

Ishpeming

**Area
Historical
Society &
Museum**

SUMMER 2020

Edited by
Karen Kasper

The Historic Places and Interesting Spaces Tour

Due to concerns and cautions about COVID-19, the Society has decided to cancel the Historic Places and Interesting Spaces tour this year. It is not something we did lightly, but we felt it was in everyone's best interests to cancel. The Places and Spaces tour is our biggest fundraiser of the year and the funds that this event generates help us keep the doors open. However, it is more important to make sure everyone is safe. We hope to be back next year with the tour. We are always interested in finding homes to tour, so let us know if you own a home that might be tour worthy.

The Museum

We are still hoping to open our museum this summer. However, we don't know when that will be or how many days a week we will be open. Some of our volunteers are people who only come up during the summer.

Cemetery Tour

The Society still hopes to have a cemetery tour this summer, which will feature Ishpeming's only US Congressman, a look at a most unusual gravestone, the father of Ishpeming Skiing and more. We aren't sure when the tours will happen, that will depend upon what's happening with the Stay at Home orders. The plans now are for them to run for the month of August only,

Main Street Tour

We will add a second tour this summer, a walk down historic Main Street. Learn about some of the buildings on Main Street, including the Anderson Block, the Gately Wiggins building and more. These tours will probably take place in September. For both tours, please watch our Facebook page for more details.

Please become a member

This year, more than ever, it is important to make sure memberships are up to date. Our biggest money-maker of the year is off the table and while the fundraiser is important to our financial well-being the monies we raise via our memberships is equally if not more important.

We now have the ability to take membership renewals via our web page at www.ishpeminghistory.org as well as by mail.

Ishpeming Area Historical Society Board

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An Ishpeming Finnish-American Goes to War 1918-1919

by Jon H. Moilanen, COL USA Ret., Ed.D.

This family story is of Private Wayne Moilanen, a World War 1 infantryman from Ishpeming who fought in the French Alsace defenses during mid-1918 and the October 1918 attack east of the Meuse River in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. Wayne is my Grandpa.

A Moilanen family treasure is a packet of letters, post cards, and other documents my Great grandma Brita saved as son Wayne wrote to her and his younger sister Ida during his World War 1 Army service. Wayne also saved letters from his sisters "Minnie" and Ida on daily life back home. Wayne's observations span induction and training in the USA, hectic events in France on battlefields and after the Armistice, and his return to Ishpeming as a combat veteran.

A Finnish-American Family and the Great War

Who was Private Wayne Moilanen? Wayne was born and raised in a miner's family of nine siblings in the iron ore mining town of Ishpeming. His father Israel emigrated from Finland in the 1870s, married Brita in 1884, and became a US citizen in 1892.

Tragedy struck the family in 1907 when Israel died in a horrific mine shaft accident. Within a year Wayne suffered another tragedy with the death of his seven-year-old brother William. Another brother Albert had died in 1904 when only one year old. By 1918, Wayne's three older sisters Wilhelmina, Helen, and Anna, lived or worked in Waukegan, Illinois while brothers John and Vernie lived periodically at home with Brita and youngest sister Ida. Brita remained a widow and died in Ishpeming in 1923.

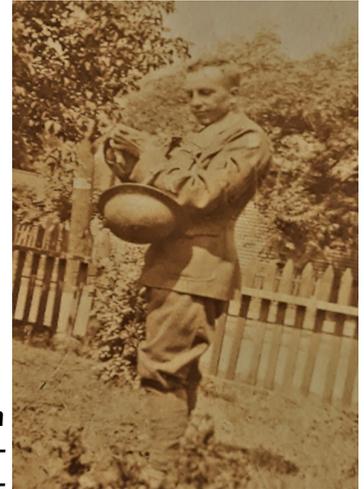
When Wayne registered for the draft in 1917, he was a teamster of two horses and wagon for a local company in Ishpeming. Wayne had major responsibilities caring for his widowed mother. His older brother John experienced a troubled life and Vernie was away at times. His sister Ida at home was only eleven years old.

