

**BRIDGING THREE CENTURIES:
INTERPRETING COMMUNITY AND THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE
IN MICHIGAN'S UPPER PENINSULA**

Thomas G. Friggens
Michigan Historical Center

THE MICHIGAN HISTORICAL CENTER IS AN AGENCY WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, ARTS & LIBRARIES. ITS MUSEUM DIVISION IS RESPONSIBLE FOR STUDYING, PRESERVING AND INTERPRETING 11 MUSEUMS AND HISTORIC SITES THROUGHOUT THE STATE.

ITS UPPER PENINSULA MUSEUM SECTION FEATURES A QUARTET OF HISTORIC SITES INCLUDING THE FR. MARQUETTE NATIONAL MEMORIAL, AT ST. IGNACE; FAYETTE HISTORIC TOWNSITE, ON THE GARDEN PENINSULA; FORT WILKINS HISTORIC COMPLEX, AT COPPER HARBOR; AND THE MICHIGAN IRON INDUSTRY MUSEUM, AT NEGAUNEE. COMBINED, THESE FOUR MUSEUMS BRIDGE THREE CENTURIES OF UPPER PENINSULA HERITAGE.

IF THERE IS ONE THING I'D LIKE YOU TO TAKE AWAY FROM THIS SESSION, IT'S AN UNDERSTANDING THAT HISTORY ISN'T JUST A MATTER OF NAMES, DATES AND EVENTS ON THE PAGES OF A TEXTBOOK. IT'S THE STORIES OF ***ORDINARY PEOPLE***, LIKE ***US***, INTERACTING WITHIN THEIR OWN COMMUNITY TO MAKE BETTER LIVES FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES.

THROUGH EVOCATIVE ARTIFACTS, INNOVATIVE EXHIBITS AND LIVELY COSTUMED PORTRAYALS, MICHIGAN HISTORICAL CENTER MUSEUMS ENGAGE VISITORS IN JOURNEYS OF PERSONAL DISCOVERY.

THIS MORNING, I'D LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU EXAMPLES FROM FAYETTE, FORT WILKINS AND THE MICHIGAN IRON INDUSTRY MUSEUM THAT DEMONSTRATE BOTH THE ***POWER*** AND THE ***POTENTIAL*** OF INTERPRETING STORIES OF ***COMMUNITY*** AND THE ***HUMAN EXPERIENCE***.

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LOCATED ON THE RUGGED COAST OF LAKE SUPERIOR, AT THE TIP OF THE KEWEENAW PENINSULA, FORT WILKINS WAS BUILT BY THE U.S. ARMY TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER IN MICHIGAN'S "COPPER COUNTRY." BEGUN IN 1844 AND ABANDONED JUST TWO YEARS LATER, THE FORT WAS BRIEFLY REGARRISONED IN THE LATE 1860s. IT WAS ONE OF THE MOST ***ISOLATED*** AND ***LEAST IMPORTANT*** FORTS IN THE COUNTRY. AS A MATTER OF FACT, ONE ARMY OFFICER WROTE: "THE POST IS

DISTANT, FROZEN OUT FROM THE WORLD FOR ABOUT SEVEN MONTHS OF THE YEAR, AND VERY EXPENSIVE TO MAINTAIN.” ULTIMATELY, THE EXPENSE AND DIFFICULTY OF SUPPLYING FORT WILKINS LED TO ITS ABANDONMENT IN 1870. THE FACT IS, TODAY FORT WILKINS IS MORE IMPORTANT AS A WELL-PRESERVED EXAMPLE OF MID-19TH CENTURY ARMY LIFE THAN IT EVER WAS TO THE GOVERNMENT – OR TO THE POOR SOULS WHO SERVED THERE.

IF THEY COULD RETURN TODAY ACROSS SIXTEEN DECADES, THE MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN WHO ONCE GARRISONED FORT WILKINS WOULD STILL RECOGNIZE THIS WILDERNESS OUTPOST. BORDERED BY WATER IN A SETTING VIRTUALLY UNDISTURBED BY MODERN INTRUSIONS, NINETEEN BUILDINGS SURVIVE – TWELVE OF THEM ORIGINAL STRUCTURES DATING FROM THE 1840’S.

FORT WILKINS WAS A TYPICAL MID-19TH CENTURY ARMY COMMUNITY. IT INCLUDED QUARTERS FOR OFFICERS, ENLISTED MEN AND MARRIED ENLISTED PERSONNEL; THERE WERE COMPANY KITCHENS WITH MESS ROOMS; A HOSPITAL, SUTLER’S STORE, AND POWDER MAGAZINE. THERE WERE THE GUARDHOUSE AND STOREHOUSES; A CATTLEYARD, STABLES AND SLAUGHTERHOUSE. A ROW OF WORKSHOPS INCLUDED A BAKERY, CARPENTER SHOP AND BLACKSMITH SHOP. THE POST GARDENS, RIFLE RANGE AND CEMETERY WERE NEARBY. DAILY DUTIES INCLUDED WORK DETAILS AND DRILL.

