88 per month in December, 1907. His compensation remained at this level for ten years. Joseph S. Soddy was awarded a silver medal in 1916 for 36 years of service at age 50. (His name is listed on page 49 of the Keweenaw Miner special edition.) Then, on February 1, 1918, he quit the company at age 52 after 33 years of service. He did not receive a pension, and died in Los Angeles County, California, in 1960, at age 94.

Francis D. (“Frank”) Soddy, the baby of the family, was born in Houghton, Michigan on June 19, 1869, eighteen years and ten days after his oldest brother Thomas was born in Wales. In 1885, when he was about 16 years old, he went to work for C & H in the Motive Power Department. In 1895, he was single and lived in House No. 1501 in “Hecla.” He worked in the machine shop under H. Messmer, earning $47 per month. In October 1900, he was transferred to the “M. S.” Department (?) and earned $71.50 per month. He married sometime after 1895 and it appears his wife died in 1901. (He quit his job on October 2, 1901 but returned to work about two months later on December 21, 1901.) He remarried Flora Switzer in 1906 and they had a daughter, Frances Mae, in 1910. His compensation continued to increase and by 1912, he was earning $102 per month. The following year, on July 29, 1913, at age 44, he was transferred back to the Motive Power Department at a professional level. Francis D. Soddy was awarded a silver medal in 1916 for about 31 years of service just after his 47th birthday. (His name is listed on page 49 of the Keweenaw Miner special edition.) He continued to work for nearly another 17 years. He retired and was pensioned on June 1, 1933 after about 48 years of service just short of his 64th birthday. He died nearly eight years later on May 23, 1941, less than a month before his 72nd birthday.

Thomas H. Soddy’s obituary appeared in the Calumet News, Monday, November 11, 1929, the day after his death:
THOMAS SODDY, LOCAL PIONEER, SUMMONED

Thomas Hill Soddy, a respected citizen and resident of this district since 1866, died at his home at 409 Kearsarge Street, Laurium Sunday. Born in Wales, June 9, 1851, Mr. Soddy came with his parents to Rossie, N. Y., where he lived for a few years. In 1860, he came to the Lake Superior country. Shortly afterward, he entered the employ of the Calumet & Hecla Company, and remained in the service of that company until his resignation two years ago after 61 years of service. For much of this time he was superintendent of motive power.

The deceased was a member of branches of the Masonic order, and was a thirty-second degree Mason of long standing.

On Dec. 4, 1879, Mr. Soddy married Miss Mary Phillips. He is survived by his widow, two sons, and a daughter, Mrs. Ella Soddy Carpenter, Youngstown Ohio; T. C. Soddy, Detroit; and T. P. Soddy, Calumet. The following sisters and brothers also survive; Mesdames Martha Roberts, Calumet; Elizabeth Miller, Flint; and Flora Nesbitt, Flint; Stephen, William, and Francis D. Soddy, Calumet; and Joseph Soddy, Long Beach, Calif.

Funeral Services will be held at the residence at 2:30 Wednesday afternoon and will be conducted by Montrose Commandery, Knights Templar.

Peter A. Nordstrom Gold Medal

Peter Anton Andersen Nordstrom was born in Kåfjord, Alta, Finnmark, Norway on August 16, 1850, and immigrated to the U.S. in 1869. He went to work for C & H in 1870 at about 20 years of age. There is nothing in his service record concerning where he worked, what he did, or how much he was paid for 24 years, but the 1900 and 1910 censuses list him as a “Miner (copper)”; in 1894 he stated on his questionnaire that he worked at the Calumet mine for Tom Hudson. He married 20-year-old Sophia Johanna Salamonsdatter Karpanen in 1873, shortly after her arrival from Norway, and as of 1900 Sophia had given birth to no less than 11 children, seven of whom survived: three sons and four daughters. His sons, Peter Martin and Elmer Hjalmar, were born in 1879 and 1885 and eventually worked for the company, as did his younger brother, John Fredrik Andersen Nordstrom and two cousins, Henry M. Larson and Martin Nordstrom. They had a third son, Gerald Waldemar, born in 1896, and a fourth son, William Howard, in 1898. William died in infancy but Gerald worked as a miner and pipe man in the copper mines beginning before 1920 and was still working for the Isle Royal Copper Company as of 1942; he died in Houghton in 1968.

Peter lived in House No. 3999 in Newtown. He received $3 or less from the Employee’s Aid Fund in 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, $17.50 over two months in 1896, $19.00 over 4 months in 1899, from $1 to $4 in 1907, 1908 and 1909, $28.50 in 1910, and $3 in 1911 and 1912. He was pensioned on July 1, 1913 at about age 63 with approximately 43 years of service. Although he was no longer employed at the time, Peter A. Nordstrom was awarded a gold medal in 1916 for 46 years of service. (His portrait is shown on page 45 of the Keweenaw Miner special edition.)

Peter A. Nordstrom’s elder son, Peter Martin Nordstrom, was born on July 18, 1878. On
April 29, 1895, when he was 16, he went to work for C & H at the Calumet mine as a “drill boy” for $35 per month. He quit three years later on July 20, 1898, but was rehired on January 15, 1902 in the “R. J. S. lab” at $50 per month. He quit again three months later on April 21st, but was rehired on January 21, 1904 as a miner at $53 per month. He married Julia Charlotte Huhta in 1901 and left the company on June 13, 1904. He worked as a laborer thereafter, and died in Proviso, Illinois, in 1946.

Peter’s younger son, Elmer Hjalmar Nordstrom, was born on June 3, 1885. On August 9, 1901, when he was 16, he went to work for C & H at the Calumet Mine as a “drill boy” for $35 per month. In February of 1905, he was either promoted or reassigned and his wages were increased to $40 per month. He received a raise in May to $44 per month. He quit about a year later on June 1, 1906. He moved to Washington, married there in 1909, and later became an accountant for the telephone company in Seattle, where he died in 1950.

John Fredrik Nordstrom, Peter A. Nordstrom’s younger brother, was born in Kåfjord, Norway on June 6, 1853. In 1872, when he was about 18, he went to work for C & H at the Calumet mine. There is nothing in his service record concerning where he worked, what he did, or how much he earned, but 22 years later, in 1894, he was listed as a miner and was paid $58.50 per month. During that year, his wife died and left him with five children. He remarried in 1896. The 1900 census lists him, with his new (younger) wife, working as a “miner (copper).” His two sons, Fred W. and Gus E., were born in 1880 and 1885. They both eventually worked for C & H. On April 13, 1908 he quit the company after about 36 years of service. He was 54 years old.

