



# The Negaunee Historical Society

## Quarterly Newsletter

January 2020

Issue #51

### From the president...

Where has the time gone? We've blown through Fall like maple leaves in a brisk wind. Major snowfall closed out most deer camps early, and more than one Thanksgiving table had empty seats due to poor roads and low visibility. But, we are Yoopers! Something to tell the great grandkids about, when snow was so deep we had to walk to school, uphill, BOTH WAYS!



Don't forget to take a few minutes of quiet time and give thanks for the blessings we have received. It may be one of those winter walks, where you disconnect from electronics and take in the wonder of the seasonal change, or perhaps a visit to a homebound or nursing home resident. Sharing of your time is an immeasurable gift that is free to give to someone and will be long remembered.

The group of volunteers who staff the museum are deserving of our sincere thanks. Without them, we could not operate. It is their unselfish dedication throughout the summer that keeps our doors open to the public. We could not operate without you...many thanks!

Looking forward to 2020, our board has begun long-range planning. The analysis of income and expenses, the collection of artifacts, acquisition of new items for display, constraints of the existing building and carriage house and the overall operation of the museum. It's your organization; your contributions support the operation and we encourage you to be part of the process. Share your thoughts by leaving a message at (906)475-4614 or email [negauneehistorical@att.net](mailto:negauneehistorical@att.net)

Enjoy the first Neighborhood Memories article, thanks to Laura Jandron and Virginia Paulson. We will continue to publish these in future newsletters, so share the memories and we will publish them in upcoming issues.

Have a safe and Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year in 2020!

—Art Gischia, society president

## Avalanche: A Winter Tragedy

On January 24, 1954, a great sadness came to the families of Mr. and Mrs. Ensio Salo and Mr. and Mrs. Eino Leklin, all of Lake Street Negaunee.

Ernie Salo and Tommy Leklin, both age 12, lost their lives when they were buried in a snow avalanche, where the Maas Mine was located at the end of Cherry Street. A snow avalanche was unheard of in Marquette County.

A third boy, Sigfred Parkkonen, was also buried, but his friends were able to reach him and he was uninjured.

Leklin, who lost his wallet in the cave-in area the day before decided to go back on Sunday, January 24 to look for it. His friends—Jerry Koski, Einar Johnson Hill and Neil and Sigfred Parkkonen—joined him and were jumping and sliding into the pit, estimated to be about 300 feet in diameter and 75 to 100 feet deep.

Neil Parkkonen was sent to get cardboard boxes to use for sliding purposes. He was just returning when he saw the avalanche start.

As the boys were jumping into the pit, Sigfred Parkkonen looked up and

yelled “Avalanche!” Jerry Koski managed to push Einar Hill out of the way and escaped being buried himself by mere inches.

The falling snow uprooted a tree, carrying it to the bottom and entangling one of the boys. Neil Parkkonen, Hill and Koski dug for Sigfred Parkkonen, who was buried in two feet of snow.

They were unable to reach the other two boys, and Jerry Koski ran for help. When he got to Cherry Street, he saw the patrol car and told patrolman John Torreano of the accident.

Fire Chief Melvin Johnson and 23 firemen, Police Chief Arne Pyynonen and four from his department responded to the scene.

It is estimated that Salo and Leklin were buried in eight to ten feet of snow.

Tommy Leklin is survived by his parents and a brother Gerald. Ernie is survived by his parents, two sisters—Jeanette Salo (Hodge) and Mildred Salo (Isaacson)—and grandparents Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Salo, and Mr. and Mrs. John Wirtanen.

—Virginia Paulson

## Searchable burial records available

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of museum volunteer Roland “Foo” Koski, a searchable website containing burial records for Negaunee is up and running.

Visit [negauneeburialrecords.com](http://negauneeburialrecords.com) today to search for your relatives or find the grave of a friend. The website, which is the compilation of more than 25 years of research by Mr. Koski, has multiple ways to search and view burial plots, burial listings and cemetery maps.