BUT MONOTONY AND ISOLATION WEIGHED HEAVILY ON THE GARRISON. OFFICERS AND ENLISTED MEN QUARRELED BITTERLY. SOME DRANK HEAVILY; OTHERS GAMBLLED AND FOUGHT. STILL OTHERS FOUND CONSTRUCTIVE PASTIMES IN READING, HUNTING AND ICE SKATING. FIRST LIEUTENANT DANIEL RUGGLES CONTRIBUTED ARTICLES, WRITTEN IN QUARTERS AT FORT WILKINS, TO THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND ARTS. ANTICIPATING DUTY IN THE MEXICAN WAR, 2ND LT. CHARLES HAMILTON STUDIED SPANISH. AND SOLDIERS OF COMPANY K, SECOND INFANTRY, DRAFTED (AND *ILLUSTRATED*) A HUMOROUS, HANDWRITTEN GARRISON NEWSPAPER.

WHEN THE ARMY LEFT COPPER HARBOR IN 1870, THE ABANDONED FORT BECAME A POPULAR SPOT FOR LOCAL PICNICKERS AND CAMPERS. IN 1923 IT BECAME A MICHIGAN STATE PARK.

TODAY, MUSEUM EXHIBITS, AUDIO-VISUAL PROGRAMS AND LIVING HISTORY INTERPRETATION EVOKE THE TEDIOUS SOLITUDE OF MILITARY SERVICE ON THE LAKE SUPERIOR FRONTIER.

BUT IT IS BY COMBINING *HISTORY* AND *THEATER* IN AN INNOVATIVE ROLE PLAYING PROGRAM THAT INTERPRETATION OF *COMMUNITY* SPRINGS TO LIFE.

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DURING THE HEAT OF A RECENT ELECTION YEAR, WHEN MANY AMERICANS TURNED THEIR ATTENTION TO THE NATIONAL POLITICAL CONVENTIONS, A VISITOR AT FORT WILKINS ASKED THE WOMAN IN 19TH CENTURY WORK GARB HER PREFERENCE IN THE UPCOMING NATIONAL ELECTION.

STRAIGHTENING UP OVER A DRIPPING WASHTUB, SHE REPLIED: “MY HUSBAND SAYS MOST OF THE MEN HERE FAVOR PRESIDENT GRANT.” THEN ADDED, “BUT I RECKON YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I DO, WOMEN DON’T HAVE THE SUFFRAGE.”

AS THE LAUNDRESS SPOKE OF CAMP GOSSIP AND EVENTS SHE HAD WITNESSED SINCE ARRIVING AT FORT WILKINS A YEAR EARLIER, IN 1869, THE VISITOR GAINED A UNIQUE PERCEPTION OF HISTORICAL FACT THROUGH A “LIVING HISTORY” ENCOUNTER.

THE FICTITIOUS PORTRAYALS OF PRIVATE AND MRS. JONATHAN HOLMES, JULIET MUELLER, AN OFFICER’S WIFE, THE CIVILIAN ANDREW DUNNE AND OTHERS ARE BASED ON ACTUAL MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY. THEIR COSTUMES ARE MADE FROM PERIOD PATTERNS AND MATERIALS AND VIRTUALLY EVERYTHING THEY SAY, INCLUDING THE LATEST *GOSSIP*, IS BASED ON EXTENSIVE RESEARCH.

AT DIFFERENT LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT THE FORT AN INTERPRETER PORTRAYS THE SOLDIER ON FATIGUE DUTY, KITCHEN DETAIL, OR SIMPLY AT AN OFF-DUTY MOMENT. THROUGH WELL-RESEARCHED DIALOGUES HE DESCRIBES NOT JUST WHAT HAPPENED AT FORT WILKINS, BUT DEMONSTRATES HOW IT HAPPENED, AND EXPLAINS THROUGH THE VIEW OF A PRIVATE SOLDIER WHY IT HAPPENED.

HERE’S HOW IT WORKS:

OUTSIDE THE POST BAKERY, PRIVATE HOLMES BURIED HIS AXE IN A CEDAR LOG AND WIPED HIS BROW ON THE DIRTY FLANNEL OF HIS SHIRT SLEEVE. LOOKING A VISITOR SQUARELY IN THE EYE, HE DESCRIBED THE DIFFICULTIES SOLDIERS FACED PROCURING FUEL.