You're in the Army Now

The United States had been at war for almost one year when he boarded the train in Ishpeming to basic Army training at Camp Custer near Battle Creek, Michigan. "I am in the field artillery now... We got two horses to take care of every day... After we care for the horses in the morning we drill [march in formation] till eleven o'clock." In the same 28 April letter from Custer, Wayne writes,

Sorry to hear that Mother and you had the grippe [influenza]. About half of our company had the grippe here to. Not me... There are about two hundred men in our barracks.... Matti Moilanen who came from Palmer [location near Ishpeming] the same time I did is sick. He has been sick for three weeks.

Wayne remained healthy and within two weeks is reassigned to Camp Gordon, Georgia as an infantryman in a large group of soldiers. The Army was hard-pressed to fill the manning shortfalls in infantry divisions with near-term shipping schedules to Europe. By mid-May, Wayne says, "It sure is warm here, a fellow sweats doing nothing. The nights here are warm too... They are going to send us soldiers to some other place. It is too hot for hard drilling."



Wayne's letters describe daily life of a private soldier, rushed routines of an Army mobilizing in war, duty details, marches, training, and new experiences in locales and weather of the US South. A later letter from Minnie notes that the Ishpeming schools are closed. Always concerned about his mother's care, he tells Ida at home, *"Tell mother we never got paid yet, so I couldn't send her any. We might get paid in a couple of days, or maybe a month. I send some home as soon as I get paid."*

From Camp Gordon, Wayne is reassigned suddenly in late May. This time he finds himself in Camp McClellan Alabama and in a different division—the third division in less than 60 days. Wayne writes to Ida,

Dear Sis: I bet you surprised to hear from me in Alabama. I am feeling fine and dandy. [Influenza is still ranging in some camps and in some USA hometowns.] It is a little warmer here than in Georgia.... We sleep in tents here eight men to a tent. We got folding beds here instead of cots. In tents it is lots cooler sleeping at night then in the barracks. We got to have summer clothes on here.... Will write a long letter next time.

Inducted into the Army in Ishpeming on 31 March 1918, he is in Europe less than 90 days later. He writes from France, *"Arrived safe and sound...I seen lots of things since left Ala.... Tell Mother not to worry."* His first-person accounts in France include countryside beauty, friendly farmers, to incidents of immediate caution and combat danger. *"You don't see any buildings here made of wood. They are made of cement or stone."* He notices something odd—there are no young men, only old farmers, wives, or young children. Young French men are dead, wounded, or serving in the trenches. *"We have open air church services held here every Sunday night. I was their, and so was lots of French people."*

Sometimes pointed and at times mundane, his observations peer from a forward observation post in Alsace near Verdun into "no man's land," gaze up at a "dogfight" between airplanes high above the trenches, or views the French countryside in relative safety of a rearward position.

Wayne writes from the trenches, *"It takes about two months to get any mail from the states... You would hardly recognize me, when I got my helmet, Gas-mask, and that stuff on."* Another letter reflects, *"I just got back from the trenches the other day.... There are lots of rats in the trenches. You can hear the rats crawling around the barbe wire entanglements all night long."*

Other letters remark, "Been very busy lately so I never had any [time] to write before.... I am writing this letter on the top of my mess kit." To Ida he writes, "You would hardly recognize me if I could get my picture taken...with steel helmet, gas masks, and all that stuff on, it would be hard to recognize me if I was home."

During the Meuse-Argonne offensive in a Hotchkiss machinegun squad, Wayne attacked up the slopes east of the Meuse River with Company G, 2d Battalion, 115th Infantry Regiment, 58th Brigade, of the 29th Infantry Division. The night before the attack, Wayne writes what may be his final letter:

Dear Sis: I got your letter a few hours ago and was glad to hear from you...I am writing this letter from a dugout so you must excuse my writing...let me know if mother got that money that I sent her, and the government money...I am feeling fine and in good health...With Love, Wayne

Weeks of combat were grueling in rainy, cold weather along wooded ridgelines and ravines

through a series of enemy defenses. At one point, all of the company's commissioned officers were casualties and a sergeant took command of the company. Wayne was fortunate to only be wounded in action. A man of few words, Wayne's thoughts while convalescing in a hospital focus on home, his mother, and life in Ishpeming.

Dear Sis:

It has been a long time since you heard from me that you must think that I am wounded or something. I am in an American hospital...It is not much to worry about only a piece of shrapnel hit me about the right eye. I was going through an artillery barrage when I got hit...I was in a big drive. We captured lots of prisoners. I captured fifteen of them alone...Well Sis I will have to close as the doctor will not let me strain my eye. Tell Mother not to worry.

