
ELY TOWNSHIP – 150TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

1871-2021

Ely Township – 141 square miles in Marquette County

Friday, August 26, 2022

Kickball Tournament, Clarksburg Baseball Field

Saturday, August 27, 2022

10:00 a.m. – **Kids Parade**, Ely Township Hall to American Legion

12:00-5:00 p.m. – **History/Information**, Ely Township Hall

3:00 p.m. – **Barnes/Hecker Mine Presentation**, Ely Township Hall

4:00-8:00 p.m. – **BBQ**, American Legion

9:00 p.m. – 12:00 a.m. – **Live Music (Spun)**, American Legion

Centennial Committee:

Erin Bertucci

Raynor Johnson

Kathleen Carlson

Rachel Perala

Angela Uhl

Merilee Burnette

Kitty Kososki

Shannon Junak

Lou Ouellette

Steve Bertucci

Kara Cox

Carolyn Trewnick

Tim Johnson

Carl Hosang

Julie Hosang

Donations:

Raynor Johnson

Cliffs

Burnette Family

Jubilee

Clarksburg Little League

US41 Auto Sales

Mary Kay

First Bank

Lyme Timber

Anonymous

In memory of Muna and Shirley Laakso

Mike's Rolling Thunder

581 Little Store

Congress

Pizza Hut

Shell

Culvers

Carey

Season Construction

Thank you!

Historical Sketch of Ely Township

Data from:

- Marquette County Historical Society
- History of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan
- Newspaper files in Ishpeming Carnegie Public Library
- Lake Superior Iron Ores
- Laws of Michigan 1871-Vol. 3, 1873-Vol. 13, 1875, 1883, 1885, 1891
- Abstracts of original entries vol. 3, C E 2308
- Ely Township Board records
- Ely School District records
- Material and pictures provided by Leif Johnson

Ely Township, slightly west of the central townships in Marquette County, was created March 29, 1871, embracing all that part of the county west of R27W, an area, which until this time had been part of Ishpeming and Marquette townships. The township was enlarged in 1873 by the addition of T41N, R32W. This area, however, was withdrawn in 1885 to be included in the formation of Breitung Township in Iron County. Successive detachments were made thereafter from western Ely Township in February 1875 to form Michigamme Township, in March of the same year to form Republic Township, and in March 1883 to create Humboldt Township. In 1882, land was detached from Ely Township to create townships which later became basic parts of newly organized counties. Crystal Falls Township became a part of Iron County. Felch Township was organized and included in Dickinson County. The final detachment from Ely Township was made in 1891 when the southernmost section of the township was transferred to Dickinson County. The first landholder registered in the county records was Stephen Walsh, who took up three parcels in Section 4 of T46N, R28W, and other pieces in Sections 8 and 10 and the 640 acres comprising Section 9. In the spring of 1864, Edwin Parsons obtained 5 tracts of land in Section 2 of T47N, R28W.

1851 and Earlier

S.P. Ely and Herman B. Ely proposed a railroad to transport the iron ore to the docks in Marquette. Eventually the Marquette, Houghton and Ontonagon Railway passed through.

1862

A small settlement was formed which later was platted as Clarksburg in 1881.

1865

There was a small settlement around the Greenwood Furnace where the blast furnaces of the Michigan Iron Company were located.

1871

Ely Township was organized into an official governmental unit with Henry S. Colwell as its first supervisor. Supervisors of Ely Township for the first dozen years were:

1871-1872 – Henry S. Colwell

1872-1873 – John R. Case

1874- – Charles G. Blake

1875-1876 – Charles G. Hussey

1877-1878 – George Mitchell

1879- – Thomas Dundon

1880-1883 – Ed A. Maas

1879

Boston Mine began operations two miles north of Clarksburg. Lake Boston (commonly called Diorite Lake) was in the southeast corner of the Boston Mining Company's land.

1880-1922

The American Mine was in operation in Ely.

1880

The population of Ely was 1,011 people.

1881

Ely Township had two frame school buildings valued at \$3,000, the latter worth \$600. There were 331 children of school age. Expenditures for the school year ending in 1881 was \$4,563.