“THE QUARTERMASTER CONTRACTS FOR FUEL WITH A FELLA NAMED GEORGE SUMNER – HE RUNS A GENERAL STORE IN COPPER HARBOR. TROUBLE IS, THE GOVERNMENT FUEL ALLOWANCE DOESN’T GO

FAR IN THESE PARTS. AND THAT MEANS THAT ENLISTED MEN LIKE ME HAVE TO CUT TIMBER YEAR ‘ROUND. WE WOULDN’T MIND IT SO MUCH IF WE WERE PAID \$6 A CORD LIKE SUMNER, BUT WHAT STICKS IN OUR CRAW IS WE DON’T EVEN HAVE A TWO-HORSE WAGON AT THIS POST TO HAUL THE WOOD IN – JUST A COUPLE OF RICKETY CARTS.”

IN FACT, ON OCTOBER 21, 1867, GEORGE W. SUMNER, A COPPER HARBOR MERCHANT, DID RECEIVE THE GOVERNMENT CONTRACT TO PROVIDE FORT WILKINS WITH 300 CORDS OF WOOD AND BY MID-SUMMER 1870, SUMNER CHARGED \$6 PER CORD FOR HIS LABORS. IN JULY OF THAT YEAR AN INSPECTING OFFICER AT FORT WILKINS REPORTED: “THE ALLOWANCE OF FUEL IN WINTER DOES NOT SUFFICE; ADDITIONAL WOOD MUST BE CUT AND HAULED BY THE TROOPS.” ECHOING THE COMPLAINTS OF MEN STATIONED THERE THAT “IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO HAUL WOOD LONG DISTANCES IN CARTS,” HE RECOMMENDED THAT THE POST BE FURNISHED WITH “ONE TWO-HORSE WAGON AND A TWO-HORSE BOB-SLEIGH.”

THE COMMON SOLDIER AT FORT WILKINS WAS NO DIFFERENT THAN HIS COMRADES STATIONED ELSEWHERE ON THE FRONTIER. LIKE “PRIVATE HOLMES,” NEARLY HALF OF ALL ARMY RECRUITS OF THAT PERIOD WERE IMMIGRANTS. IN 1870, NEARLY TWO-THIRDS OF THE FORT WILKINS GARRISON WERE OF FOREIGN BIRTH, PREDOMINANTLY IRISH AND GERMAN. ARMY PRIVATES ENLISTED FOR A THREE-YEAR PERIOD AND RECEIVED \$16 PER MONTH. THEY REPRESENTED A CROSS-SECTION OF AMERICAN SOCIETY AND WERE RECRUITED FROM THE RANKS OF FARMERS, LABORERS AND SKILLED TRADESMEN. MANY, LIKE “HOLMES,” WERE VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR.

ANOTHER INTERPRETER PORTRAYS AN ARMY LAUNDRESS WHO, IN 1870, EARNED ONE DOLLAR PER MAN FOR WASHING DONE EACH MONTH AND A RATION OF FOOD EACH DAY. AS KATE HOLMES SHE PERFORMS LAUNDRY TASKS, AND DOMESTIC CHORES, OR COAXES YOUNG VISITORS INTO PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM, WHILE TELLING THEM ABOUT FAMILY LIFE AND THE HARDSHIPS OF ISOLATION.

AS THE WIFE OF A 2ND LIEUTENANT, STILL ANOTHER INTERPRETER DESCRIBES GARRISON LIFE FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF AN OFFICER’S LADY, INTERPRETING THE DIFFERENCES IN THE MILITARY CLASS STRUCTURE. “WE ONCE TOOK PLEASURE IN ARMY LIFE,” SHE SAYS, “UNTIL OUR TRANSFER TO THIS POST. HOW *LONELY* IT IS WITHOUT THE OTHER FAMILIES ON OFFICERS’ ROW.”

THE CIVILIAN, ANDREW DUNNE, INTERPRETS CIVILIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ARMY AND THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CIVILIAN AND MILITARY COMMUNITIES AT COPPER HARBOR.

IN KEEPING WITH THE CHARACTERS THEY PORTRAY, SOME INTERPRETERS EMBELLISH THE TRUTH WITH A SPRINKLING OF FANCY. BUT HISTORICAL FACT IS OFTEN MORE INTERESTING THAN FICTION. WHEN THE ILLEGITIMATE SON OF AN ENLISTED MAN DROWNED IN A BOATING ACCIDENT ON LAKE FANNY HOOE IN APRIL, 1870, HE WAS GIVEN A MILITARY FUNERAL – OVER THE PROTEST OF A JUNIOR OFFICER. CAPTAIN FERGUS WALKER, WHO AUTHORIZED THE FUNERAL, DEFENDED HIS ACTION, SAYING: “THE BOY WAS A FAVORITE OF THE MEN. . . . IT COMES WITH A BAD GRACE FROM THIS OFFICER TO SPEAK OF THE ILLEGITIMACY OF A CHILD, WHO, WHEN LIVING, WAS THE PLAYMATE . . . OF HIS OWN CHILDREN.”

