

Ishpeming Area Historical Society and Cliffs Shaft Mine Museum, Ishpeming, MI Essay

Newspaper: The Iron Ore

Special Features

George Newett, the owner and founder of the Iron Ore was a geologist and a recognized authority on mines and mining. The first two pages of almost every issue were devoted to the mining industry, whether it be iron, gold, copper or other minerals, at least while Newett was alive. In an age when mining stocks were abundant and because of the distances involved, fraudulent investment schemes were common, Newett was ever vigilant and often warned his readers about shady deals. He also visited many of the mines in the United States and in his later years would spend the winter months travelling throughout the southern states.

While most local newspapers covered only their immediate area, the Iron Ore's coverage of mines throughout the United States and foreign countries meant it provided information on mines outside a local area. It had a subscriber base reaching far beyond the city limits of Ishpeming.

During the early to mid-1800s, the Iron Ore employed a young Will Bradley as a typesetter and an illustrator. Bradley later became famous as an illustrator. His early work can be seen in the masthead of the Iron Ore, some of the advertisements and a special edition of the newspaper from January 1, 1889.

After Newett died in 1927, the ownership of the paper passed to two of his sons, William and George Jr. The focus of the newspaper shifted slightly. While the first page of the paper continued to feature the mining industry, the second page often covered political news from Lansing and Washington DC. In addition, every issue had information on conservation and outdoor activities, more reflective of the interests of the sons.

The paper was sold in 1950 and for the last three years it was mainly an advertising paper, with little news content.

Why should this newspaper be made available online? Why is it a high priority for your organization and your community? How will having this newspaper available online contribute knowledge about your region and Michigan history?

The City of Ishpeming recently celebrated its 150th anniversary. For 70 of those years, almost half of that time, the Iron Ore chronicled the life of the city of Ishpeming. From births, deaths and marriages to building our downtown, the mines, the ski jumping tournaments that made Ishpeming the birthplace of ski jumping in America and more, the Iron Ore covered it all.

Mining disasters of every size were covered, especially the disaster at the Barnes Hecker mine, which claimed the lives of 51 men.

Anytime a new building was erected in downtown Ishpeming, the Iron Ore covered it. The newspaper is often the only source of information on the origins of those buildings.

Common council proceedings and school news regularly appeared in the Iron Ore as well as the personal and social activities of many of the residents. During the first World War the Iron Ore regularly published excerpts of letters from residents turned soldiers and William Newett, George's son, became a[n] unofficial war correspondent through the many letters to his father. Those letters give us a valuable picture of what life in France was like at that time, although they were heavily censored.

Anytime there is a question about when or why something happened, the Iron Ore usually has an answer, although that answer may require some research. Many alumni and former residents would like to see the newspaper digitized.

Michigan's state history curriculum now emphasizes the use of primary sources in the classroom. While the high school's history classes do cover Ishpeming's history, digitizing the Iron Ore would give students a great primary source to use to learn about Ishpeming's rich history.

Currently, the Iron Ore can only be viewed by going in person to either the Central Upper Peninsula & Northern Michigan University Archives or to the Ishpeming Carnegie Public Library. This reduces access to the rich history of the Ishpeming area.

The Iron Ore should not be limited in its availability to those who can physically access it. It was designed to bring small town America news to big America. Once the paper is digitized, access to the paper becomes limitless.