Miners worked ten hours/day for a daily of \$2.00-\$2.25.

1882

Boston Mine shipped 21,302 tons of iron ore.

1883-1897

Dexter Mine opened.

1884

Dey Mine worked.

1902

In May, Mr. Edward Copps was endeavoring to start up a Michigan Gold Mine property.

1908

At the Michigan Gold Mine, the company was manufacturing silica.

On November 14, a newspaper stated "The American (Mine) is said to be dignified with a real townsite, and lots are now for sale by enterprising agents. It is said that four or five hundred men will be working here."

1908-1909

The new town near the American Mine, ten miles west of Ishpeming, will within a few months contain several buildings. Work on the first structure will start. It will be a large boarding house and will be built by Charles LaFrenier, who was the first to buy a lot in Diorite, which will be the name of the town because of the several diorite bluffs.

1909 – June 19

"A number of Swedish miners from Colorado worked at the American Mine. Substantial boarding and dwelling houses have been constructed and close by is the new townsite of Diorite, where a well-stocked general store, a town hall and several residences are being completed. More are in the course of construction and one could not wish for a more delightful location. Close by is a beautiful lake, and to the north, a level stretch ending in a huge wall of granite, ample protection from the north winds, while to the west is the mine. The soil is good, gardens can be made productive, and very soon there will be fine roads leading to Ishpeming – the township board has taken the matter in earnest. The Northwestern and South Shore Railroads provide ample transportation facilities."

1911 – January 7

Michigan Gold Mine – "This pocket of virgin gold was found only a few feet below the grass roots. The vein was one of the gash variety located in the diorite. Diorite is generally not the kind of rock in which gold veins long continue."

1911 – February 25

"West of the American Mine, the Maas interests have done considerable diamond drilling and report large finds of iron ore – very high grade."

1913 – May 10

Near the American Mine, the company is to erect several dwellings for the miners. The American Mine location is a very attractive one and is close enough to Ishpeming to permit easy access to the later place whenever desired.

1913 – May 13

Michigan Gold Mine closed.

1915 – August 21

A two mile by three-fourths mile swamp was drained by the American Mine of the American-Boston Mining Co. Mr. J.R. Thompson was credited with the plan for draining it.

1916 – February

The miners employed at the American Mine of the American-Boston Mining Company at Diorite have been out on strike for an eight hour work day.

1918 – May 25

The Barnes-Hecker property of which the Iron Ore News has made frequent mention, and located to the west of the North Lake mines in the Ishpeming district of the Marquette Range, will probably prove a very valuable addition to the field, in giving a place to labor, which means business for the merchants, more activity, and prosperity.

1918 – August 24

The work of the sinking of the shaft at the Barnes-Hecker property west of North Lake, progresses very slowly. The ground has been troublesome and the shaft will probably have to be concreted for a considerable distance from the surface. It is now to a depth of 350 feet.

1919 – March 22

The second level of the Barnes-Hecker was opened. There was very little area to work in and due to possible damage to timber, very little blasting can be done.

1919 – October 11

An Armstrong loader was purchased for the Barnes-Hecker Mine.

1925 – October

A group of boys had gone hunting on the Diorite Bluffs and beyond. Hank Johnson, 16, and Waino Maki, 14, were in the group. An unexpected snowstorm blew in after the boys had separated to pursue game. As visibility decreased, the boys turned homeward. Nearing the village, they noticed that two were missing from their group. The boys tried to retrace their steps and find the missing boys but the snow wiped out their tracks, so they returned to Diorite and reported their friends missing. Word spread around town and a search party formed. The mine whistle blew at regular intervals in the hope that Hank and Waino would hear it and use it to find their way. Darkness fell and the wind chill was below freezing. Hank and Waino stumbled over branches and fell time and again in the wet snow. They became confused and tired. The wolves on the bluff, sensing the boys in trouble, began to howl. Hank and Waino, cold, wet, and exhausted, stopped to rest. Their strength sapped and now separated, the boys tried to wait out the night. The howling wind almost drowned out the sound of the wolves as they drew nearer to the boys all night long. The search parties had no luck finding the boys and the next morning, Hank was found crawling by the barn wall on Pelto's farm. He was brought into the farmhouse, with his legs frozen, and warmed by the heat of the wood oven. Hank would lose both of his legs to the frostbite and had nightmares of wolves surrounding him and would flail around in his sleep, howling like a wolf. Waino was found frozen to a tree and developed pneumonia and died two weeks later.