GLANCING UP FROM HER MENDING, KATE HOLMES EXPLAINED TO VISITORS WHAT HAPPENED NEXT AS REPORTED BY THE POST COMMANDER ON JULY 29, 1870. “YOU CAN IMAGINE THE FEELINGS OF POOR MRS. H.” SHE COMMISERATED. “FIRST LOSING HER ONLY CHILD, THEN HEARING HIM SLANDERED. SHE WENT AFTER THE LIEUTENANT’S BOY WITH A BROOM AND LAID HIM LOW FOR SPEAKING OUT OF TURN.”

AS A FORM OF LIVING HISTORY, THE ROLE PLAYING PROGRAM LETS VISITORS EXPERIENCE FOR THEMSELVES ASPECTS OF 19TH CENTURY GARRISON LIFE WHILE LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE DAILY ACTIVITIES, ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS OF MEN AND WOMEN WHO WERE PRESENT THERE DURING THE SUMMER OF 1870. THIS METHOD OF INTERPRETATION BRINGS THE MUSEUM EXPERIENCE TO LIFE, REACHING OUT TO THE VISITOR BOTH INTELLECTUALLY AND EMOTIONALLY. A VISITOR WHO HAS HUNCHED OVER A WASHTUB AND DONE LAUNDRY BY HAND, RAKING THEIR KNUCKLES ACROSS A WOODEN SCRUBBOARD, WHILE LISTENING TO THE WOEFUL TALE OF AN ARMY LAUNDRESS WHO HAS NOT BEEN PAID, WILL LIKELY GAIN A DEEPER APPRECIATION OF THE DRUDGERY – AS WELL AS GARRISON ECONOMICS – EXPERIENCED BY CATHERINE CHRISTOPHER AND OTHER LAUNDRESSES 136 YEARS AGO AT FORT WILKINS.

FREEMAN TILDEN, IN INTERPRETING OUR HERITAGE, WROTE THAT THE “CHIEF AIM OF INTERPRETATION IS NOT INSTRUCTION, BUT PROVOCATION.” YEARS LATER, THOMAS SCHLERETH, THEN AT NOTRE DAME, CHALLENGED MUSEUMS TO INTERPRET SOCIAL CONFLICT AS PART OF THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE.

OUR BENCHMARK FOR SUCCESS IS TO BECOME THOUGHT-PROVOKING – TO PRESENT A SITUATION, TO EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED, AND THEN TO ASK THE AUDIENCE “***WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE IN THAT SITUATION?***” THE ROLE PLAYING PROGRAM NEED NOT ALWAYS LEAVE A VISITOR WITH A SMILE; A THOUGHTFUL SILENCE OR A QUIET TEAR IS A POWERFUL WAY TO INTERPRET “COMMUNITY.”

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IT IS EXTRAORDINARY THAT THE VILLAGE OF FAYETTE, A 19TH CENTURY FURNACE TOWN LOCATED ON THE GARDEN PENINSULA BETWEEN MANISTIQUE AND ESCANABA, HAS SURVIVED NEARLY INTACT. TODAY, MORE THAN A CENTURY AND A QUARTER REMOVED FROM THE BUSTLE AND GRIME OF ITS HEYDAY, FAYETTE IS PRESERVED AS ONE OF THE NATION'S PREMIER EXAMPLES OF AN EARLY INDUSTRIAL COMMUNITY AND COMPANY TOWN.

FROM 1867 TO 1891 THE JACKSON IRON COMPANY OPERATED TWO BLAST FURNACES THERE, PRODUCING CHARCOAL PIG IRON FOR AMERICA'S STEEL INDUSTRY. IN THE SHADOW OF ITS FURNACE STACKS IT BUILT A COMPANY TOWN TO PROVIDE THE HOUSING, STORES AND MEDICAL CARE NEEDED TO SUPPORT ITS LABOR FORCE. FAYETTE'S POPULATION HOVERED AROUND 400 WHEN THE FURNACES AND CHARCOAL KILNS WERE IN PRODUCTION. WHEN SMELTING CEASED IN 1891, THE COMPANY TOWN WAS ABANDONED.