In 1997, Mr. Koski was given permission to begin a project with the cemetery sexton that would record more than 18,000 burials up to December 31, 2019. He has gone through the cemetery and recorded all of the markings (names and dates) from each monument and marker located.

Mr. Koski will offer a presentation about the burial website at noon on Wednesday, February 19 at the Negaunee Senior Center.

—Kristy Malmsten

## Memories of Negaunee

*This article is condensed from one that was written by Bill Maki of Negaunee Township and published in Marquette Monthly 21 years ago. He reminisces about his neighborhood, the Patch Location and County Road.*

Before there were uniforms, spiked baseball shoes, bleachers and screaming parents on the sidelines, there was a baseball team from Patch Location and County Road. They grew up next to Lucy Hill on the south side of this small mining town. This was their playground. In winter it was their ski hill and toboggan slide. It was where they cut their Christmas tree and where they learned to hunt partridge.

Summers on Lucy Hill were spent swimming in the mine pit, a remnant of the Milwaukee Davis Mine. Taking a dip in the pit meant swimming in a body of water with no bottom, surrounded by old mine rocks and barbed wire. Here we had summer bonfires, and roasted potatoes until they were black.

In the "Patch," we had our first baseball field. It was triangular, with third base on the Patch Location Road. In center field were the old railroad tracks to Palmer, and right field was the old 400 passenger train tracks. The backstop was "borrowed" telephone poles and screen confiscated from "The Company."

In the spring we prepared the field using the candle method, and it was exciting until we underestimated the east wind and had to get help from the police and fire department. Our parents weren't happy.

We were a bunch of kids who went to the movies on Saturday afternoon jumped from boxcars in the winter, shacked cars when we were bored and raided gardens. Not the ones in the Patch because those people knew us and then we wondered how our parents knew.

World War II ended, we had no television, and we had a box of baseball cards and a stack of comic books we traded.

The company was generous and donated old scrap iron to us. We sold scrap iron to take our first trip out of the U.P. We saw a baseball game between the Braves (now Brewers) and the Phillies.

We were church goers, Catholics and Protestants. We became teachers, attorneys, business owners, miners, store managers, a sheriff and a painter.

## Frank Matthews: Negaunee's historian

On October 5, 1902, Frank Matthews was born in a farmhouse three miles west of the historic Jackson Mine. He was fascinated by the mining activity and became a collector of old bricks, abandoned tools, discarded horseshoes, and scraps of metal. He became a saver of things that nobody had a use for.

Matthews was a jack of all trades—a butcher, a baker, a candlestick-maker. He helped to build the county airport on US-41. He was a newspaper boy, shoe shiner, appliance serviceman and sold pasties for 15 cents. He worked at the Maas Mine, but when his brother was killed in a mining accident, he couldn't continue mining.

In 1969, he opened up a one-room museum on US-41 in Negaunee Township. The building was constructed of scrap lumber from the Jackson Mine and old pioneer houses. Inside, the artifacts, tools, pictures and mining memorabilia offered a visual history of the area's early pioneers and mining companies. He envisioned his museum as a project to promote Negaunee to the world. He thought it was important to the tourist industry, and to educate Negaunee's youth.

The garage-sized building and grounds where his collection overflowed had something that each nationality that came here brought with them when they came. In his nationality garden, he had shamrock from the Irish, mint from the Scottish, multiplier onions from the French Canadians, and parsley the Cornish brought for the pasty. The Swedes brought chives for mixing with fresh butter, the Italians added garlic and grapes. The English

brought rhubarb and johnny-jump-ups, and the French brought lilacs. The Germans brought horseradish.

He hoped that what started as something for him to putter with would turn into something the community could be proud of, that every little town should have at least one room to tell of its beginnings. At the Negaunee Historical Museum, we have such a room.

Working with Cleveland Cliffs Iron Co., the State Historical Commission, the DNR and service groups, they drafted a plan for a multiple facility park. The committee reverted to an advisory group. Anxious to see his dream come true, Matthews shook his head at "progress" and said: "Give me \$5,000, six lumberjacks and a team of horses, and I'll build you a park. Whatever happens, it's still my playground."

