

# Iron Mining Industry Resource Guide

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This handout provides information on selected historical regional manuscript collections, published works, and encyclopedic companions maintained by the [Central Upper Peninsula and Northern Michigan University Archives](#), and the [Lydia M. Olson Library](#). These collections provide significant documentation of a wide variety of subjects related to the iron mining industry, its environmental and economic impacts, and related legislation and studies in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Where available, links are provided to descriptions of manuscript collections. This Guide is not comprehensive, and researchers should contact the NMU Archives or Olson Library for more information. Researchers may also wish to search or browse the Archives' online collection management tool, [ArchivesSpace](#), and the Library's online catalog, [One Search](#).

## Historical Regional Manuscript Collections:

1. [Briar Hill Mine Shaft Blueprint](#)  
MSS-122, 1911, 1 item

Briar Hill Mine was located at Norway, Michigan on the Menominee Iron Range, and was one of the most productive mines in the UP. It was opened by Briar Hill Coal & Iron Co., and sold to the Penn Iron Mining Co. in 1880. Today the head frame of the Briar Hill Mine is one of the last remnants of mining history left in Dickinson County. The blueprints provide detailed lists of supplies and labor required as well as cost of labor, timber, explosives, fuel, hoistings, blacksmithing and supplies, and is signed and dated in 1911 by Captain William Bond.

2. [Caniesto Mining Company Records](#)  
MSS-261, 1904-1944, 2 Cubic Feet

This collection comes from the offices of Chester Adgate Congdon, primary owner and president of Caniesto Mining Company in Minnesota. He served as a United States Attorney, and as a member of the Minnesota House of Representatives. In 1929 Cleveland – Cliffs Iron Mining Company leased the Caniesto Mine, connecting the Caniesto Mine to CCI sites in the UP. Record Series 2 provides documentation of supply distribution from the Caniesto Mine to Negaunee/Ishpeming Hospital from 1939-1944.

3. [Cleveland – Cliffs Iron Company Pension Records](#)  
MSS-347, 1908-1932, 2 boxes

Records provided by this collection include applications for Old Age Pension records from Cleveland – Cliffs workers as well as recommendations made by the CCI Pension Board. These forms provide information related to employee work records, such as their department, location, occupation, dates employed, pay received, age at application for pension and monthly pension to be paid. Pension applications also show date and city of birthdate, birthplace and home address at time of application. Recommendation for old age pension forms show decisions made by the Pension Board regarding employees' pension applications, and decisions regarding recommendations for widows and orphans' pensions.

4. [Cleveland – Cliffs Iron Mining Company Records](#)  
1854-1960, 1,200 Cubic Feet

The Cleveland – Cliffs Iron Mining Company formed in 1891 as a result of a merger between the Cleveland Iron Mining Company and the Cliffs Iron Mining Company. However, the collection includes records created by other iron mining companies as early as 1854. The collection also includes a large set of maps that document CCI land use and the location of mines, furnaces, and kilns.

For a comprehensive discussion of the collection's research value, please see Terry Reynolds, "[Archival Report: The Cleveland – Cliffs Iron Company Collections, Northern Michigan University Archives](#)," *Michigan Historical Review* 30, no. 1 (2004): 133-144.

5. [Cleveland – Cliffs Iron Mining Company Records](#)  
Mss-036, 1905-1918, 2 Cubic Feet

This collection contains business records from the Cleveland – Cliffs Iron Mining Company from 1905 to 1918 separated into four series. Series I provides Gwinn Area (a development town established by CCI) Design and Development records consisting of estimate and authorization records for various mine locations, correspondence, and financial material related to the establishment of Gwinn. Series II provides blueprints and maps of Gwinn and various mines. Series III is a ledger containing Estimate and Authorization reports for Gwinn/Swanzy, 1905-1913. Series IV is the Gwinn Area Payroll Ledger.

6. [Dominic J. Jacobetti Papers](#)  
MSS-078, 1954-1994; 1975-1994, 109 Cubic Feet

Dominic Jacobetti was a member of the Michigan House of Representatives from 1954 until his death in 1994. He was considered the "god father" of Upper Peninsula politics. Jacobetti was particularly concerned with the Upper Peninsula's economic development and was a staunch supporter of the iron mining industry. His papers document his legislative support and close association with the industry.