THE COMPANY RENTED MODEST HOUSES TO MARRIED EMPLOYEES AND DORMITORY SPACE TO SINGLE WORKERS. IT ALSO REGULATED BUSINESSES SUCH AS A GENERAL STORE, MEAT MARKET, HOTEL AND BARBER SHOP. WORKERS' EXPENSES, INCLUDING RENT, STORE PURCHASES AND DOCTOR'S FEES, WERE DEDUCTED FROM THEIR MONTHLY EARNINGS. (AFTER DEDUCTIONS, ONE FURNACE WORKER CARRIED HOME JUST 26 CENTS FOR HIS LABORS IN APRIL, 1887).

THROUGH ITS SUPERINTENDENT, THE COMPANY ASSERTED CONTROL OVER THE ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL LIFE OF THE VILLAGE. AT RISK OF IMMEDIATE DISMISSAL, NEW EMPLOYEES AND THEIR FAMILIES WERE BOUND BY WRITTEN CONTRACT TO TOE THE COMPANY LINE. AND, TO ENCOURAGE SOBIRETY, IN 1869 MANAGEMENT PROHIBITED THE SALE OF LIQUOR ON COMPANY-OWNED LAND – AN UNPOPULAR RULING THAT WAS LATER RESCINDED.

LIKE OTHER COMMUNITIES IN THE UPPER PENINSULA, FAYETTE WAS A MELTING POT OF NATIONALITIES. IN 1880, NEARLY 80% OF THE WORK FORCE WERE IMMIGRANTS FROM CANADA, THE BRITISH ISLES AND NORTHERN EUROPE. MOST WERE SEMI-SKILLED OR UNSKILLED LABORERS WHO STRUGGLED TO SAVE WAGES OF \$1.00 OR \$1.50 A DAY. TO MAKE ENDS MEET, SOME FAMILIES TOOK IN BOARDERS. SOME HOUSEWIVES WENT TO WORK AS CLEANING WOMEN FOR THE COMPANY. OTHERS TOOK IN LAUNDRY; STILL OTHERS TURNED TO GARDENING AND FISHING. AND IT WAS A YOUNG POPULATION! TWO OF EVERY FIVE RESIDENTS WERE CHILDREN WHOSE AVERAGE AGE WAS LESS THAN SIX YEARS.

THEIR COMMUNITY DEVELOPED IN THE MAINSTREAM OF MIDDLE AMERICA. STAGECOACHES AND PASSENGER STEAMERS LINKED FAYETTE TO NEIGHBORING TOWNS. A FEDERAL POST OFFICE OPENED THERE IN 1870 AND WITHIN A DECADE RESIDENTS RECEIVED THEIR MAIL DAILY. THE MUSIC HALL WAS A CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES. THEATRICAL SOCIETIES AND A DEBATE CLUB CAPTURED THE SPIRIT OF THE LYCEUM; TRAVELING SHOWMEN, DANCES AND MASQUERADES ATTRACTED VISITORS FROM NEIGHBORING TOWNS; THE CRESCENDOS OF FAYETTE'S CORNET BAND ROSE ABOVE THE BLAST OF ITS FURNACES; SPORTING EVENTS DREW ATHLETES AND SPECTATORS FROM AFAR; AND YOUNG SCHOLARS FELT THE WHIP OF DISTRICT SCHOOLING.

"THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF THE PLACE," WROTE THE NOVELIST JAMES HIBBERT LANGILLE IN 1870, "STARTED NEW POINTS OF BUSINESS APART FROM THAT OF THE IRON COMPANY." A LIFE INSURANCE AGENT PUT OUT HIS SIGN. E. H. BOEHME OPENED A PHOTOGRAPHIC GALLERY. DON DUPONT OPERATED A BARBER SHOP. "NOW WE HAVE A TONSORIAL ARTIST," WROTE ONE WAG; "THE KEENNESS OF HIS RAZOR IS ONLY EXCELLED BY THE ACUTENESS OF HIS REPARTEE." AND BY 1875, RESIDENTS COULD VISIT THE LOCAL SHOEMAKER.

FAYETTE'S HOTEL, THE SHELTON HOUSE, WAS A COUNTRY SHOWPLACE FEATURING THE "POMP AND PANOPLY OF BRUSSELS CARPETS, SPRING BEDS, MARBLE TOP TABLES" AND AN EXCELLENT CUISINE. OTHER SERVICES IN FAYETTE'S SMALL BUSINESS DISTRICT INCLUDED THE GENERAL STORE, MEAT MARKET, LIVERY AND NEWSTAND.

TODAY, A MODERN VISITOR CENTER OVERLOOKS NINETEEN ORIGINAL STRUCTURES THAT INCLUDE THE RESTORED FURNACE COMPLEX, RECONSTRUCTED KILNS, THE HOTEL, STORE RUINS, THE TOWN HALL, AND SEVERAL HOMES. NEARBY ARE REMAINS OF THE DOCKS, LIMESTONE QUARRY AND RAILROAD GRADES, AS WELL AS THE COMMUNITY RACE TRACK AND BASEBALL FIELD.

