

nice selection of mining machinery, mine signs, an underground ore car, diamond drill rig and an old railroad ore car.

The Iron County Museum contains numerous other displays, both inside and outside, including

pioneer life displays, a miniature lumbering exhibit, the Carrie Jacobs-Bond House, an early gas station, and others. A few hours spent at this museum are instructive to an understanding of how life has been lived in this area over the past 100 years.

THE IRON MOUNTAIN IRON MINE

by Robert Fox
1235 N. Westfield Street
Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54901

Visitors to Vulcan, Michigan, can learn first-hand what it was like to toil in an underground iron mine, by visiting the Iron Mountain Iron Mine. This mine is typical of the many underground iron ore mines that once operated on the Menominee Range.

The Iron Mountain iron mine operated a total of 68 years and during that time mined a total of 21,625,000 tons of iron ore. The mine began producing in 1877, and ore was shipped every year except 1921 and 1932, up to and including 1945. The longest stope measures 630 feet, the main adit is 2600 feet long, and the mine is 1300 feet deep. There were a total of 14 levels.

During the early prospecting era, ore was hauled by wagon to Menominee, Michigan, and from there it was shipped by vessel. After the Chicago and North Western Railway Company built a railroad to Vulcan in 1877, the mine went into full-scale operation and the iron ore was then shipped by rail to Escanaba. Therefore, this mine was the first on the Menominee Range to have ore shipped by rail.

Prior to 1882, the mine was operated by the Menominee Mining Company; from 1882 to 1923 by the Penn Iron Mining Company, a subsidiary of the Cambria Steel Company, which in 1923 became part of the Bethlehem Steel Company.

Visitors to the mine enter a building that serves as the ticket office and gift shop. After putting on a raincoat and hard hat you are ready to begin the tour. Once outside, the guide explains the history of the mine as well as the geology of the orebody. The guide demonstrates several pieces of mining equipment, including an





air compressor, drill and dump cart. I also noticed numerous mine signs mounted on the walls.

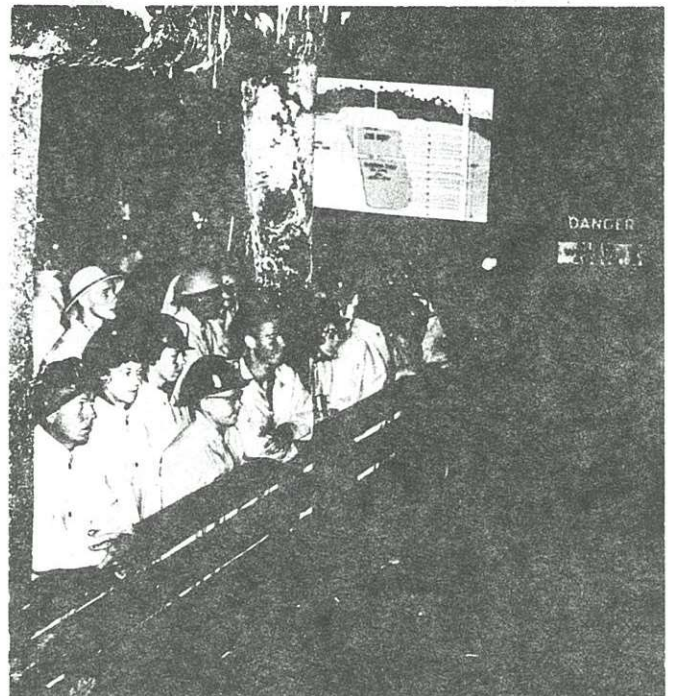
Visitors ride a train into the mine. The tour passes through 2600 feet of underground drifts and tunnels to a depth of 400 feet below the earth's surface. The temperature in the mine averages 46° F year-round. A portion of the tour involves walking to different features of the mine. At one point a demonstration is given on mine lighting. Electric lights are turned off and a candle is lit, giving people an opportunity to understand just how much light a miner had when he used a candlestick.

A highlight of the mine tour is the view of the big stope. This man-made underground cavity was created by years of mining. The stope is 630 feet long, 300 feet wide and 180 feet from the stope floor to ceiling. The lighting on the rocks creates an impressive view.

During the mine tour visitors learn how the double-jack method of drilling was used when this rich iron mine was discovered. Another demonstration shows how a water-liner drill was used. An experienced guide also explains the method of timbering that was used in iron mines. Inside the Visitor's Center you can view a collection of ore-related rocks and minerals.

The Iron Mountain Iron Mine is located 9 miles east of Iron Mountain, Michigan. Look for "Big John" standing 40 feet high, greeting all visitors to the mine.

(All photos courtesy of Dennis Carollo, Iron Mountain Iron Mine)



Source

Boyum, B.H. (1977) *The Saga of Iron Mining in Michigan's Upper Peninsula*. Marquette County Historical Society.