7. Fillmore C.F. Earney Papers

MSS-186, 1965-1994, 2 Cubic Feet

Dr. Fillmore C.F. Earney was a Professor of Geography at NMU from 1966 to 1996 and specialized in the geography of mining and mineral resources. The collection focuses on mining and mineral resources and contains a report entitled “Marquette County Growth Impact Study (1975)” that examines the impact of mining operations by the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Mining Company on the population and economic growth of Marquette County.

8. [Iron Duke Mine Company Records](#)

MSS-352, 1867-1962, 1 Cubic Feet

The Iron Duke Mine Company formed in 1881 operating in New York. It purchased land and mineral rights in Ishpeming, Michigan. The mine didn't operate any mines of its own but rather leased its mineral rights to others on a rental or royalty basis. The Iron Duke Mining Company defaulted in 1898, and was subsequently leased by Cleveland – Cliffs Iron Company for 99 years. CCI built a company golf course on the land. Cleveland – Cliffs purchased the mining rights in 1921 after the Iron Duke Mine Company failed to renew its corporate charter and went into liquidation. The collection includes correspondence, stock options, proxy certificates, meeting minutes, financial reports, tax records, and documents pertaining to the purchase and selling of the mine.

9. [Iron Workers Local 783 Records](#)

MSS-024, 1957-1994, 8 Cubic Feet

The Iron Workers Union Local 783 formed in 1957 during construction of the Mackinac Bridge in Michigan under the name “International Association of Bridge, Structural, and Ornamental Iron Workers Local 783.” It merged with Local 8 in 1994, taking on the name Local 8. The collection includes by-laws, meeting minutes, contracts, correspondence, financial records, audits, Pension Fund, Benefit Fund, and Health and Welfare Trust records as well as election information. The most significant records in the collection are in the Bylaws and Meeting Minutes. They include a complete set of membership meeting minutes, by-laws, revisions and an original charter listing.

10. [Marquette County Board of Supervisors Proceedings of the Annual Meeting Records](#)

MSS-013, 1933-1941, 1 Cubic Foot

Marquette County was one of six counties designated in 1843 during a topographical survey by Dr. Douglas Houghton. It would not be officially established until 1848. It was named after the Jesuit priest and explorer Jacques Marquette.

This collection contains narrative reports and financial statements for each county department and service. Included are Morgan Heights Sanatorium reports, which provided care for tuberculosis patients in Marquette County. These reports provide demographic information on patient ethnicity, length of residence at the sanatorium, and employment prior to hospitalization. Also of note are reports from the Marquette County

Mine Inspector which include safety information, production levels, and number of miners employed by all companies on the Marquette Iron Range.

11. [Oliver Iron Mining Company Engineering Blueprints](#)

MSS-119, 1901-1909, 23 items

Initially formed under the name Oliver Brothers and Phillips, the company incorporated under the name Oliver Iron and Steel Company in 1888. The company was one of the largest manufacturers of iron bars and iron specialties in the United States. Oliver Iron Mining Company was a subsidiary company formed during a venture with Carnegie Steel. It began operation on the Gogebic Iron Range in the UP where it operated from 1897 to 1955. The company owned and operated eighteen mines. The collection includes blueprints of various types of mining equipment and structure designs.

12. [Oral Histories of Underground Iron Miners](#)

MSS-180, 1960-1994, 1.5 Cubic Feet

Mary Tippet Andes conducted interviews with eight former underground iron miners, of varying nationalities, between 1960 and 1994. They recount their experiences as the last generation of underground iron miners working for the Cleveland – Cliffs Iron Company on the Marquette Iron Range. Twenty-four audiocassettes as well as selected transcripts of the interviews were produced. The collection also contains release forms and other documentation of the project.

13. [Red Dust Oral History Collection](#)

MSS-113, 1983-2000, 11 Cubic Feet, 800 interviews with transcripts

Students of the former National Mine School and the current Aspen Ridge Middle School conducted numerous oral history interviews from 1983 to 2000. From these interviews, they wrote and produced seventeen books entitled “Red Dust” as part of the Red Dust local history project. This collection contains an entire series of interviews documenting iron mining. Interviewees include miners, their wives, and their family members.