THE MUSEUM VILLAGE "SPEAKS" OF INDUSTRY AND COMMUNITY THROUGH A WELL-PRESERVED BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND A CULTURAL HERITAGE BROUGHT TO LIFE THROUGH TRADITIONAL EXHIBITS AND PERIOD RECREATIONS.

IN 1880, ALMOST HALF THE PEOPLE LIVING THERE WERE CHILDREN UNDER 17 YEARS OLD. LIKE KIDS EVERYWHERE, CHILDREN OF THIS COMMUNITY CAME OF AGE WITH MIXED EMOTIONS OF HAPPINESS AND DISAPPOINTMENT, WORRY, ROMANCE AND SOMETIMES TRAGEDY.

TODAY, A PERMANENT EXHIBIT, DESIGNED FOR AND ABOUT CHILDREN, TELLS THEIR STORIES, HELPING VISITORS TO GAIN BOTH A CLEARER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO GROW UP AT FAYETTE AND A BETTER APPRECIATION OF THE COMPANY TOWN AS A COMMUNITY.

THE STORYLINE FOLLOWS TWO TRACKS – ONE WRITTEN ESPECIALLY FOR YOUNG MUSEUM VISITORS (AND PRINTED IN LARGE FONT AT CHILD HEIGHT), AND A MORE DETAILED TRACK GEARED FOR ADULT VISITORS AND CHILDREN WHO WISH TO LEARN MORE ABOUT KIDS AT FAYETTE.

BY ASKING AND ANSWERING BASIC QUESTIONS, THE EXHIBIT APPEALS TO THE NATURAL CURIOSITY OF CHILDREN AND EVOKES CHILDHOOD MEMORIES AMONG ADULT VISITORS. HANDS-ON INTERACTIVES INCLUDING A TOY TRAIN, DRESS-UP CORNER AND A GAME OF CHECKERS ON CHILD-SIZE FURNITURE INVOLVE CHILDREN IN AN ACTIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE.

BOTTOM LINE: THE EXHIBIT ENCOURAGES VISITORS OF *ALL* AGES TO RELATE THEIR OWN LIVES TO THOSE OF CHILDREN WHO ONCE LIVED AT FAYETTE AND TO SHARE THEIR OWN CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES WITH EACH OTHER.

ANOTHER RECENT EXHIBIT INTERPRETS A WORKING CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD THROUGH THE LENS OF IMMIGRATION, DIET AND HEALTH. DRAWN FROM A COMBINATION OF HISTORICAL, ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL RESEARCH, THE EXHIBIT ALLOWS VISITORS TO EXPLORE A RECREATED LABORER’S CABIN, DISCOVERING LAYERS OF INFORMATION ON WORK SURFACES, IN DRESSER DRAWERS, AND EVEN ON PILLOW COVERS.

A THIRD EXHIBIT APPROACH FOCUSES ON FAYETTE’S UPPER CLASS, WHERE IN THE HOME OF THE COMPANY SUPERINTENDENT ROTATING EXHIBITS INTERPRET VICTORIAN-ERA RITES OF PASSAGE.

OVER A 24-YEAR PERIOD, SIX SUPERINTENDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES LIVED IN THIS SPACIOUS HOME WHICH WORKERS CALLED THE “WHITE HOUSE.” THE LONGEST TENURE WAS THAT OF JOHN B. KITCHEN, WHO OVERSAW FURNACE OPERATIONS FOR NINE YEARS. MOST OCCUPIED THE RESIDENCE FOR LESS THAN FOUR YEARS. THERE WAS A LOT OF MOVING.

THIS HOUSE ALSO WITNESSED HAPPINESS AND DESPAIR. ONE SUPERINTENDENT MARRIED; ANOTHER CELEBRATED THE BIRTH OF A

CHILD. THE YOUNG DAUGHTERS OF TWO SUPERINTENDENTS DIED AT HOME, AS DID WILLIAM PINCHIN, SUPERINTENDENT HERE IN 1888.

DETERMINED NOT TO RECREATE YET ANOTHER VICTORIAN PARLOR SCENE, WE OPTED TO INTERPRET THE TRANSIENT NATURE OF THE SUPERINTENDENCY AT FAYETTE.

ONE YEAR, THE PARLOR IS DEPICTED AS IT MAY HAVE APPEARED ON “MOVING DAY” – OFFERING A CHAOTIC GLIMPSE OF PACKING BARRELS, STENCILED CRATES, ROLLED CARPET, AND FRAMED PICTURES LEANING AGAINST THE WALL WHERE THEY ARE LATER TO BE HUNG.