A Note About Pensions

According to Lankton (1991), “... by the turn of the century, C & H had hundreds of men of advanced years and long service on the payroll. Because it valued loyalty, the company had not
systematically weeded aging men out, had not discarded them when their performance had fallen off … C & H did not want to dismiss its oldest and, at one time, best employees, particularly if forced retirement would cause them undue hardship. On the other hand, it did not want to carry men over 60 on the payroll as charity cases, until one day, they obligingly quit or keeled over.” So in 1904, the company secretly began giving pensions to some of their older employees based on need. The policy was formulated by Alexander Agassiz and the directors in Boston and was administered by Superintendent James MacNaughton on a case-by-case basis. But word soon got around and C & H was forced to expand the system generally to workers over 60 years old with at least 20 years of service. Pensions were based on 1% times the years of service times the average of the workers last ten years of earnings. But they were awarded for five years or less.

Life was hard in the Keweenaw, and harder still for miners, many of whom worked into their late sixties or early seventies, so a pension of only a few years duration was usually long enough. If you were still productive or quit the company but were otherwise qualified to receive a pension, you were out of luck. And when a pensioner died, the payments stopped. There was nothing for the widow or family of the deceased. In the meantime, the pensioner was required to move out of company-owned housing within six months of retirement. (Widows were required to move within a year, but the company frequently paid them $60 cash, a year’s rent, to speed up the process.) (Lankton 1991)

![Figure 7. Les Tolonen’s award winning exhibit of C & H employee service medals of 1916. The “Big Wheel” is awarded by the Show Committee each year to the best dealer exhibit. Greater Detroit Gem, Mineral, and Fossil Show, October 10, 2010. William Severance photo.](image)

**Les Tolonen Medal Exhibit**

Les Tolonen and his wife June Gracyk have been familiar figures at Midwest mineral shows as dealers in Copper Country minerals for many years. Not well known, perhaps, is the fact that Les has a major collection of Keweenaw artifacts and ephemera, as evidenced by his award winning Calumet & Hecla Mining Company Semi-Centennial Service Medal exhibit at the Greater Detroit

Figure 9. Bronze (lower left), silver (center), and gold (upper right) C & H employee service medals of 1916 in Les Tolonen’s exhibit. Greater Detroit Gem, Mineral, & Fossil Show, October 10, 2010. William Severance photo.
Gem, Mineral, & Fossil Show in October, 2010. Prominently displayed in its original presentation case was the Calumet & Hecla Mining Company gold medal awarded to David Spence in 1916 for 44 years of service. There was also a silver medal in its original case and a bronze medal standing alone. The exhibit included an original copy of the Keweenaw Miner special edition of July 15, 1916: “Calumet & Hecla Mining Company Semi-Centennial”, an original copy of the program for the event and an original photograph of the presentation ceremony. These items which accompanied the medals, though rare, are still available today on eBay and elsewhere. But what distinguished his exhibit for me was the presence of items even more unusual, unissued bronze and silver medals, which Les believes are unique, as well as a rare bronze medal with a blank reverse. And the bottom of the case was lined with a small section of the red, white, and blue bunting which decorated the platform during the 1916 medal presentation ceremony.

![Figure 10. Calumet & Hecla Mining Company gold medal awarded to David Spence in 1916 for 44 years of service. Les Tolonen collection. Photo courtesy of June Gracyk.](image)

**David Spence Gold Medal**

David Spence was born on May 24, 1845 in Scotland. In 1872, when he was about 27 years old, he immigrated to America and went to work for C & H as a laborer in the “Rock house.” As of the 1880 Calumet census he was still working as a “laborer” and was living with his wife, Jane R., and infant daughters Jane and Margaret. In 1894 it is noted that he was married to a new wife, Elizabeth Ann, and lived at 703 Waterworks, in Calumet. By 1900, still a “laborer (mine),” he and Elizabeth had three young sons and four older daughters. In 1910 he is listed as a “laborer, mine shaft house,” and in 1911, he was still a laborer earning $2.33 per day. By 1920 he had retired. One son, David Jr. (born 1888), eventually worked for C & H.
David Spence (Sr.) was awarded a gold medal in 1916 for 44 years of service. (His portrait is shown on page 43 of the *Keweenaw Miner* special edition.) He was 71 years old. In April 1894, he received $22.00 from the Employee’s Aid Fund and over the next 20 years, through August 1914, another $61.00. He was also injured late in his career. From January 5, through April 30, 1918, he was paid $118.26 from Workmen’s Compensation. He was given a pension the next day, May 1, 1918, a few weeks short of his 73rd birthday. He lived more than ten additional years until January 23, 1929 when he was almost 84 years old. By then, his pension had expired, but his heirs collected $1,500 life insurance, paid out over a 12-month period.

![Figure 11](image)

*Figure 11. 8.25 inches (21 cm) diameter obverse bronze proof of sculptor Victor D. Brenner’s medal design with a 2.5 inch (6.4 cm) diameter bronze medal for comparison. Photo courtesy of the anonymous owner.*

**Keweenaw National Historical Park Medals**

Jeremiah Mason, Archivist at the Lake Superior Management Center of the Keweenaw National Historical Park, tells me that the Calumet Visitors Center has an example of each of the three C & H Semi-Centennial employee service medals on exhibit: a bronze medal awarded to Joseph Cosso in 1916 for 23 years of service, a silver medal awarded to Sidney G. Vivian in 1920 for 30 years of service, and a gold medal awarded to Frank Schulte in 1916 for 47 years of service. (There is a portrait of Frank Schulte in the *Keweenaw Miner* special edition with the other “Gold Medal Men”. Joseph Cosso is listed on page 51 and Sidney Vivian is listed on page 53 with the bronze medal recipients, presumably for 26 years of service.)
They also have a large proof of the obverse of the bronze medal designed by sculptor Victor D. Brenner on exhibit as well as a framed bronze proof set in the collection (both obverse and reverse designs). The Houghton County Historical Society has a similar framed set (Jeremiah Mason, personal communication, June 7, 1916). I only recently heard of these proofs from the anonymous collector who owns the Peter A. Nordstrom gold medal. He found one for sale a while ago on eBay. It is a very impressive 8.25 inches in diameter compared to the 2.5-inch diameter of the bronze medal. This brings new meaning to the term “proof set”. There surely can’t be very many more of these in existence.