14. [Ronn, Ernest Papers](#)

MSS-029, 1946-1999, 1.3 Cubic Feet

Ernest “Ernie” Ronn was a union organizer and labor leader for the United Steel Workers headquartered in Negaunee, Michigan. The USW represents the iron miners on the Marquette Iron Range. His time writings about his time on the Marquette Iron Range provides insight into the culture, demography, and living conditions for iron miners in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The collection includes photographs documenting his activities as a labor leader, personal memorabilia, books on labor history, manuscripts of his memoirs, correspondence and an oral history interview conducted by Dr. Russell M. Magnaghi in 1998.

15. [Soo Hardware Company Records](#)

MSS-127, 1911-1918, 1 folder

The Soo Hardware Company was a wholesale operation for the mining and lumber industry located in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. It was founded in the late nineteenth century with A. L. Ferguson as the company's first president<sup>1</sup>. It provided business to iron, steel, mill and lumbering industries. They also provided goods to shipping companies in the form of stoves, furnishings and chandlery for ships. The collection provides insight into twentieth century business practices and includes correspondence, invoices, receipts and general correspondence concerning business activities.

16. [United Steel Workers of America, Local 4950, Photographs](#)

MSS-037, 1946, .25 Cubic Feet

United Steelworkers of America formed in 1936 as the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, and signed its first contract with Carnegie-Illinois Steel for increased wages in 1937. Since then it has become an amalgamated union representing the interests of workers from all facets of the metal working industry. USW Local 4950 along with USW Local 4974 represents workers from the Tilden and Empire Mines in Negaunee and Ishpeming. The collection includes photographs that document groups, individuals, organizing activities, publicity events, negotiating sessions, picket lines, and parades that occurred during the Iron Workers Strike of 1946 in Ishpeming and Negaunee, Michigan.

17. [Winthrop Iron Company Records](#)

MSS-348, 1899-1908

The Winthrop Iron Company owned Winthrop Mine in Ishpeming, Michigan on the Marquette Iron Range. Winthrop Mine opened in 1870. It changed hands in 1877 and restarted operations as a part of the Winthrop Hematite Company. It again changed hands in 1902 and began operating as a part of the Oliver Mining Company. The collection consists of correspondence in the form of letters and Western Union telegraphs. Of particular note is the takeover of Winthrop Mine by National Steel, which would eventually merge into the conglomerate U.S. Steel in 1901.

**Published Works:**

[C&NW'S Iron Ore Route](#). Altoona, Wisconsin: Plets Express, 1994. Video recording.

C&NW's railroad runs through the Marquette Iron Range at Palmer, Michigan. The video provides documentation of mining activities at the Empire Mine and taconite plant including

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<sup>1</sup>"The Metal Worker," *Sanitary and Heating Age*, November 14, 1896.

open pit mining, crude ore dumping, various stages of iron ore processing and ore cars being filled with taconite pellets (low-grade iron ore).

Crystal Falls Iron Mine, Inc. [\*Iron: The Story of Mining in Michigan's Upper Peninsula\*](#). Crystal Falls, MI: Crystal Falls Iron Mine, 1969.

The Crystal Falls Iron Mine Company's book provides information on the discovery of iron in the Western UP, the establishment of several mines in the area, early mining methodologies, and the development of iron itself. Cross sections of various mines, and simplified shipping routes along the Great Lakes are included throughout the pamphlet.

Gianunzio, Fiore. [\*Mangia Ferro! "The Iron Eater:" The Story of a Rugged Italian Immigrant and His Family in the Twentieth Century\*](#). Iron Mountain, MI: Piers Gorge Press, 1999.

The story of Nunzio Gianunzio began in the late nineteenth century and ends in the late twentieth century. The book describes the life of an Italian immigrant to America, specifically to Iron Mountain, Michigan where he was described as one of the toughest iron miners on the range, an "Iron Eater." It provides an insight not only into mining culture but also into the immigrant life and family culture surrounding the Lake Superior Iron Country.

Magnaghi, Russell M. [\*Italian Oral History Collection Interview with Anton Bracco\*](#). 1983.  
Digital sound file.

This interview between Dr. Magnaghi and Bracco documents Bracco's experiences as an Italian immigrant miner in the UP. He tells stories of fires, cave-ins, various strikes and the different nationalities who worked the mines at the time. The interview is available digitally as a sound file on the Lydia M. Olson website.

Magnaghi, Russell M. [\*Portals to the Past: A Bibliographical and Resource Guide to Michigan's Upper Peninsula\*](#). Marquette, MI: Center for Upper Peninsula Studies, 2011.