Wounded on 25 October, he was evacuated from the combat zone and convalesced at a base hospital for two months in Allerey, France before returning to his infantry company. The Armistice on 11 November preceded a long wait in France before returning home to Ishpeming, Michigan in June 1919. Wayne became a miner like his father, married Grandma [Edith Jacobs] in 1926, and raised a family of my father Harold and his younger sister Jeanette [Lindberg]. Wayne fulfilled his ambitions as a miner, husband, father, and grandfather. He died in 1980 in Ishpeming.

Reflections of Grandpa: Private Wayne Moilanen

Wayne knew—as a citizen soldier—he served honorably in duty when called to war in service to the Nation. As he returned to Ishpeming, I imagine him smiling as he walked south from the train depot and past “Old Ish” to his home on East Johnson Street. The city joined in a welcome home celebration July 4th and 5th. A huge parade, led by Stephen H. Collick, marched under the Welcome Arch which had been erected by the city at the insistence of Mayor C.J. Shaddick.

I remember, as a boy, Grandpa as a quiet short man who always had a wad of snuff inside his lip as he spoke in a soft tempered voice. He was a kind man with a gentle smile.



I remember Grandpa and Grandma: her “smooch” and hug as we entered the kitchen door, delicious pasties cooling under a towel, and the sweet aroma of saffron buns. Grandpa loved to bring my brothers and me to the backyard raspberry patch on First Street and enjoyed watching us pick and eat berries by the handful.

Grandpa rarely spoke of wartime experiences but his letter trope reveals a profound appreciation of a young man I never knew. “*Thank you, Grandpa!*”

100 Years Ago

New Service Station

The Wahlman Construction company has been awarded a contract by the Standard Oil company for the removal of the two buildings that now occupy the site at the corner of Division and Second Streets which was recently purchased by the oil company from the Blackney estate. Mr. Wahlman will start a crew to work there early next week and he estimates that the work can be completed in a very short time.

The Standard Oil is to erect a modern oil and gasoline station on the lot and it is thought that the plans will reach here within a few days so that the construction work can be commenced shortly after the old structures are removed. The building will be of brick construction with stucco coating and will present a very neat appearance. The driveways will be of concrete.

The present filling station on the Negaunee-Ishpeming highway will be discontinued when the new station is completed.

Representatives of the Standard Oil company looked the city over carefully and came to the conclusion that Division street is the main artery of Ishpeming. Division is still looked upon as part of the main highway leading from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

(Iron Ore, May 1, 1920)

Slow Them Down!

There are a lot of car drivers who go across street intersections, without slowing down, or without looking to the right or left. They seem to have only one idea in their noodles which is to rush straight ahead, and act as if they thought they were the only people on the road. Marshal Trevarrow tells us these fellows give more trouble than any other class, and the fact that accidents have not occurred is due to good luck, as they ought to happen often by reason of the way they drive.

Guess we will have to put a policeman on the principal corners of town, giving him a whistle with which to signal these fellows. A traffic cop would be putting one over on Marquette, eh? Guess we will have to put a few on. It would serve as an education for some of the sap-headed fellows who now defy all laws and road courtesies.

(Iron Ore, Op-Ed, May 8, 1920)

Local History

The Historical Society loves stories like this issue's feature article, stories about local residents and local history. Do you have memories of your childhood? We welcome them. Length should be about 1000 words and pictures are great as well. Send us an email for more details.

Volunteers Needed

We are always in need of volunteers. They are the lifeblood of our organization.

We are looking for a membership chairperson. This job involves keeping track of our memberships, providing a member list for sending out newsletters, writing thank you cards when we get new members and attending our board meetings to report on our membership numbers. Some computer skills are necessary.