My guess is the Calumet Visitors Center of the Keweenaw National Historical Park is the only place the public may see a Calumet & Hecla Semi-Centennial gold medal on exhibit, let alone a proof of the bronze medal.

![Figure 12. Calumet & Hecla Mining Company gold medal awarded to Frank Schulte in 1916 for 47 years of service as exhibited at the Calumet Visitors Center, Keweenaw National Historical Park. Photo courtesy of the National Park Service. (Reverse image is not available.)](image)

**Frank Schulte Gold Medal**

Frank Schulte was born in Germany in 1848. He began work for C & H on June 2, 1869 at about 21 years of age. There is nothing in his employment record about where he worked, what he did, or how much he was paid for about 25 years, but in 1894, he is listed as working at the Central Mine as a loader in shaft house #5. By that time he was married and had six sons and a daughter. His sons were born in 1873, 1878, 1882, 1889, 1891, and 1894. At that time, three sons, Frank, J. P., and Joseph N., and a nephew, Frank Joseph, worked for C & H. The Employee’s Aid Fund paid him $1.67 in December of 1893 and $3.35 in January 1894. About 14 years later, in December 1907, his wages were reduced from $71.50 per month to $58.50 per month. He received small amounts of additional aid in 1908 and 1911 and in 1913, he received aid of $25 per month from September through December. This aid continued into the next year through April and expired on April 25, 1914. He was pensioned on June 1st, 1914 with nephritis (inflammation of the kidneys) at about 66 years of age, one day short
of 45 years of service. Although he was retired at the time, Frank Schulte was awarded a gold medal in 1916 for 47 years of service at about age 68. (His portrait is shown on page 45 of the *Keweenaw Miner* special edition.) He died less than six months later on January 5, 1917 at about 69 years old.

**Joseph Pollard Gold Medal**

Joseph Pollard was born in Cornwall, England on June 2, 1843. He immigrated to Michigan around 1858 and began working in the copper mines in 1860. In August 1872, when he was 29 years old.
old, he was hired as a mine captain for C & H in the Hecla mine for $75 per month. In November 1898, twenty-six years later, his earnings were raised to $85 per month, and two months after that, in January 1899, were increased again to $110 per month. He was married and had five children between 1869 and 1887. By 1902, he had nine children. Several of his sons worked for C & H. He lived at 225 Lake Linden Road in Laurium. He was still working as a mine captain in 1910.

In 1916, when he was 73 years old, he was awarded a gold medal for 44 years of service. (His portrait is shown on page 41 of the Keweenaw Miner special edition.) He worked three more years and was pensioned on August 31, 1919 when he was 76 years old. His employment record shows his pension expired, but there is no date. There are also four addresses shown covering twelve years after he retired: 9/25, 19615, Edsel Ave., Detroit, Mich.; 10/28, 3233 So. Edsel Ave, Detroit, Mich.; 8/29, 225 Lake Linden Ave., Laur.; 9/31, 3233 S. Edsel Ave., Detroit. So he apparently kept his home in Laurium long after he retired, even though he lived in Detroit much of the time, presumably with one of his sons. C & H continued to keep track of him until he died on January 28, 1935, just nine days short of his 92nd birthday.

I do not know what happened to his gold medal, but he did have a mineral collection which was given to the Cranbrook Institute of Science in 1984. In about 1997, Ross Lillie, owner of North Star Minerals, obtained several of Pollard’s specimens from Cranbrook by exchange. I purchased one of these in 1997 and another in 1999. Accompanying the specimens was a copy of a handwritten note ostensibly by the Cranbrook curator:

Note: Dan Pollard called on 8/3/84 returning our call of 8/1/84. He gave the following information re specimens donated to C. I. S. on 7/12/84: Collected by Joseph Pollard who came to Michigan’s Copper Country from Cornwall about 1858 at 18 yrs of age. Worked in the mines from 1860 to 1910. Became mine captain for Calumet & Hecla. Became property of Dan’s father who stored them in a glass front cabinet until his death recently. Dan and his brother Dean decided to donate the specimens to C. I. S. in memory of their grandfather.

It is noted that Joseph Pollard’s personal data here are somewhat at odds with those given in the Calumet & Hecla employment records.

John Richards Silver Medal

John Richards was born in Cornwall, England on December 15, 1857. He immigrated to the U.S, in 1873, and on March 11, 1885, when he was 27 years old, he went to work for C & H at the Hecla mine. It is not clear to me from his employment record what his occupation was, but he is shown in an old photograph labeled “Red Jacket Mine Captains, 1900”. At a later undetermined date, perhaps as a result of injury and presumably late in his career, he was demoted from mine captain all the way down to timberman earning $4.75 per day! At a still later date, he was promoted to miner.

In 1880 he married Elizabeth Ann Mitchell and they had five sons and four daughters. His sons, William John born in 1883; Charles born in 1886; Wilbert born in 1891; and Arthur born in
1895 all worked for C & H. Three of his daughters, listed only by their married names, were born in 1882, 1896, and 1901. The fourth, Blanch, was born in 1904. His wife died on October 2, 1915. The following year, at age 58, he was awarded a silver medal for 31 years of service. (His name is listed on page 49 of the Keweenaw Miner special edition.) He was pensioned nearly four years later on April 14, 1920 at age 62 after 35 years of service.

In 1893, but not again until 1914 through 1916, he received small amounts of assistance from the Employee’s Aid Fund, but never for very much nor for extended periods. However, in March 1920, he received $43.50 and in April, the month he retired, he received $18.00. Also late in his career, he received funds from Workmen’s Compensation. From April 20 through May 30, 1915 he received $36.26. And during a span of nearly five months, November 23, 1916 through March 17, 1917, he received $128.32. He received nothing in 1918, but he was apparently incapacitated again. In November 1919, he received $14.00, and in December, he received $56.00. Before he retired the following April he lived at 185 Calumet Avenue in Calumet. In 1922, he moved to 346 Eason Avenue, Highland Park, Detroit. He died twelve years later on October 8, 1932, just two months and seven days short of his 75th birthday.
In October 2003, I exhibited my gold medal at the Greater Detroit Gem, Mineral, and Fossil Show. In the back of the case was a photograph labeled “Red Jacket Mine Captains, 1900.” Wisconsin mineral dealer and friend, the late Gary Richards, saw the photo and pointed out his great-grandfather Captain John Richards. Calumet & Hecla had awarded him a silver medal in 1916, and Gary had inherited the medal. Regrettably, Garold R. “Gary” Richards died on December 30, 2014. He was only 68 years old. I don’t know where Captain John Richards’ silver medal is now, but it may have been passed down to his great-great-grandson John Thomas Richards, Gary’s only son.