Dr. Magnaghi's bibliographical resource is a guide to a litany of topics including, among many other things, agriculture, immigration, industry, travel, religion and activities in the UP during times of national importance. This collection of resources can be accessed via [nmu.edu/archives/subject-bibliographies](http://nmu.edu/archives/subject-bibliographies) under [The Upper Peninsula Bibliography](#).

Reynolds, Terry. "[Archival Report: The Cleveland – Cliffs Iron Company Collections, Northern Michigan University Archives](#)." *Michigan Historical Review* 30, no. 1 (2004): 133-144.

Terry Reynolds' article provides an analysis of the CCI collection available at the Central Upper Peninsula and Northern Michigan University Archives, and its potential value to researchers.

Reynolds, Terry and Virginia P. Dawson. [\*Iron Will: Cleveland – Cliffs and the Mining of Iron Ore, 1847-2006\*](#). Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2011.

*Iron Will* tells the story of the opening of the Lake Superior mining region, its rise, and its decline, through the history of the Cleveland – Cliffs Iron Company. The account is constructed using a combination of archival material from CCI, investors’ reports, board minutes, company documents, published accounts and oral histories. It contextualizes and analyzes the company’s transition to pellets (low grade iron used as raw material in blast furnaces), and its survival during the decline of the American steel industry, is analyzed.

Robyns, Marcus, Katelyn Weber and Laura Lipp. “[Reluctant Revolutionaries: Finnish Iron Miners and the Failure of Radical Labor and Socialism on the Marquette Iron Range, 1900-1914.](#)” In *Northern Border: Essays on Michigan’s Upper Peninsula and Beyond in Honor of Russell M. Magnaghi*. Marquette, MI: Northern Michigan University Press (2014): 212-243.

This essay explores the political atmosphere surrounding the Marquette Iron Range and its participation, or lack thereof, in the labor organization and radical politics happening on mining ranges at the time. It offers a contextual background of the unique political views of the Finnish immigrants living on the Marquette Iron Range. Included are several archival photographs from the Central Upper Peninsula and Northern Michigan University Archives related to miners, their towns and their culture.

Ronn, Ernie. [Fifty-Two Steps Underground: An Autobiography of a Miner](#). Marquette, MI: Center for Upper Peninsula Studies, Northern Michigan University, 2000.

Ernest “Ernie” Ronn was a union organizer and labor leader for the United Steel Workers headquartered in Negaunee, Michigan. The USW represented the iron miners on the Marquette Iron Range. *Fifty-Two Steps Underground* describes the stories of miners living in Negaunee, Michigan working in the iron ore industry. It tells of a self-described family of miners of fourteen nationalities, their customs, their families, and religions, clothing, food, and the general conditions of early settlers in the UP.

Stakel, Charles J., Frances Stakel Nelson, Bruce K. Nelson and Robert W. Williams. [Memoirs of Charles J. Stakel: Cleveland – Cliffs Mining Engineer, Mine Superintendent, and Mining Manager](#). Marquette, MI: John M. Longyear Research Library, Marquette County Historical Society, 1994.

Charles J. Stakel worked as the Cleveland – Cliffs Iron Company assistant mining engineer at the Ashland Mine, and eventually as the superintendent of the Spies-Virgil, Republic, Barnes-Hecker, Morris, Lloyd, Holmes and Cliffs Shaft mines. In 1943, he became the Mining Manager until his retirement in 1950. He also worked closely with the greater community, serving in several public officer positions and holding chairs on several important committees including the Marquette County Board of Supervisors. Stakel was also involved with the Marquette religious community, holding positions on committees of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

Central Upper Peninsula and Northern Michigan University Archives. “[The Cleveland – Cliffs Iron Company Historical Records Digitization Project.](#)” Archives.nmu.edu/ccj.

The Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Mining Company Digitization project, funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, focuses on three record series from the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Mining Company collection. The three series include over 70,000 historical documents contained in lumber, land, and mining annual reports, and over 235 maps dated 1893-1960.

Williams, Ralph D. [\*The Honorable Peter White: A Biographical Sketch of the Lake Superior Iron Country\*](#). Cleveland, OH: Freshwater Press, 1986.

*The Honorable Peter White* provides first-hand accounts of the development of the Lake Superior Iron Country from those who helped shape it into the historically significant area it is today. Illustrations of mining and shipping areas across Lake Superior are provided as well as the business accounts of Peter White from the first bill of lading for the earliest shipments of ores, to the time when railways and great docks were constructed.