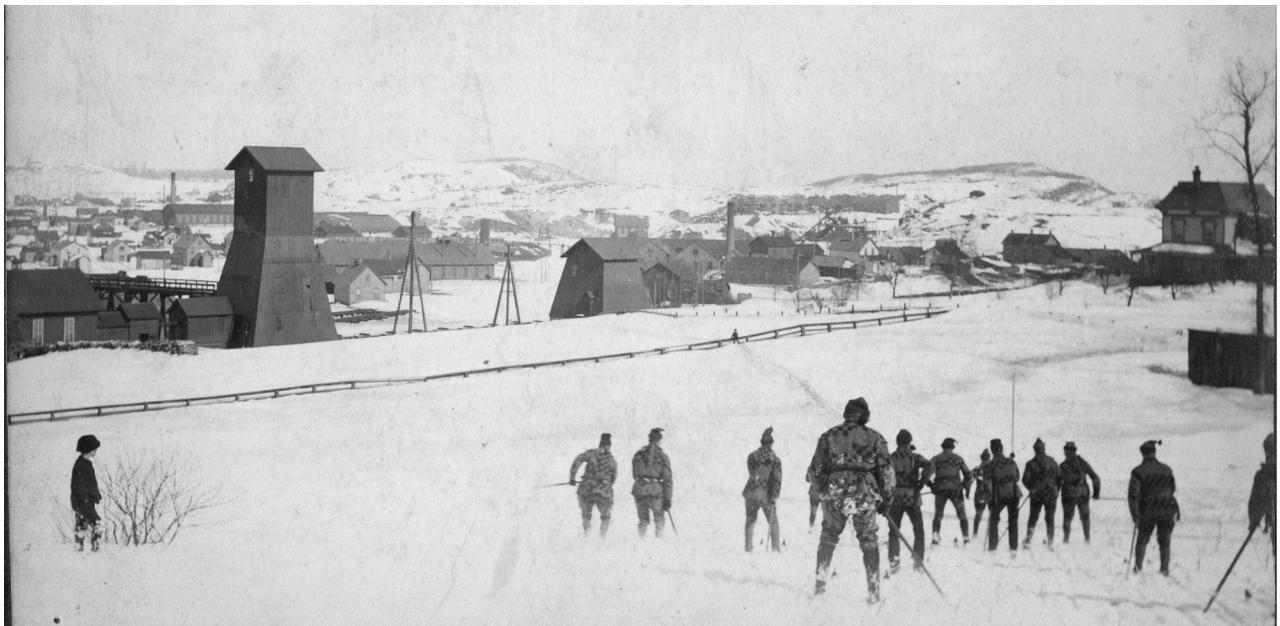
Volunteers to help in the museum are always welcome and our museum volunteers work one three hour shift per week. The more museum volunteers we have, the more days we can be opening. Training is provided for this job and we welcome summertime residents for this position as well, since June, July and August are our busiest months.

If you have good typing skills, we are looking for someone to transcribe old newspaper articles to use in booklets. This is a task that can be done from home.

Interested in any of the volunteer slots? Send us a message via our website or our Facebook page.

Our Recent Purchase

This past winter, we purchased a new laptop with Memorial Donations sent in the names of two of our volunteers, Kevin Bannon and Nancy DeCaire. We thank all those who made these donations.



The note on the back says this picture is from the early 1890s.
It was donated by the Arsenault family

Become a member

Ishpeming Area Historical Society

The Ishpeming Area Historical Society is a 501(c)3 Michigan Non-Profit Organization
Our mission is to promote and encourage a better appreciation for and a sustained interest
in the history of the Ishpeming area. Your membership allows us to carry out this mission.

Yearly membership (Renewable January 1st)

\$5 Student (high school-College)

\$10 Individual

\$20 Family (One household)

\$25 Non Profit Business

\$35 Business

\$200 Lifetime Individual or Family, \$250 Lifetime Business

Additional donation _____

Name _____ Date _____

Mailing Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone # _____ Email: _____

In memory/honor of (if applicable) _____

I do NOT wish my name to be used in any publicity or on a membership plaque.

Is this a New Membership Renewal Membership

Is this address my/our year round address? If not, what months do I/we reside here?

(We send out newsletters in the spring and fall.)

Visit our website at www.ishpeminghistory.org or:

Mail completed form and payment to:

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Ishpeming, MI 49849

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ISHPEMING
AREA HISTORICAL
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The Summer 2020 newsletter is sponsored in part by **Globe Printing**.

Sons of Ishpeming Memorial

A group of citizens is working on erecting a memorial to John Voelker, Glenn Seaborg and Clarence "Kelly" Johnson along the Iron Ore Heritage Trail between 1st and 2nd Streets. There are also plans to honor others from Ishpeming, but the details haven't been worked out. The Ishpeming Area Historical Society is assisting with this project.