THE FOLLOWING YEAR THE THEME ROTATES TO THE WEDDING RECEPTION OF HARRY AND CHARLOTTE MERRY, REplete WITH PERIOD DECORATIONS, REFRESHMENTS AND A GIFT TABLE.

THE THIRD YEAR IN THE EXHIBIT CYCLE – THE MOST PROVOCATIVE – DEPICTS THE PARLOR IN MOURNING. A WHITE ROSE IN A ROOM FESTOONED WITH BLACK CREPE AND FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS SIGNALS THE DEATH OF A CHILD. CREPE COVERS A MIRROR, IN KEEPING WITH VICTORIAN SUPERSTITION. THE ORIGINAL CHILD-SIZE COFFIN, WITH ITS VIEWING WINDOW OVER THE FACE, HITS HARD.

POWERFUL INTERPRETATION NEED NOT ALWAYS LEAVE THE VISITOR SMILING.

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THEY CAME FROM MORE THAN 40 NATIONS, HARDCRABBLE MINERS BOUND TO MAKE A BETTER LIFE. THE HEAVY ORE THEY GRUBBED FROM THE EARTH FUELED AMERICA’S INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION; BUILT CITIES, FACTORIES, SHIPS AND RAILROADS; BROUGHT CHANGE TO CITIES AND FARMS; PUT THE WORLD ON WHEELS; AND SECURED DEMOCRACY AT HOME AND ABROAD. THEY CHANGED THE WORLD.

THE HISTORY OF MICHIGAN’S IRON INDUSTRY ISN’T JUST A LITANY OF PRODUCTION FIGURES AND SHIPPPING DATES. BETWEEN THE LINES OF THE CORPORATE LEDGER MAY BE FOUND STORIES OF THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE THAT HELPED MAKE MICHIGAN AN INDUSTRIAL LEADER.

THE IRON RESOURCES OF THE UPPER PENINSULA ATTRACTED THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE TO A REMOTE, UNDEVELOPED REGION. AMONG THEM WERE SKILLED AND UNSKILLED MINE WORKERS, SPECULATORS, GEOLOGISTS, BANKERS, LAWYERS, MERCHANTS, SALOON KEEPERS AND

POLITICIANS OF DIVERSE NATIONALITIES, BACKGROUNDS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

THE LABOR FORCE THAT WENT TO WORK IN MICHIGAN'S IRON MINES INCREASED FROM A FEW DOZEN IN 1850 TO ITS PEAK OF 18,000 IN 1917. IT, TOO, WAS AN IMMIGRANT WORK FORCE – CHIEFLY FROM CANADA, THE BRITISH ISLES AND SCANDINAVIA.

MANY TOWNS, LIKE IRONWOOD AND WAKEFIELD, GAINED NOTORIETY AS ROUGH MINING CAMPS. BESSEMER SUPPORTED 48 SALOONS AND PASSED ORDINANCES TO STOP “ALLEY RIOTING, IMPROPER DIVERSIONS AND SMOKING ON THE DYNAMITE WAGON.” AT IRONWOOD, THE ALHAMBRA, AN ORNATE AMUSEMENT HALL FEATURING A HORSESHOE BAR AND RIBALD STAGE SHOW, WAS RUN BY PADDY O'NEIL WHO BOASTED THAT “WITH HIS BARE HEAD HE COULD BUTT THE PANEL OUT OF ANY BAR IN TOWN.”

AT MIKE O'BRIEN'S COLOSSEUM VARIETY THEATER IN WAKEFIELD, ITINERANT THESPIANS SHARED THE STAGE WITH DOGFIGHTS, WHILE O'BRIEN'S PET MONKEY ENTERTAINED BAR PATRONS. (INCIDENTALLY, THE MONKEY BROUGHT DOWN THE HOUSE ON CHRISTMAS EVE, 1887, WHEN IT OVERTURNED A KEROSENE LAMP AND BURNED THE THEATER AND MUCH OF WAKEFIELD TO THE GROUND.) AT FAYETTE, OUTRAGED CITIZENS SET FIRE TO A SALOON AND BROTHEL WHEN THEY LEARNED ITS PROPRIETOR KEPT A WOMAN THERE AGAINST HER WILL.

HEAR THE WORDS OF ONE MINER'S DESCENDANT: “THE IMMIGRANT MINERS WERE AWARE OF THE RISKS IN THE MINES. AN OCCUPATION IN A MINE WAS THEIR FIRST STEP ON THE LADDER CLOSER TO THE AMERICAN DREAM UP IN THE SUNLIGHT. NO PENNIES FROM HEAVEN, RATHER HARD LABOR BELOW” – HANNU HUSKONEN, GRANDNEPHEW OF BILLY HAKKINEN, 2006.

