

## THE IRON COUNTY MUSEUM

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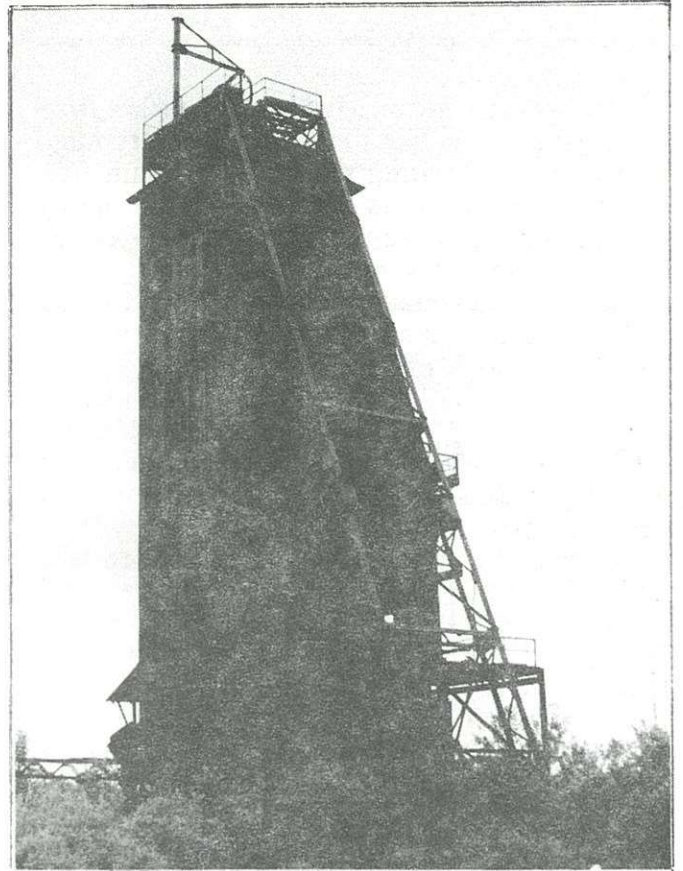
I was heading to Houghton, Michigan, to attend the "Red Metal Retreat" when I decided to take a little side trip to Caspian, Michigan, to visit the Iron County Museum. Approximately 79 iron mines have been recorded in Iron County.

The focal point of the mining section of the museum is the headframe that has been preserved from the Caspian mine. In 1963 the Pickands-Mather Company deeded 5.5 acres, including the headframe and engine house of the Caspian mine, to the Iron County Historical Museum Society. The mining headframe was built in 1921 and is believed to be the oldest surviving headframe in the State of Michigan.

The Verona Mining Company opened the Caspian mine in 1903. The mine shipped ore every year, 1903-1937 with the exception of 1921 and 1932. Total shipments amounted to 6,623,320 tons. The mine reached a depth of 539 feet and is now flooded.

The Peterson Mining Hall is located in the engine house. Here, I found a nice selection of mining lamps on display including candlesticks, oil-wick lamps, carbides and electric lamps. Several canary cages are displayed along with a selection of blasting cap tins. There are also several lunch pails on display, as well as a large collection of photographs. There are old leather and modern hard hats on display, and a good selection of mining tools.

One of the interesting features of the mining displays are the dioramas of several different mines that operated in the area. One diorama represents the underground structure of the Caspian mine. Another diorama represents the Hiawatha mine, which had 21 levels. There is one diorama of the Homer-Wauseca mine, which has the greatest reserves of ore. The largest glass



Headframe of the Caspian mine.

diorama shows the geographic surface of 50 square miles and shows primarily the Hanna Company mine holdings. There is also a collection of rocks and minerals on display which includes many specimens from the local iron mines. A large specimen of "grape ore" (botryoidal hematite) catches your eye as you view the mineral display.

Outside the museum buildings you will find a



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.

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## THE IRON MOUNTAIN IRON MINE

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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

