

Preserving the Past

THE HIBBING HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

2015 - 4th Quarter



Growing up in the Greenhaven neighborhood of Hibbing in the 1950s and '60s was a lot of fun. Especially in the Winter! My siblings and I could walk out our front door, cross the street and walk up a hill, where the hospital now exists, to try out our new skis. We could look out our kitchen window after supper and watch for the skating rink lights to turn on. We would race through the playground to the rink and skate all evening—on school nights! Imagine that. Mr. Grillo had the rink plowed and the wood stove in the shack ready to warm us up.

One of the more exciting adventures was to go tobogganing at DuPont on a weekend afternoon. Before the Carey Lake area was developed, there was simply the DuPont sliding hill rising up next to the ruins of the DuPont explosives factory. Mr. Hagge, one of the neighborhood dads, would load up his station wagon with his sons' friends and haul us all out to the hill for an afternoon of sliding and tobogganing. Sometimes, he even tied the toboggan to the back of his car and pulled the braver kids down the road to the hill. Nicolleli, Gernert, Tripp and Suihkonen kids joined the Hagge boys in careening down the slope on sleds, saucers, toboggans and even cardboard. One part of the slope was steeper than the rest and had a great big pine tree next to the edge, about half-way down. It was pretty scary and depended on the toboggan driver as to whether we would make it safely to the bottom or bail out first.



With support from the City of Hibbing, Security State Bank and US Bancorp Foundation, the Hibbing Historical Society preserved a corner of the DuPont building, created two information plaques and, just this summer, placed a bench at the site. It is sited to look out over scenic Carey Lake and provide a resting spot for bicyclists, hikers and other visitors. Kudos to Pete Hyduke and his crew for working with us on the installment of this bench.

It is collaboration such as this that helps us preserve our history and, for many of us, some very special memories.

-Linda Suihkonen, HHS Board member

Eight Ways to Spell Mesabi

Of all the significant place names in northern Minnesota, none is more confusing than the term “MESABI”. The word is of Native American origin. The first European spelling of this name appears as MISSABAY Heights in a 17th century map belonging to French explorer Jean Nicollet.

In 1848, pioneer American geological explorer, Dr. Joseph G. Norwood, described the area as MISSABE Wachu, or Big Man Falls. In the 1853 Dictionary of the Otchipwe Language, Michigan missionary, Bishop Frederick Baraga, recorded the noun MISSABE as signifying a “giant”. Another missionary, Rev. J. A. Gilfillan, cited an Ojibway legend in which a cannibalistic giant, MISSABE, owned the rugged hills in north central St. Louis County.

It is to geological commentator, Col. Charles Whittlesey, writing in the 1860s, that we owe the spelling of MESABI, officially accepted by the United States Geological Survey. This spelling is also acknowledged by renowned Minnesota geologist, Horace V. Winchell in his 1894 history of Minnesota mineral discoveries.



Inconsistencies have come up:

- The Duluth and Iron Range Railroad named a station MESABA.
- The Duluth, MISSABE, and Northern Railroad stuck to the original spelling.
- Professor Winchell occasionally used MASABI.
- The Minnesota Steamship Company managed by Pickands-Mather used MASABA for one of its new ore carriers during the mid-1890s.
- State Archeologist, Warren Upham, author of Minnesota Geographic Names suggested still another spelling—MISSABI.
- A reference to MISABAY Hills can also be found in early writings.

Thus, we have a speller’s nightmare. For practical purposes, we may reduce these to three main usages:

1. MESABI—the official geographic spelling
2. MISSABE—the major railroad spelling
3. MESABA—part of the title of the Mesaba Iron Company, antecedent of Reserve Mining Company

Mystery Photo

Several readers, including Jeff Dougherty, helped us identify 3 of the people in the last “mystery photo”. Those identified included Vi Hobble, David Oxman and Thelma Mattson. Then, we hit the jackpot when Mary Enich called with additional information.

The photo was taken during the 1982 Winter Frolic celebration. In addition to confirming the earlier identifications, she stated that David Oxman was the host of the King and Queen coronation ceremony. She was also able to point out three of the queen candidates seen dancing in the background. They are JoAnne Scipioni (Schwartz), Ann Mulvahill and Sandy Anderson. Thanks to all who took the time to share their valuable information.

Curator Erica selected photo below. If you recognize any of the people in the picture or have any information about what appears to be a groundbreaking, please contact Erica at the Museum.



Officer Spotlight

Treasurer Mary Palcich Keyes is passionate about Hibbing. She is a proud member of Hibbing High School's Class of 1975. After graduation, Mary attended the College of St. Catherine, earning degrees in English, Speech/Theater and Secondary Education. She then taught Senior English for 20 years at Hill-Murray School in Maplewood, Minnesota. She also worked at the Minnesota History Center, in downtown St. Paul, before returning to her beloved hometown in 2003. Mary and her husband Joe, to whom she has been married for 36 years, owned and operated Howard Street Booksellers until they retired last year.

Mary has been extremely active in promoting the treasures of Hibbing. Mary and Joe were members of both the Downtown Merchant Association and the Dylan Days Committee. As part of Dylan Days, Mary acted as tour guide for a unique and popular bus tour through town. Mary continues to give tours of historic Hibbing and the high school. Most recently, Mary and her sidekick, Joe, hosted and narrated the 2015 Jubilee Parade for which they received rave reviews.



Mary has been a Board Member for nine years, most recently serving as Treasurer. Kudos to Mary for her hard work in planning Hibbing's Birthday Party every August. This year, great weather allowed the party to be held on the lawn of City Hall. Over 100 guests were present as Isabel Thouin, long-time Children's Librarian, and Willard Whitman, Navy hero, were inducted into the Hall of Service. Visit the museum to see their plaques and learn more about them, along with all of the other inductees.

Mary is an avid reader although she is also a fan of British TV shows and movies. Mary enjoys spending time with the many friends she has made since returning to Hibbing.

Mark Your Calendar!

Upcoming events include:

October 24th: Annual Fall Meeting: A Celebration of Italy (see insert)

December 11th: A Victorian Christmas Open House (separate mailing to follow)

Your favorite party planners are looking for ideas for next year's calendar of events and would appreciate your input. What people or groups would you like to see featured? What part of Hibbing's rich history would you like to know more about? Please contact Erica, Mary, Roberta or Linda at the Museum.