A quote attributed to Matthews: "If we forget our past, there is no use looking ahead." He was asked if he would donate his artifacts to Michigan's State Historical Museum. He refused.

"Every time we do this, the people downstate take it all away," he said. "We are sitting on a wealth of history in Negaunee, and I would like to see the community preserve our historical sites."

The Iron Industry Museum in Negaunee Township is across the highway from where Matthews began his one-room museum. A visitor to the museum can learn about the mining process, and enjoy outdoor interpretive trails that illustrate the Carp River Forge plant and animal life, geology and Native American culture.

—Virginia Paulson

## Girls Sports Start at Negaunee High

*From the February 1952 edition of Nee Hy Nuz, Negaunee High School's newspaper:*

Thursday, February 14 marked the beginning of "After Supper Sports."

Twice a month the girls of the junior and senior classes and alumni under the direction of Miss Florence Hildebrand will meet to play basket-

ball. The games will take place every other Thursday evening in the Central Grade School gym at 7:00 p.m.

After school sports have also been organized for members of the ninth and tenth grades. The success of these programs depends on the number of girls participating. So, let's come out and have fun.

**Editor's Note:** Evidently, it worked!

## Negaunee Historical Society Board

Art Gischia, president  
Steve Perucco, vice president  
Kelly Jandron, treasurer  
Donna Gravedoni-Bjork,  
secretary

Dave Dompierre  
Laura Jandron  
Paul Jandron  
Pat Johnson  
Roland Koski  
Miles Parkkonen  
Virginia Paulson  
Theresa Rinehart  
Jeanne Sandstrom

# Negaunee Historical Society Donation Form

P.O. Box 221, Negaunee, MI 49866-0221

\_\_\_\_\_ \$10 Yearly Membership      \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 Lifetime Membership  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$5 Annual Student Membership      \_\_\_\_\_ General Donation

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please include your email address if you would like the newsletter via email:

## Thank You!

### IN THE MUSEUM

## Winter tales of days gone by...

Negaunee residents have enjoyed winter sports since the 1800s, when there was a snowshoe club.

The Adelphi Rink, an indoor rink, was located on Lincoln Street just behind the Breitung Hotel and was used for roller hockey, with the team name Adelphi's.

From 1907 to 1932, the Negaunee Unions also played indoor winter baseball—called kitten ball—similar to today's softball in the Adelphi Rink.

The Jackson Bowl was an outdoor rink at the end of Iron Street where hockey was played and you could skate for pleasure. Lucy Hill was a great place for skiing and a toboggan ride. A toboggan may have been something you had on your Christmas list.

Another favorite outdoor rink was in the area now used as parking for football games and baseball games. It had lights for night skating, and there were "warming shacks"—one for girls and one for boys, with benches where you could put skates on. You could warm up by the pot belly stove when you needed a break. Music was played and boys and girls skated together.

In the '40s and '50s, this is where the

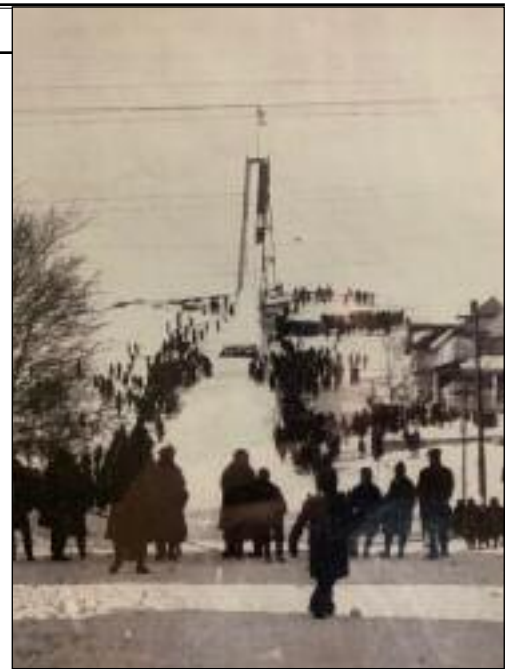
Negaunee Skating Club, the "Northern Lights," presented a winter ice carnival. Skaters were dressed in costumes not fit to be worn in outdoor temperatures.