**Ansel P. Kumpula Bronze and Silver Medals**

Ansel Peter Kumpula was born in Hancock, Michigan on May 14, 1877 of Finnish parents. On November 3, 1891, when he was not yet 15 years old, he was hired by C & H at the Hecla mine. His occupation is shown as “Drill.” No wages are shown in his employment record. Three years later, in December 1894, he was transferred to the South Hecla mine. In April 1897 he was promoted to timberman at $44 per month, which was later converted to $4.25 per day. Ansul Kumpula was awarded a bronze medal in 1916 for 25 years of service. (His name is listed on page 51 of the *Keweenaw Miner* special edition). He was only 39 years old. At some time during the nearly 24 years between the time he was promoted to timberman and March 29, 1921, he was promoted to miner at an undisclosed wage. On March 29, 1921, after nearly 30 years of service and nearly 44 years of age, he was laid off. Ansul Kumpula was awarded a silver medal in 1921 for 30 years of service.

The following year, on January 24, 1922, he applied for reemployment. On his Application For Employment form he stated he lived at 3995 Scott Street, Calumet, was married and had seven children born between December 11, 1901 and February 17, 1915: Russell, Sylvia, Sidney, Lawrence, Margaret, Murial, and Carl—four sons and three daughters. (One of his sons predeceased him.)

![Figure 15. Calumet & Hecla Mining Company bronze medal awarded to Ansel P. Kumpula in 1916 for 25 years of service. William Severance collection and photo.](image-url)
His father and two or three brothers also worked for the company. His mother, Annie, was still living and resided in Swedestown. Ansel Kumpula was described as being 5 feet 6 ½ inches tall, weighing 155 lbs. with blue eyes and black hair. He was given a physical examination and there is a note: “Loss 1 & 2 fingers - Rt. Hand”. There is nothing mentioned about an accident, they were just gone. (There is a legend that because the stopes were so noisy, the drillman would signal the miner swinging the sledge that the hole was deep enough by placing his thumb over the end of the drill.) He started work the next day at the Hecla mine, reduced in grade to timberman, earning $2.70 per day. He was later promoted back to miner at $3.50 per day. His earnings increased to as much as $4.60 per day in March 1929 but decreased to $3.80 per day by June 1931. Then, the following year, in February 1932, he was demoted back to timberman at $3.35 per day. Two months later, on April 29, 1932 he was laid off, less than a month short of his 55th birthday, after spending nearly 40 years underground. It is noted he was not old enough to be given a pension.

Over his 40 years of employment, he received money from the Employee’s Aid Fund. Over the twenty-year period from December 1893 to August 1914, he received $94.83. He received $9.00 that August, then $7.00 in January 1916 and $23.00 in February. Ten years later, late in his career, he received assistance one more time. In January 1929, he received $29.00 and $3.00 in February. He did, however, collect $109.17 in Workmen’s Compensation from August 13 through October 27, 1917. (This may have been when he lost his thumb and forefinger.) He was apparently injured again in May 1929, when he received $21.00. He died on October 15, 1939, nearly 7½ years after he retired. He was 62 years old. Although he paid insurance premiums for two years, he did not keep up the payments, so his heirs did not receive any life insurance benefits at his death. (There is a note that in January 1935, more than two years after he retired, he still owed the Calumet & Hecla Mining Company $21.35.)
Ansul P. Kumpula’s obituary appeared in the Calumet Evening News Journal on Monday, October 16, 1939:

**PETER A. KUMPULA DIED SUNDAY EVENING**

Peter A. Kumpula, 62, died Sunday evening at his home, 3995 Scott Street following a short illness. He was born in Hancock and came to Calumet as a young man, being employed by the C. & H. Mining company for the past 42 years.

He is survived by his wife, three sons and three daughters, a brother in Detroit and a sister in Calumet. The body is at the Peterson Funeral Home and will be taken to the residence this evening. Funeral services will be held Wednesday afternoon at 3 O’clock at the home, with the Rev. S. V. Austere officiating. Burial will be in Lakeview Cemetery.

**Later Medal Presentations**

The Calumet & Hecla Mining Company continued to award employee service medals for a few years after 1916. There was a column in *The Daily Mining Gazette* on July 13, 1917, which read in part:

**LIST OF NEW SERVICE MEDAL MEN OF C. & H.**

One Hundred and Ninety-nine Will Receive Gold, Silver, and Bronze Medals

at Safety First Rooms This Afternoon—Simple Program

At 3 o’clock this afternoon 198 men and one woman in the employ of the Calumet & Hecla Mining Company will receive gold, silver and bronze service medals, gold for 40 years’ service, silver for 30 years and bronze for 20 years. The medals will be presented in the safety first rooms on Mine street, President Rudolph L. Agassiz and General Manager James MacNaughton making the presentations and speaking briefly.

The value of the medals, although considerable, is not what is held in esteem by the men or the employing company. It is the true service, faithfulness, that counts and will be dwelt upon. These men have labored and strived for the best interests of the company, besides merely earning a livelihood, and the company is presenting them with a token of distinguished service in consequence.

The program will be very simple, according to present arrangements, and there will be nothing of ostentation. Mr. Agassiz and Mr. MacNaughton will speak to the men as men, expressing the company’s gratitude to men who have been faithful in their service. The one woman who receives a medal is Mrs. Sarah King.

There followed a list of ten Gold Medal Men. The remaining 189 medals were divided between the Silver Medal Men, including two pensioners, and the Bronze Medal Men, including Mrs. Sarah King. I believe Mrs. King may have been the only woman ever to receive a C & H employee service medal.

