Signs of the Times

by Dave Johnson

An interesting addition to a mining artifact collection are some of the many signs that were used in mines. These signs can be broken into three broad categories:

Safety or warning signs Signal signs Information signs

These signs can be cardboard, painted metal, porcelain over steel, painted wood and oilcloth fabric.

Of these materials, the porcelain signs appear to be the most sought after and coveted by collectors, at least this is what their pricing indicates. The porcelain signs are the most enduring since the porcelain is less susceptible to weather above ground or wet underground conditions than are cardboard, painted tin, painted wood or oilcloth signs over long periods of time. Blue and white porcelain generally indicates an earlier time period that the more common white, black, and red variety. Signs made by the Stonehouse company are highly sought after. The company name is often printed in the lower right-hand corner in fine print.

Many porcelain signs are reproduced today, and are done so amazingly well. Oil Company and Coca-Cola signs are the most copied lot, but fakes are turning up in the mining sector. Look for gray porcelain on the back of the sign as an indication of authenticity, though I'm certain that even this could be reproduced.

As can be seen in the photos, most of the signs shown here are in pristine condition. Those signs from the Carey Mine in Ironwood, Michigan and the Quincy Mine in Hancock, Michigan were found in the company warehouses after the mines closed. This is the condition that most collectors prefer, however, reality dictates that not many unused signs survived. Most signs that saw use in the mines above and below ground were either weather damaged or abused, or both. Thirty or more years ago traveling through old mining areas, while rock collecting with my parents, I can recall seeing signs around many old mines in out-of-the-way areas of Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, and Canada. They were all badly weathered, rusted and usually full of bullet holes. These were not very appealing collector's items, although I have seen signs in this poor condition in museums and in private collections.

My preference, like that of most, is for mint or near mint mine signs which limits the availability of pieces. Mint mine signs are about as common as rare mint lamps.

The purpose of this article is merely to point out the variety of mine signs, not to give a history of mine signs or of a specific manufacturer. The signs from my collection are biased toward the Michigan copper and iron mining areas, reflecting the areas I have frequented the most.

- NOTICE TO EMPLOYEES ALL LIGHTS IN THIS BUILDING ARE TO BE KEPT TURNED OFF WHEN NOT NEEDED FOR WORKING. - COPPER RANGE CO.-

Blue and white porcelain. From Copper Range Co., Baltic Mine, Baltic, MI.

MANWAY

Red and white porcelain, from Carey Mine, Ironwood, MI.

RAISE CLOSED

Painted tin from Idaho.

TO LADDERWAY

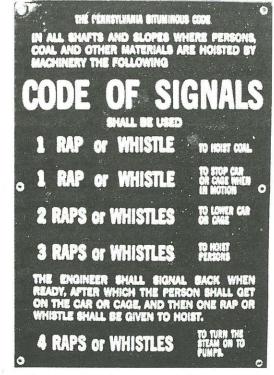
Red and white porcelain, from Montreal Iron mine, Montreal, WI.

TO HOISTING SHAFT

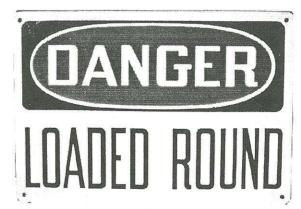
Red and white porcelain from Carey Mine, Ironwood, MI.

TELEPHONE CODE -2 LONG FOREMEN ELECTRICIANS — 6 LONG **MACHINISTS** - 2-2-2 MUCKING MACH. REP. 1-2-1 - I LONG NUMBER ONE HOIST 3 LONG MAY RAISE HOIST 4 LONG AUXILIARY HOIST 5 LONG 19 WINZE HOIST WHITE RAISE HOIST **OPERATOR** CHERRY HOIST 19 WHITE RAISE STATION CALLS ARE THE SAME AS SHAFT SIGNALS-FOR EXAMPLE-SHAFT COLLAR-2-1 IN CASE OF ACCIDENT NOTIFY SUPERVISOR AT ONCE.

Blue and white porcelain, from Bunker Hill Mine, Kellog, ID.



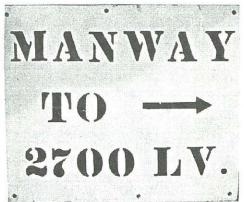
Blue and white porcelain, cage signal sign.



Stonehouse sign from Quincy Mine, Hancock, MI. Red, white, and black.

CAUTION KEEP OFF THIS TIPPLE

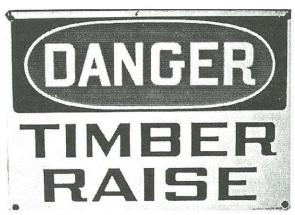
Stonehouse coal sign. Black and yellow.