Some names to remember from that era were Ruth Tompkins, Gertrude Helgren, Theresa Choquette, Elaine Hill (Judici), Gertrude Lenten (Symons) and Dorothy Hill (Collins). Dorothy Hill went on to skate professionally with the Chicago Ice Capades. Pictures from the ice capades can be seen at the museum.

It may have been in the late '20s or '30s that Pioneer Ski Hill started on the bluff where the water tower is currently located. The hill crossed Rock Street and went right down Pioneer Avenue. It has been said that skiers went as far as Main Street.

Wilbert Rasmussen, a 1950 graduate of Negaunee High School, probably did not ski on this hill, but he gained national acclaim in 1946, when at the age of 15 he smashed the record at Suicide Hill. He had a jump of 250 feet, breaking the record of 236 feet. He was named to the National Ski Hall of Fame in 1988.

The complete history of Wilbert's



skiing accomplishments can be seen at the Negaunee Historical Museum.

Negaunee currently is home to the Luge run in the Rolling Mill Location off Lucy Hill.

Skating is popular again with the Negaunee Ice Arena with hockey and open skating.

—Virginia Paulson

*Editor's Note: For more information on this topic, visit the Negaunee Historical Museum, where one of the trees is on display.*

**Negaunee Historical Society**  
**P.O. Box 221**  
**Negaunee, MI 49866**

**BULK RATE**  
**U.S. Postage Paid**  
**Permit #33**  
**Negaunee, MI**  
**49866**

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**



## Teal Lake has claims to fame over the years

Teal Lake, located within the City of Negaunee is a gem for the West End. It covers 466 acres and has a maximum depth of 32 feet. Shallow shorelines are very limited, with most of the lake being greater than 3.5 feet deep.

Teal Lake has provided a popular and productive sport fishery for many years. Its species include one of the few naturally reproducing populations of walleye found in the Upper Peninsula.

In the 1800s, the Neely & Williamson sawmill was located on the shores of Teal Lake. Logs were cut on the opposite side of the lake and floated across to the mill.

In the 1920s many pageants were held at Teal Lake. It is a year-round playground with rowing, canoeing, kayaking, sailboarding, ice fishing and in 1995 when the city no longer used it as a supplier for drinking water, swimming.

But a little known fact is that the "White House" was once located on a piece of land that jutted out into the lake in an area now known as Cambria Location. This was long before US-41 ran adjacent to the lake, and long before

there was a place known as Negaunee.

In 1852, a wealthy man, James Reynolds, built a house on the lake for his ailing daughter. It was only used one summer for the purpose for which it was built. The young girl died before another summer would come around. This summer home was also used by the Reynolds as a place of worship for the congregation now known as St. Johns Episcopal Church. It became a barracks for the soldiers who came to preserve order during the labor riots.

When the mines opened in the Teal Lake area, "The White House" was used as boarding for miners. It burned to the ground in May 1879. It is thought that the fire was set intentionally because of a squabble between several parties as to who would take possession of it.

Teal Lake also took its share of lives over the years, including Ema Stilson Orr (42), Florence Crane (17), Roy Mitchell (16), Gordon Piper (15) in 1904, and Nazer Remillard (35) and Wilfred Remillard (20) in 1907.

—Virginia Paulson



### Museum Information

303 East Main Street  
P.O. Box 221  
Negaunee, MI 49866  
(906)475-4614

Fall & Winter hours:  
By appointment only

negauneehistorical@att.net  
[www.negauneehistory.org](http://www.negauneehistory.org)

*Layout & editing donated by  
Kristy Basolo-Malmsten,  
Plan B Publishing*