There was an additional medal presentation on August 14, 1918.
I do not know if there were additional medals awarded in 1919, but William H. Soddy, who received a silver medal in 1916 for 36 years of service, was awarded a gold medal for 40 years of service in 1920. And the silver medal on exhibit at the Calumet Visitor Center of the Keweenaw National Historical Park was awarded to Sidney G. Vivian that same year. Lastly, Ansul P. Kumpula, who received a bronze medal in 1916 for 25 years of service, was awarded a silver medal for 30 years of service in 1921. I believe this is the last year in which the Calumet & Hecla Mining Company awarded service medals to their employees.

Although the bronze and silver medals awarded during these years are not common today, there are more than a few in public and private Copper Country collections and medals occasionally become available on eBay and elsewhere. But the gold medals are truly rare. Of the 180 gold medals known to have been awarded, I can document the ownership of only four.

**What is a Medal Worth?**

When the Peter A. Nordstrom gold medal surfaced in the Keweenaw in 2001, I tried to find out what it might be worth, so on August 27th I sent an email to the American Numismatic Society (ANS) in New York: “What can you tell me about the availability and recent prices of the Calumet & Hecla Mining Company gold service medals by Victor D. Brenner awarded in 1916 and immediately subsequent years?”

![Figure 17. Medal Presentation of August 14, 1918. The crowd is much smaller than the one at the Calumet & Hecla Mining Company Semi-Centennial employee service medal presentation in 1916. Photo courtesy of the anonymous owner; photo by Steckbauer, Calumet, MI.](image)
I received a response from Curator Dr. Michael Bates: “Dear Mr. Severance, this is a question for someone in the trade. There are no good references for such data. I’ll forward it [your inquiry] to a friend of mine, Paul Bosco, a New York coin dealer who is a well-known specialist in medals.”

Paul Bosco responded: “Dr. Bates at ANS asked if I could help you. The medal was not rare a few years ago but I haven’t seen one lately. A bronze example is likely worth comfortably over $100, a silver $200+, maybe $300+, and a gold example, well, getting one would just be good luck. I have lots of other medals by this medalist, V. D. Brenner … Brenner is the designer of the Lincoln cent and the most popular American medalist.” (personal communication, September 6, 2001)

I also contacted the American Numismatic Association in Colorado Springs, the publisher of *The Numismatist*. According to their library catalog, *The Numismatist* reprinted an article by Glenn B. Smedley, *The Works of Victor David Brenner, a Descriptive Listing* (1983). Smedley was a prominent coin and exonumia collector who cataloged the V. D. Brenner medals and assigned a Smedley number to each design. The Calumet & Hecla Mining Company employee service medals were assigned Smedley number 108; the bronze, silver and gold medals all have the same Smedley number. A search of the ANA database found they have two bronze medals and a silver medal, but no gold medal in their collection.

Finally, at the suggestion of Dr. Carl Francis and William Metropolis, then of the Harvard University Mineralogical Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts, I contacted the legendary Q. David Bowers, now of Stack’s and Bowers Galleries in New York—Bill Metropolis is a coin collector and a personal friend of Dave Bowers. I asked about availability as well as current and historical prices of the C & H gold medals. In his response of March 1, 2002 he stated he did not have one and added, “Concerning gold medals in general, typically 20th century ones sell for a small premium over ‘Melt,’ this being especially true for large, heavy gold medals.” He then referred me to Brooklyn dealer Stephen Tanenbaum, “a leading dealer in such medals and a fine friend of mine.” I spoke to him a few days later. He thought there might be four to ten gold medals extant. He agreed there would be a small premium over bullion value, but mining is popular, which could add to the value. He thought $5,000 would be a fair price. “But not $15,000! Most V. D. Brenner collectors don’t want to tie up $5,000 in a medal and are happy to settle for a bronze.” But, he added, “An auction could go crazy if two men are both nuts.”

The weight of the Thomas H. Soddy gold medal is listed in my catalog as 5.74 oz. If we convert this weight to troy ounces and multiply by the gold assay value of 0.93, we arrive at 4.655 troy ounces. The New York spot market for gold closed on Friday, July 15, 2016 at $1,337.10/troy oz. So one hundred years to the day after it was awarded to Thomas H. Soddy, its bullion value should be about $6,500.00. The price of gold in 1916 was $20.67/troy oz., so it should have been worth about $100.00 when it was awarded. One may hear crazy numbers tossed around about value, but the only way to find out what a gold medal is really worth is to sell one. Or buy one?

What about the value of the bronze and silver medals? Steven K. Whelan, proprietor of Tamarack Mineral Company in Calumet, Michigan sold a pair of bronze and silver medals in their original
presentation cases sometime before April 30, 2003. This was a special set. The silver medal was awarded to Michael Messner for 33 years of service while the bronze medal was awarded to his son, John W. Messner for 20 years of service. The set was accompanied by a program of the ceremonies held on July 15, 1916. The price was $800.00. After the medals were sold, Steve removed the offering from his website, but after numerous requests, he reposted and archived it as an April 30, 2003 update on http://tamarackminerals.com/candh/medprog.htm.

That was 13 years ago. One might expect the prices of these medals to double about every ten years or so, but according to people I have talked to, this is not necessarily the case. In 1998, I paid Ross Lillie of North Star Minerals $1,100 for the Ansel P. Kumpula medals. (About $350 for the bronze and $750 for the silver in original presentation cases with a 1916 lapel pin and ribbon.) Although a well known dealer once told me he would never sell a silver medal for less than $1,500, the anonymous owner of the Peter A. Nordstrom gold medal has purchased a number of them in recent years in the range of $600 to $800, depending on condition (personal communication, June 1, 2016).

Cornish and Finns

“Wherever there is a hole in the earth, you will find a Cornishman at the bottom of it.” (Rouse 1969). When the copper and tin mines closed in Cornwall in the 1840s, many Cornish miners immigrated to America. Because of their long history of extensive mining knowledge and skill, the Cornish, or “Cousin Jacks”, landed at the top of the mining and social hierarchy in the Keweenaw. Arthur Thurner (1974) states,

Before the Calumet lode was discovered, English, Cornish, Scotch, Irish, and German Miners worked in the Lake Superior district … In the 1870s, French Canadians, Norwegians, Swedes and Finns joined the earlier immigrants at the Calumet & Hecla mines. Poles and Italians came in large numbers in the 1880s. Many Slovenians and Croatians arrived in the 1890s. This was the general immigration pattern … In 1900 Houghton County had 66,023 residents. Of these, 28,150 were born in other countries.