THE OBJECTS THEY LEFT BEHIND ARE LINKS WITH THE PAST THAT BREATHE LIFE INTO HISTORY AND INSPIRE THE IMAGINATION.

IN THE 1890S, IMMIGRANTS LIKE H. TAVAJARVI MADE THEIR WAY TO THE MINING DISTRICT, HELPED BY A BOOK OF RAILWAY FARES ISSUED TO RECENT ARRIVALS BY THE IMMIGRANT CLEARING HOUSE COMMITTEE IN NEW YORK. A SIMPLE PENCIL MARK IN TAVAJARVI'S FARE BOOK SUGGESTS HE TRAVELED FROM NEW YORK CITY TO NEGAUNEE BY TRAIN, PAYING \$23.35 FOR HIS TICKET.

THE CRYSTAL IS GONE AND THE HANDS ARE BROKEN AND BENT, BUT THE POCKET WATCH CARRIED BY MINE CAPTAIN WILLIAM TIPPETT

DURING HIS FINAL SHIFT AT THE ILL-FATED BARNES-HECKER MINE BEARS SILENT WITNESS TO AMERICA'S WORST IRON MINING TRAGEDY.

AT 11:20 A.M. ON WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1926, THE MINE NEAR ISHPEMING CAVED IN AND BACK-FILLED WITH WATER WHEN UNSUSPECTING MINERS SET OFF A BLAST THAT RIPPED OPEN AN UNDERGROUND LAKE.

51 PEOPLE PERISHED. ONE SURVIVED – RACING 800 FEET UP A VERTICAL LADDERWAY IN 10 MINUTES, WITH RISING WATER TUGGING HIS BOOTS MUCH OF THE WAY. IN JUST 15 MINUTES – THE TIME IT TOOK FOR THE MINE TO FILL WITH SAND AND WATER – 132 CHILDREN WERE LEFT FATHERLESS AND 42 WIVES BECAME WIDOWS.

CUT OFF FROM THE SURFACE 1,000 FEET ABOVE THEM, BILL TIPPETT AND SIX OTHERS RACED THROUGH PITCH DARKNESS TOWARD THEIR ONLY AVENUE OF ESCAPE BUT WERE QUICKLY OVERTAKEN BY A VIOLENT FLOOD OF MUD, ROCKS AND WATER. THEIR BODIES AND THOSE OF JUST THREE OTHER VICTIMS WERE THE ONLY ONES RECOVERED. ACCORDING TO TIPPETT'S FAMILY, THE CAPTAIN'S TIMEPIECE HELPED TO IDENTIFY HIS REMAINS.

RUTHERFORD WILLS' BRASS CHECK NO. 14 WAS LAST USED ON THE DAY OF THE MINE DISASTER WHEN WILLS, THE LONE SURVIVOR, REPORTED FOR THE MORNING SHIFT BEFORE GOING UNDERGROUND JUST FOUR HOURS BEFORE TRAGEDY STRUCK. HE SUFFERED NIGHTMARES THE REST OF HIS LIFE AND NEVER RETURNED UNDERGROUND.

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HISTORY ISN'T JUST A MATTER OF NAMES, DATES AND EVENTS PRINTED ON THE PAGES OF A TEXTBOOK. IT'S A MATTER OF PEOPLE – LIKE US – WHO LIVED, WORKED AND STRUGGLED, JUST TO MAKE IT THROUGH EACH DAY.

IT'S A MATTER OF PEOPLE LIKE DAVID JEFFRIES, A CAREER SOLDIER BADLY CRIPPLED BY RHEUMATISM FROM HIS LONG SERVICE ON THE FRONTIER.

IT'S A MATTER OF COUNTLESS IMMIGRANTS, LIKE PIETRO BOGGETTO, WHO FOUND BOTH OPPORTUNITY AND SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION ON THE MINING RANGES.

AND, IT'S A MATTER OF PEOPLE LIKE BILL TIPPETT, WHOSE DEATH UNDERGROUND IS A STARK REMINDER OF THE HUMAN INVESTMENT THAT HELPED BUILD MICHIGAN'S IRON INDUSTRY.

THROUGH EVOCATIVE ARTIFACTS, INNOVATIVE EXHIBITS AND LIVELY COSTUMED PORTRAYALS, MICHIGAN HISTORICAL CENTER MUSEUMS STRIVE TO ENGAGE VISITORS IN JOURNEYS OF PERSONAL DISCOVERY. OUR HOPE IS THAT THEY WILL GAIN NOT ONLY A CLEARER UNDERSTANDING OF THESE MUSEUMS, BUT A BETTER APPRECIATION OF MICHIGAN'S HERITAGE AND THEIR OWN.