1926 – October 2

Henry Ford named his new iron mine the "Blueberry," because Mr. Ford and his son Edsel went on an inspection of the mine location and spent some time gathering blueberries.

1926 – October 16

The Ford Motor Company, which commenced the sinking of a new mine shaft, to be known as the Blueberry, will have to find a new spot to sink the shaft, because when only a few sets had been put in place, quicksand was encountered. Drilling determined that the ledge at the point was much deeper than anticipated, so it was decided to abandon the work and go further back.

1926 – November 3

Fifty-one men lose lives at Barnes-Hecker Mine.

1930 – August 23

Henry Ford paid a visit to the Ford Motor Company's Blueberry Mine on his way to the summer home at the Huron Mountain Club.

1931 – August 22

Henry Ford visited Blueberry Mine.

1932 – February 6

Blueberry resumes work after six week shutdown. They will work on a half-time schedule.

1932 – May 14

Ely Township Mine Assessment Report:

Blueberry - \$905,000

Morris - \$1,075,000

Greenwood - \$50,000

1932 – August

The only underground mine in operation in Marquette County is the Greenwood Mine. This closed in 1959.

1933 – August

A large forest fire ravaged a vast area of Ely Township.

2019

Population: 2,086

137.5 square miles

15.2 people per square mile

748 households; 2.8 persons per household

Median age: 42.7

60% population ages 18 to 64

51% male

Per capita income: \$28,216; Median household income: \$63,190

8.9% persons below poverty line

26.3 minutes – mean travel time to work

63% married

1.5% women ages 15-50 who gave birth during the past year

1,153 housing units

Median value of owner-occupied housing units - \$148,900

94.3% high school grad or higher; 16.9% Bachelor's degree or higher

10.2% veteran status

Iron Ore Mines

American Mine	1880-1922
(Also called the Sterling Mine)	
Boston Mine	1880-1896
Dexter Mine	1883-1897
Dey Mine	1884
Chase Mine	1910-1916
(Included Dey Mine, part of Dexter Consolidated)	
Lloyd Mine	1911-1950s
Morris Mine	1911-1950
Barnes-Hecker	1918-1926
Blueberry Mine	1926-1954
Greenwood Mine	1932-1950s

Gold Mines

Michigan Gold Mine 1903
1911-1913 ---- 1934-1938
(Closed August 27, 1938 due to bankruptcy.)

Excerpts from the Iron Ore Newspapers about the Barnes-Hecker Tragedy

At 11:20 a.m., Wednesday, November 3, 1926 the Barnes-Hecker mine caved in, taking the lives of 50 miners and the County Mine Inspector – William E. Hill. One man, Wilfred Wills escaped alive. Many of the miners lived in Ely Township at the time.

Barnes-Hecker Location:

William Tippet, Captain
Sam Phillippi, Shift Boss
Nels Hill
John Santti
Peter Mongiat
Joseph Mankee
Thomas Drew

South Greenwood Location:

Nick Valenti
Joseph Gelmi

Four Mile Carp:

Peter Duroche

Diorite:

Harvey Vepsala

North Lake:

Solomon Valimaa
Nester Solomon
Elias Ranta
James Scopel
William Kakkuri
William Huot

Ishpeming:

William E. Hill, County Mine
Inspector
Raymond Carlyon
Albert Vickman
Frank Jokinen
Edward Chapman
Herman Chapman
Ed Temo
Louis Trudell
Emil Maki
Harry Quayle
Herman Aho
Arvid Kallio
Arvid Heino
Uno Koskinen
Gust Frendi
George Lampshire

Ishpeming Continued:

Richard Lampshire
Ed Laiture
Theodore Kuri
John Wiljamer
Walter Mattila
Henry Haapala
William Carlyon
Peter Carlyon
William Tuomela
Earl J. Ellersick
Clement Simoneou
Jack J. Hanna
Solomon Millimaki
Thomas Kirby, Sr.
Thomas Kirby, Jr.
James Green
Walter Tippet

December 11, 1926 – Iron Ore News:

“There is nothing new to report from the Barnes-Hecker Mine of the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company where the bodies of 51 men are buried in the workings.”