The Finns were at the top of the list with 7,241. There were also small numbers of Hungarians, Frenchmen, Swiss, Russians, Chinese, Danes, “ … and lesser numbers of other Asians [sic], Welsh, Australians, Belgians, Bohemians, Greek, Dutch, West-Indians, and a few persons from still other countries. By 1920, Lithuanians, Mexicans, Romanians, Syrians, Armenians, and Bulgarians also appeared in the Houghton County census.” (Thurner 1974, pp. 13–14). In all, over 30 nationalities were represented.

According to Lankton (1991),

Ethnic diversity characterized the mining communities as a whole, but the men filling the company’s top posts presented a picture of exclusivity. To be sure, a few Germans and Irishmen occupied top slots, along with even fewer Scots or Swedes, … (but) Americans or Cornishmen usually held the esteemed positions of agent (superintendent), chief clerk, mine captain, and surface captain.” (“Americans served as chief clerks or agents, but not as mine
captains. Cornishmen, on the other hand, served as captains, later as agents, but seldom as chief clerks.”) The Cornish became the immigrant elite, seldom relegated to unskilled work, but often tapped as skilled laborers, bosses, captains or agents. (Lankton 1991, pp. 60–61).

On the other hand,

“... many Finns had come from agricultural backgrounds. Few had any mining experience. Some became excellent miners, but most started at the lowest paid jobs in the mines. Underground, they pushed cars full of ore and did timbering ... Charges of exploitation were common. When doing business in Red Jacket or in court, many Finns had to rely on interpreters. Some were taken advantage of by the unscrupulous.” (Thurner 1974, p. 17).

As the population of Finns increased in Calumet, so did the discrimination against them.

“In addition to the real difficulties of language and adjustment many Finns faced, they saw themselves characterized by non-Finns as clannish resisters of Americanization who refused to learn English, members of the lowest social strata, a strange breed of solemn, hardworking people, stubborn and peculiar.” (Thurner 1974, p. 18).

Of course, all non-English speaking people in the Keweenaw faced discrimination, some of it a bit subtle. For example,

“A Cornish or English miner injured in an underground accident was usually identified by name and sometimes the reporter added some kind words about him. As often as not, non-Anglo-Saxons were described only by nationality ... Even in death a man could be nameless in the press as was a Calumet & Hecla employee in 1882: ‘A Finn ... felling trees, was killed ... by one of the trees falling on him.’ ” (Thurner 1974, p. 19).

Discrimination based on ethnicity is believed to have been a general practice of the press. It is noted that the obituary of Welshman Thomas H. Soddy, shown above, identified his survivors by name and geographical location, but the obituary of Finnish miner Ansel P. Kumpula gave the location of a brother and a sister, but only the number and gender of the children he left behind.

“In 1887, an early settler of the Keweenaw reflected on its various ethnic groups. The Americans preferred being the boss. The Cornishmen liked mining and deemed their vocation ‘among the most honorable, if not aristocratic.’ The Irish made good miners, but often left the underground because they also made good businessmen and politicians. The Germans, too, left the mines in favor of running a store, hotel, saloon, or brewery. The French-Canadians were good citizens, but ‘could not be induced to become a miner.’ They wanted surface work. As for the Finns: ‘The old settlers looked down upon them with the same sort of aversion as the west coast people do on the heathen Chinese.’ ” (Lankton 1991, p. 212).

The Finns were certainly not heathens. They were Lutherans who quickly built churches and in 1896 established Suomi College and Seminary in Hancock.
But between 1900 and 1910, the number of Finns who lived in Houghton County had increased from 7,241 to over 11,000.

“The Finns who came after 1900 felt the sting of a more intense social discrimination than that which had greeted earlier arrivals. Their discrimination took on a harsher cast, as mine managers discovered traits in the new Finns that they distinctly disliked. These men tended to be less interested in Lutheranism and more interested in socialism; less interested in temperance societies and more interested in unions; less interested in the dream of saving up to buy a small farm and more interested in raising hell.” (Lankton 1991, p. 212).

“Between 1900 and 1910, mine managers across the upper Great Lakes increasingly blamed Finns for instigating labor troubles. Charles Lawton condemned their role in the 1906 strike at Quincy … At Calumet & Hecla, James MacNaughton did not want this ethnic group to dominate the ranks of unskilled labor.” (Lankton 1991 p. 213).

Between 1905 and 1910, he weeded out many Finns and replaced them. Although Finns had been the largest foreign-born ethnic group in Houghton County, by 1913, they were only the fourth largest group working underground at C & H, behind Austrians, Italians, and Cornish. In 1912 and into 1913, when the mines were short of trammers and unskilled laborers, Calumet & Hecla was “desperate for men”. But

“MacNaughton shunned the ethnic group the mines had relied on most heavily since 1890 to sustain their labor force expansion. He informed the Commissioner of Immigration at Ellis Island and the U. S. Secretary of Commerce and Labor that ‘We do not want Finlanders’” (Lankton 1991, pp. 211-212).

In Search of Red Jacket

“On the shores of Gitche Gumee, by the shining Big-Sea-Water …” (Longfellow 1855). Thousands of years ago, ancient people mined for copper on the Keweenaw Peninsula using fire and primitive stone tools. One of their ancient pits, an abandoned cache of copper-bearing rock, filled over the intervening centuries with the detritus of giant trees and soil, was uncovered by Edwin J. Hulbert in 1858 when he discovered the Calumet conglomerate lode. He and his Boston associates purchased land along a section of the conglomerate and in 1864 sank a shaft at the northeast end of their property. This became the Calumet mine of the Calumet Mining Company. Soon after, they sank another shaft at the southwest part of their property for the Hecla mine of the Hecla Mining Company. The two companies joined to form the Calumet & Hecla Mining Company in 1871. Although they did not realize it at the time, the part of the Calumet conglomerate owned by C & H encompassed the only part of the lode to prove profitable. Fortunes were lost sinking shafts northeast of the Calumet mine and southwest of the Hecla property. But Cornishman John Daniell, mine captain of the Osceola #1 mine, convinced his company to buy land northwest of the C & H boundary (Benedict 1952). It took 3½ years of digging around the clock to reach 2,270 feet, where he cut the Calumet conglomerate lode
as it dipped northwestward toward Lake Superior on its way to Isle Royal. The Tamarack mine of the Tamarack Mining Company proved to be very profitable and was eventually acquired by C & H in 1917 (Steele 1982).