Painted tin from Butte, MT. Black on yellow.

THIS BELL FOR CAGER ONLY

Stonehouse cage bell sign. Red and white.



Stonehouse from Quincy Mine, Hancock, MI. Red, white, and black.



Stonehouse from Quincy Mine, Hancock, MI. Red, white, and black.



Stonehouse, yellow and black.

9 MIEN PER DECK

Painted tin cage sign from Bute, MT. This is for a two-level man cage. Black and white.

WARNING

DO NOT PASS LAST CROSS BAR WITHOUT SETTING SAFETY POST

STAND UNDER BAR AND REACH TO MAKE GAS TEST.

EXCEPT FOR FIRE BOSS EXAMINATION

SHOT FIRER-ALWAYS HANG THIS SIGN ON LAST CROSS BAR AFTER SHOOTING

Porcelain coal mine sign. Black and yellow.

NO SMOKING WITH IN 15.FEET OF THE SHAFT

Red and white painted tin from Idaho.

DANGER DO NOT OPERATE THIS HOIST UNTIL RELEASED BY PHONE-MEN WORKING IN SHAFT OR HEADFRAME

Red and white porcelain from Carey Mine, Ironwood, MI.



Red and white porcelain from Carey Mine, Ironwood, MI.

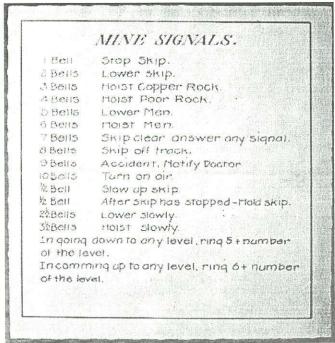


Red and white porcelain from Carey Mine, Ironwood, MI.

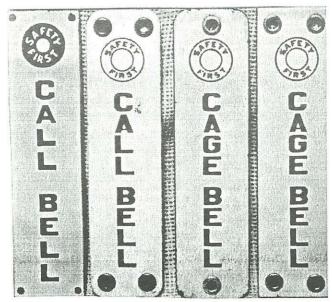
DANGER

LOOK FOR MISSED HOLES REPORTED

Red and white porcelain from Carey Mine, Ironwood, MI.



Cardboard, from Tamarack Mine, Calumet, MI.



Porcelain from Ironwood, MI.



– MEN – IN SHAFT

Stonehouse porcelain. Red, white, and black. From Quincy Mine, Hancock, MI.



EMPLOYEES FORBIDDEN TO TRAVEL ON THIS SLOPE

MSA Co. of Pittsburgh, PA. Porcelain: red, white, and black.



INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE USE OF RAISE TRAVEL LIGHTS

Rud Aufter OFF inverses that the raise is clear.

Keel limits 400 indicate that the raise is being used and you must keep a sale distance were freezible raise.

Years the lights DM whosever you wish to one the raise, client to your declination and turn the hights OFF. Which boisting or lowering equipment and materials the lights count be in the ON POSITION CONTINUESTY while the raise is being used.

If the roles is being used for booking or lowering environment and materials and it is naces sary to cloud from one level or such to another the following procedure will be used:

- I. Shap in the clear and flush the lights several times but leave the fights CR
- 2. The present or porsume, responsible for the raise travel lights being GN will then two the ficket GFT preveiding that the raise is clear, REMEMSER do not clear the raise units united it is said for travel, that is, the cases is not been part to knowle are not materials, we represent that would greate the heavet of a respondent head or follows objects.
- 3. When the raise has been cleased by those resing it the person, or persons, demining to climb from one level as sub-to mosther, will then turn she lights UN, proceed to those destination, and then turn the lights OFF.

THE RED WARRING LIGHTS ARE FOR YOUR PROTECTION BUT THEY CARROT ACCOMPLISH THEIR PURPOSE UNLESS THEY ARE USED PROPERLY.

MINE FIRE SIGNALS

ALL MEN MUST ATTEMPT TO LEAVE THE MINE WHEN-

1. THE COOR OF STENCY FROM THE AMLINE OR AS COURDS IS PRESENT IN THE AM.
2. THE LIGHTS ARE FLASHED 5 OR MORE TIMES AT ABOUT 5 SECOND INTERNALS.

BE PREPARED IN ADVANCE

FINE OUT NOW THE AIR ENTERS AND LEAVES YOUR WORKING PLACE,
ASKYOUR FOREMAN ABOUT THE MEANS OF ESCAPE FROM YOUR WORKING PLACE, AND ABOUT MINE SWITLEYS.