December 18, 1926 – Iron Ore News:

“At the Barnes-Hecker Mine near Ishpeming, the great task of unwatering the shaft and the levels goes steadily on. Little headway is made however, the conditions being against it. There is such a head of water to fight against that the greatest care has to be observed in the work and the object of the company cannot be realized for a long time.”

“No contractor can be found who will take the risk attached to the job.”

“The mine is a cemetery from which no remains can now be taken in recognizable form, and of which, long before they could be reached, there will be no trace, being absorbed by the earth from which they came.”

Historical Sketch of Ely Township Schools

1881

There were two frame school buildings in Ely Township. There were 331 school age children residing in the township.

1903 – July 27

The first meeting of the school board under the new law was held. School board members were:

- President – Thomas Adams
- Secretary – R.J. Mahaffey
- Treasurer – Moses Verville
- Trustee – August LaFave
- Trustee – Magalore Thibert

There were 4 school buildings:

- Clarksburg School
- Dexter School
- North Greenwood School
- South Greenwood School

1905

School Board members were: Moses Verville, Philo P. Chase, Magalore Thibert and George Junak.

1907

John Decaire and Louis Nault were Trustees on the Ely Township School Board.

1908 – August

There were 32 children of school age residing at the American Mine Location. A motion was made that a new school be built.

1909

There were 5 school districts in Ely Township. Some of the teachers were Rose LaForge – District 1, Nellie Trihey – District 2, Mabel Chase – District 3, and Esther Olson.

1909 – December

The Diorite Store Company sold coal to the schools.

1914

Out of the 5 school districts in Ely Township, M. Stevenson received the highest pay. He received \$75 per month for being principal in Diorite.

1915

R.P. Bronson built a school at Pleasant Prairie. The school records outline an accredited high school curriculum for Ely Township in Diorite.

1918

Dexter School closed. Half of the students were sent to Barnes-Hecker School, the remainder went to Simon’s Forks School.

1919

The first graduating class from the High School in Ely Township were:

- John Nancarrow
- Hilda Hannuksela
- Margaret Decaire
- Lydia Saari
- Iona Pearson

1920

Henry Bouley was the local leader of the Boys and Girls Club work, as evidenced by a certificate of Charles Johnson's. He completed three years of handicrafts in 1925.

1921

Two familiar members of the Class of '21 are Russell Mackey and Mildred Larmour Junak.

1921-1922

Schools in Ely – Teachers:

- Diorite – Henry Bouley, Margaret Decaire, Hilda Hannuksela
- Clarksburg – Viola Ryan
- Barnes-Hecker – Edith Nancarrow
- Black River – Mildred Larmour
- Simons – Pearl Treado
- North Greenwood – Rene Bernard

1922

Miss Gladys Malmberg filled a vacancy at Simons School. Russell Mackey taught at Barnes-Hecker, his sister, Fannie, taught at the North Greenwood School. Myrtle Blomgren taught in Black River, while Margaret Decaire taught at the Clarksburg School.

1922-1923

Hilda Hannuksela taught students from grades 5-10 in Diorite.

1924

Andrea Johnson taught at the Pleasant Prairie School. Familiar names such as Honkala and Watters were on the roster.

1930s

By the end of the 1930s the only school that remained open was Diorite School.