The period between the discovery of the Calumet conglomerate lode in 1858 and the C & H semi-centennial medal ceremony in 1916 saw enormous changes in the landscape, the way of life, and in mining methods. In 1858, there were no roads connecting the Quincy mine to the south with the Cliff mine to the north. Only Indian trails penetrated the thick forest of the Keweenaw wilderness with only a pioneer cabin along the way. With no road, travel in winter, often on snowshoes over deep, drifted snow was especially difficult. Obtaining food did not seem to be a problem in the summer and fall, but during the six or seven months when Lake Superior was frozen, the totally isolated prospectors and miners subsisted on a diet composed mostly of salt pork and beans, salted whitefish, and potatoes and root vegetables. The arrival of the first steamship in Copper Harbor in April or May, loaded with supplies and fresh provisions, was a cause for great jubilation and rejoicing.

Double-jack drilling, using hand steel and an 8 to 12-pound sledge, was supplanted by compressed air drilling using a hollow drill so water could flush the stone chips and rock dust out of the drill hole. This resulted in greatly reduced dust in the stopes, which relied on natural air circulation. Black powder gave way to dynamite and wheelbarrows and kibbles were replaced by tracks, tramcars, and skips. But trammers and unskilled laborers were still required to push the cars and unload the broken rock into the skips. Miners and trammers worked five ten-hour night shifts followed by five ten-hour day shifts plus a seven hour shift on Saturdays for miners and a full ten-hour shift for trammers (Lankton 1991). In 1913, the Western Federation of Miners Union proposed a five-day workweek with eight-hour shifts. They were not successful. But soon after the strike died out in 1914, C & H adopted the 40-hour week (Benedict 1952).

Ladders were used to get into and out of the mines. “Men working in deep mines started work after a long and tiring descent, and near the end of their shift they held back on their effort, so they would have enough energy left to ‘get to grass’.” (Lankton 1991). In 1865, Cornishman John W. V. Rawlings, Chief Engineer at the Cliff mine, installed the first man engine in the United States and C & H soon followed. This event is connected to the C & H Semi-Centennial celebration in that Timothy O’Shea, the most celebrated of the “Gold Medal Men,” left work at the Cliff mine after his father was killed in a man engine accident (Keweenaw Miner 2016). By 1890, C & H had replaced the man engines with man cars in several shafts. Tallow candles were replaced by longer burning stearine candles in the mid-1870s, which were supplanted in turn by paraffin lamps in the 1880s and 1890s. Carbide lamps were common after 1910 (Lankton 1991).

Unlike the primordial thunderclap of the Big Bang, which is still ringing its way around the universe, the sights and sounds of the village of Red Jacket are gone forever, the blasts of the mine whistles, the 24/7 thudding of the stamp mills, the bells and chug, chugging of the steam driven locomotives pulling strings of ore cars are no more. The last of the reverberating echoes have faded away beyond the limits of hearing, or of remembering. There is no one alive today to have even a distant
memory of the village of Red Jacket. Still, it is relatively easy to learn a great deal about that vanished, legendary place. There is a surfeit of technical information in the literature, its complex geology, ore deposition, mining technology, types of lodes, dollars invested, companies formed, mines opened and closed, number of shafts dug, miles of tunnels driven, tons of ore produced, dividends paid, and so on.

Connecting to the village of Red Jacket on an intellectual level is not difficult. But establishing an emotional connection is another matter.

“Bring Stones”1

“What is that cross on the road beyond the mine?” she had once asked Paco.

“The cross marks a place where a fatal accident occurred,” he told her.

“No. The victim of the accident is in the panteón. The cross is only to remind people what happened.”

“Why are those stones piled around it?”

“When people pass and remember, they bring stones.”

Death was always waiting for anyone going underground. “… 470 men died from injuries in Calumet & Hecla’s shafts, drifts and stopes” during the life of the mine. Keweenaw mines “suffered few fatalities in early decades, when the industry was starting, and few deaths in later decades, when it was in decline. Fatal accidents proved a macabre measure of economic growth” (Lankton 1991). Half of all fatalities occurred in the twenty years between 1900 and 1920. Although the hazards faced by different occupations were somewhat different, this seemed to even out, as nearly all occupations had about the same risk. The risk was also about equal for different ethnic groups.

It just depended on how many of them there were. “Decade after decade, as skilled Cornish miners became a smaller percentage of the underground work force, the burden of fatalities shifted from them and onto Finns, Austrians, and Italians” (Lankton 1991).

“Underground, falling materials proved the biggest killer, especially rock dropping down from the hanging wall, or rock rolling down a stope or shaft … accounting for 45 percent of all deaths of known cause” (Lankton 1991). “The second most common category of accidental death involved machinery, principally the equipment for transporting rock or men. Machinery-related accidents claimed about 20 percent of all fatalities” (Lankton 1991). Sixteen percent of fatalities were due to explosives. Another 16 percent were caused when men “fell to their deaths from ladders or while walking in a stope, drift, or shaft” (Lankton 1991).

Non-fatal accidents were also significant. “If a man were to work a year underground, the odds were one in 200 that he would be killed, but they were better than one in three that he would be injured at least seriously enough to lose time from work. In 1911, when 60 Michigan copper workers died, another 656 suffered serious injuries, and 3974 suffered minor injuries” (Lankton 1991).

Even though the death rate per million pounds of copper produced had steadily fallen over time such that the 1900–1909 decade rate was half that of the rate in the 1860s, “Workers’s families … did

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1 Doerr 1984, p. 212.
not know the fatality rates in terms of cold statistics. They just knew that more men were dying in the mines than ever before” (Lankton 1991).

“Immense Distances, Extraordinary Events”

It is suspected that by seeking out first hand accounts in diaries and journals of the period and in studying literature which emphasizes people and place over mining history and technology, one can establish at least a tenuous emotional connection to the people and place of the early years of the Calumet & Hecla Mining Company. A close reading of the C & H employment records while writing this article has helped me to strengthen such an emotional bond.

The very idea that Thomas Hill Soddy, born in Wales in 1851, could work for 61 years in the Copper Country of the Keweenaw Peninsula in Michigan under the harsh conditions which prevailed at the time is nearly beyond comprehension. Even the rationalization that much of his ten-hour workday was probably spent above ground does not diminish his accomplishment.