AFTER A FIRE SIGNAL IS GIVEN, AND YOU FIND SMOKE IN YOUR AIR COURSE, FOLLOW THE SMOKE AND LOOK FOR OTHER FRESH AIR ESCAPEWAYS. IF THERE ARE NONE, THE UPCAST SHAFT WILL GENERALLY BE THE BEST MEANS OF ESCAPE. TRY TO TRAVEL ORLY IN FRESH AIR TO AN ESCAPEWAY.

IF SMOKE IS NOT PRESENT IN YOUR AIR COURSE, YOU ARE ON THE FRESH AIR SIDE OF THE FIRE. ONCE IN FRESH AIR DO NOT ENTER A SMORY SECTION, EITHER REMAIN THERE IS NO MEANS OF ESCAPE, OR FOLLOW THE FRESH AIR BACK TO THE ESCAPEWAY FROM THE NOME.

IF YOU ARE IN A BEAR END BRIFT ON SLICE AND CANNOT GET INTO THE AIR COURSE BECAUSE OF MEANY SMOKE, SHET BOWN YOUR SMALL FAN AND TURN ON THE COMPRESSED AIR FOR VENTRATION. WALL UP THE ENTRADES WITH A BARRICADE WASE AS AIRTWHY AS POSSIBLE, AND REMAIN IN THE PLACE WITH MELF ARRIVES. THE OR BLOCK THE VENT TUBE IF YOU CANNOT BEACH THE FAR, IN KEEP DROBLE OUT OF YOUR PLACE.

WARNING

IT IS IMPORTANT TRAT THE VENTILATION CIRCUITS REMAIN UNCHANGED WHILE MEN ARE IN THE MINE. BO NOT TAMPER WITH MAIN FAM.

BUT BUT ALTER THE POSYTION OF VENTILATION OR FIRE DOORS WHEN LEAVING MINE.

Standard Signs, Inc.(porcelain) Safety sign from Carey Mine, Ironwood, MI.

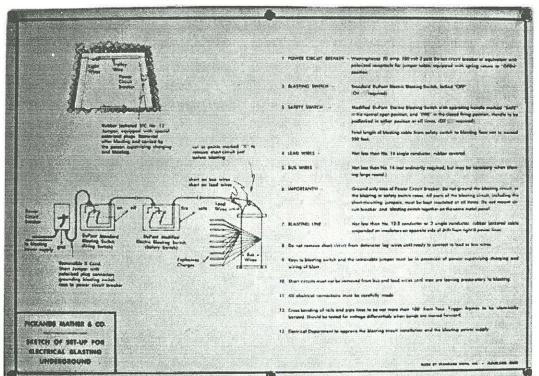


Red and white porcelain, from Carey Mine, Ironwood, MI.

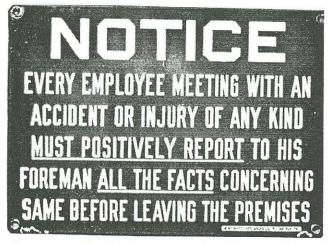
BLASTING SWITCH

Red and white, from Ironwood, MI.

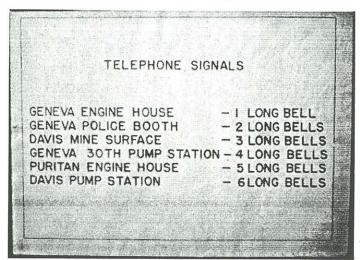
Cardboard instruction sign from Carey Mine, Ironwood, MI.



Standard Signs, Inc. Porcelain blasting sign from Ironwood, MI.



Green and white porcelain, from Calumet & Hecla, Calumet, MI.



DISCONNECT BLASTING SWITCH

Red and white, from Ironwood, MI.

Cardboard signal sign from Aurora Mine, Irowood, MI.

Cardboard signal sign from Geneva Mine, Ironwood, MI.

To call any station from .	100000000000000000000000000000000000000
of the some group, simply rin	
number of that status given in the	feat
below. To call a station in th	a other
group, bush the button on the side of	
bux, while ranging . Thus two ring	
station on the mine group will co	
Dry, but two rings with the button press	
soft the Office	
OFFICE GROUP	
Rollroad Station 1 f	Ping
Office 2 A	ings
Manager 3	
Coptaini House4	
Master Mechanic's House 5	*
MINE GROUP	
Supply House 1 R	ing
Coptoin's Office or Dry 2 R	inge
Boiler House3	
Hoisting Engine 4	
Pump Station5	19900