1940's

The Ely Township Sports Club held meetings at the Diorite School. The group sponsored ski tournaments, a baseball team, and dances. Alivian Hill, Buster Howe, and Nels Paavola were our best skiers. Bob Laakso, the best baseball pitcher. Charles Johnson as umpire had the most arguments. In 1948, Jean Johnson Warlin won the Ely Sports Club Queen Contest with the most booster button sales.

1950

The 8th grade class of Bill Larmour planted the pine trees in the park by the lake.

1954

New addition to Diorite School, including a gymnasium and four elementary classrooms.

1960's

The school and teachers sponsored 4H classes, on Fridays, for many years. In 1968-69, the Five Dimension 4H Club was very active. Student leaders were Dennis Robinson, Kenneth Saari, Lori Stetson, and Gayle Yesney. Chairpersons Maxine LaParche and Jean Warlin, with help from Stella Byykkonen, Elsie Hooper, Lucy Salminen, Grace Saari, Joyce Lake, Robert Laakso, Donald Magnuson, and Donald Grund. Knitting and wood shop handicraft were taught. Scout Troops also met at the school for many years and were led by John Lake, Lloyd Hooper, and Jim Fagen for the Boy Scouts. Edith Pearce led the Girl Scouts.

The Lutheran Church held monthly worship services and weekly Sunday School with up to 65 children attending. Jean Warline and Gerine Jaykka led the Sunday School. The church basketball league rented the gym for games.

1960-1996

The Diorite School Ely Parents and Teachers Groups have been active from the 1960's to the present day. The fundraisers they held purchased bleachers for the gym, playgroup equipment, library books, and audio visuals. They meet once a month and volunteer assistance for field trips, librarians, monitors, or whatever help is needed at the school. One teacher had 20 years of perfect attendance.

Over the years, the school has been used for a wide variety of events: wedding receptions, teen dances, square dances, and City League basketball.

1974

Westwood High School opened in Ishpeming.

1997

Aspen Ridge Elementary School opened in Ishpeming.

Passenger Trains

Passenger train service was available around 1935 by the Duluth, South Shore and Atlantic Railway. There were five trains eastbound and five trains westbound, every 24 hours, with flagstops at Greenwood and Low Moore and a depot at Clarksburg. Section foremen at Greenwood during this time were: Bernard Gebeau, Frank Bargion and Isadore LaCosse.

Farming

Farming was one of the main industries in Ely Township in the 1890s to about 1940. There were farming settlements on the South Plains in South Greenwood, North Greenwood, Clarksburg and Black River. Dairying, hay and potatoes were the main income.

Many farmers worked their teams at the lumber camps in winter. The largest farm was Low Moor, one mile west of Greenwood. It had a clearing one mile long and one-fourth mile wide along the South Shore Railway. It was started by Taylor and E.C. Anthony of Negaunee in the '90s, later being Anthony alone. Much of this land was much land and was ditched at 100 foot intervals. This was done by horses and men. Many of the laborers were trustees from the Marquette prison. Hay was the main crop. At one time they had 150 head of Angus beef cattle and around 200 sheep. Some of the cattle and sheep were shipped out by rail and some were slaughtered at the farm and distributed to merchants at Negaunee and Ishpeming. The foreman was Charles Carter, a big burly Scotsman.

Nature's Contributions

LAKES:

- Boston
- Lowmoore
- Little Perch
- Big Perch
- Gold Mine
- Deer
- Chabeneau
- Duck
- Johnson
- Brocky
- Island
- Tanglefoot
- Sagola (2)
- Gingrass
- Round
- Dewey
- Ross
- Penglase
- Frenchy
- Heart

CREEKS:

- Wild West
- Camp Eleven
- Flat Rock
- Bells
- Green
- Bernhardt
- Gold Mine

RIVERS:

- Escanaba
- Carp
- Black

Historical Sites of the Mining Era

- Greenwood Blast Furnace
- Barnes-Hecker Mine
- American Mine
- Michigan Gold Mine

Businesses of the Past

(as recalled by Leif Johnson)

FURNACES:

- Greenwood

CHARCOAL KILNS:

- Greenwood
- Peterson
- Clarksburg
- LaFave

SALOONS:

- Ross
- Thibert