But my highest admiration is reserved for Ansel Peter Kumpula, who spent nearly 40 years of his life at hard, physical labor underground, and to the many other long forgotten laborers, trammers, timbermen, and miners who worked long, arduous hours underground under extreme and dangerous conditions.

The Calumet & Hecla Mining Company semi-centennial employee service medals of 1916 are certainly rare and coveted artifacts, an important part of the Michigan Copper Country heritage. But they may be something more. They may also act as talismans, objects with mystical powers. Perhaps the very sight of one of these medals may transport one over space and time to the village of Red Jacket of 100 years ago and remind us of the thousands of miners who labored their entire lives to recover a red metal from deep within the earth.

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2 Doerr 1984, Chapter 17 title.
Figure 19. Copper, twinned crystals, 5.6 cm high, attributed to the Cliff mine, Keweenaw County, Michigan. Ex Seaman Mineral Museum, Michigan Technological University, Joseph W. V. Rawlings collection (ca. 1920). From I. P. Scalisi collection (1991). Joseph W. V. Rawlings was born in Camborne, Cornwall, England in 1826 and came to the U. S. in 1851. “While serving as Chief Engineer at the Cliff mine, he built the first Cornish-style man-engine used in America.” He died in ca. 1905. (Biographical Archive of The Mineralogical Record). William Severance collection and photo.

Figure 18. Calcite enclosing copper, 5.0 cm, attributed to the Calumet mine, Houghton County, Michigan. Ex Dr. Arthur Montgomery collection. From Dr. Richard V. Gaines collection (1999). Stanley J. Dyl II says “If Calumet mine (1864–1871), it’s a very important piece.” (Sept. 2, 1999). But Ross Lillie of North Star Minerals says the matrix is not a conglomerate (March 10, 2008). Dr. Theodore Bornhorst agrees (November 2, 2015). William Severance collection; Jeff Scovil photo.
Figure 20. Calcite, faint yellow twin, 3.25 cm wide, from the Cliff mine, Keweenaw County, Michigan. Ex American Museum of Natural History (1900). Ex Clarence S. Bement collection from Captain John Daniell (1873). From the I. P. Scalisi collection (1999). Osceola mine Captain John Daniell sold this specimen to Clarence S. Bement in November, 1873 for $5.00—nearly 13 years before he discovered the Tamarack mine in 1885. Louis P. Gratacap (1912) cited this specimen as one of 19 preeminent Michigan calcites in the Bement collection. William Severance collection; Jeff Scovil photo.

Figure 21. Copper, 4.0 cm, from the Tamarack/Osceola mines, Houghton County, Michigan. Ex Field Museum of Natural History. One of 12 type specimens given to the Field Museum by John T. Reeder. From Ross Lillie (1998). John T. Reeder was the Chief Clerk and Purchasing Agent for the Tamarack and Osceola mines in 1909. Stanley J. Dyl Il attributed this specimen to the Osceola mine based on the presence of prehnite microcrystals (June 19, 1999). William Severance collection; Jeff Scovil photo.
Figure 22. “Hair” Copper, 31.5 cm, from Calumet, Houghton County, Michigan (ca.1909). Ex Ernest Weidhaas collection (1888–1974), to the Field Museum of Natural History, to Martin L. Ehrmann (1938), to the Richard and Elna Hauck collection, to The Arkenstone, to the Robert Nowakowski collection. This specimen is roughly half of a larger piece, which came apart at some point. The other slightly larger piece is in the collection of Don and Gloria Olson. William Severance collection; Jeff Scovil photo.

SELECTED CALUMET & HECLA CHRONOLOGY

1859 ................ Edwin J. Hulbert discovered the Calumet conglomerate lode.
Aug 24, 1864 .... John Hulbert and Amos Scott sank an exploratory shaft on the lode.
Sep 17 ............. Reached Calumet conglomerate. Future site of Calumet mine #4 shaft.
Sep 18 ............. Calumet Mining company formed.
Nov 15 ............. Hecla Mining Company formed.
Early 1866 ........ Purchased “breccia block” tract. Future site of Hecla mine #1 shaft.
Jan 13 ............. Calumet Mining Company elected S. P. Shaw President and Quincy A. Shaw Vice President and Treasurer.
Feb .................. Site of “ancient pit” deepened. Future site of Calumet mine #1 shaft.
Mar 24, 1871 .... Calumet & Hecla Mining Company formed.
Late 1881 .......... Tamarack Mining Company formed (Steele 1982).
Feb 1882 .......... John Daniell began sinking Tamarack mine shaft (Steele 1982).
Jul 1, 1885 ......... Tamarack shaft reached Calumet conglomerate lode at 2270 ft (Steele 1982).
Mar 1889 ........... John T. Reeder appointed Chief Clerk, Osceola Consolidated Mining Company (Rosemeyer & Dyl 2000).
Fall .................. Calumet & Hecla Mining Company began construction of Red Jacket shaft.
Sep 7, 1895 ....... Osceola mine fire. 1 captain, 19 miners, 5 trammers, 1 laborer and 4 boys died ...................(Lankton 1991).
Jan 1909 ........... C & H bought interest in Tamarack, Osceola, Ahmeek, Seneca, Isle Royal, and Laurium mines.
Aug .................. John T. Reeder appointed Chief Clerk and Purchasing Agent for these mines (Rosemeyer & Dyl 2000).
Jul 23, 1913 ...... Western Federation of Miners Union strike began.
Dec 25 ............. Italian Hall disaster. 62 children and 11 adults died.
Apr 12, 1914 ..... Strike ended (Steele1982).
Jul 15, 1916 ...... Calumet & Hecla Mining Company semi-centennial celebration (Keweenaw Miner 1916).
Sep 7, 1923 ...... Calumet & Hecla Consolidated Mining Company formed with 34 shafts on the C & H Conglomerate lode.
Apr 30, 1968 .... Calumet & Hecla, Inc. acquired by Universal Oil Products (Rosemeyer 2001).
Aug 21 ............. Employee strike began (Rosemeyer2001).
Apr 9, 1969 ...... Employees terminated (Rosemeyer 2001).
Jan 1971 .......... Centennial mine pumps shut off (Rosemeyer 2001).

References from Benedict (1952) except as noted.
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REFERENCES


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William A. N. Severance, a Michigan native, holds degrees in Astronomy and Nuclear Engineering from the University of Michigan.