
Rock drifting—eleventh level—Negaunee Mine
The iron-ore-mining industry has been the single most formative influence in many areas of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Most of the UP’s larger towns, for example, emerged near the more successful iron mines or their ports. Because iron mining began when the region was a wilderness, iron-ore companies were drawn into the business of community building from the very start. They erected houses and stores to attract labor, and they platted towns. Chronic labor shortages led to the recruitment and settlement of significant immigrant populations in the region. Because the Upper Peninsula of Michigan had such rich iron ores and large forested areas, some mining companies also sought to process ores at nearby charcoal-fired blast furnaces. This entailed securing and managing large timber “estates” to provide long-term supplies of hardwood to fuel these furnaces and to furnish timber supports for the mines. The need to reduce transportation costs for moving ore to ports and charcoal or wood to furnaces stimulated the construction and set the routes of many of the region’s railroads. In brief, iron-ore mining and smelting shaped the landscape of many parts of the Upper Peninsula, influencing the location and layout of the region’s towns and the transportation routes that served them, while simultaneously creating or destroying hills and lakes and modifying the overall ecology of the region.1

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1 There is no modern scholarly historical overview of iron mining in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, but several popular or anecdotal works provide a reasonable substitute. These include Burton H. Boyum, The Saga of Iron Mining in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula (Marquette, Mich.: John M. Longyear Research Library, 1977); Harlan Hatcher, A Century of Iron and Men (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950); and “Forging America’s Future: 150 Years of Michigan Iron,” special issue, Michigan History 77 (November/December 1994). To some extent the best scholarly overview of the early history of Michigan iron mining is still Henry Raymond Mussey, Combination in the Mining Industry: A Study of Concentration in Lake Superior Iron Ore Production (New York: Columbia University Press, 1905). Iron smelting in the Upper Peninsula is covered by Kenneth D. Lafayette, Flaming Brands: Fifty Years of Iron Making in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, 1848-

**Bringing out cordwood**
The records of most of the companies that operated on Michigan’s three iron ranges have vanished or are unavailable. However, a plethora of records survives from one firm: the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company (CCI), formed in 1891 when the Cleveland Iron Mining Company (organized in 1847) and the Iron Cliffs Company (organized in 1864) merged. This company’s surviving records are especially important for a number of reasons. First, they include the records of a number of CCI’s predecessors (i.e., Cleveland Iron Mining Company, Iron Cliffs Company, and others) that were central actors in the opening of the Lake Superior iron district, which has been the leading supplier of American iron ore since 1870. Second, the CCI papers come from a very important firm. Cleveland-Cliffs has been the major ore producer on Michigan’s Marquette Range since the company’s creation. Third, the CCI papers provide information on a company that was actively engaged in paternalistic policies (deeply involving itself in the life of the community and its workers in the regions where it operated) and becoming a corporate model in this regard for the entire mining industry. Fourth, the CCI papers are important because Cleveland-Cliffs was involved in more than simply iron mining. Its extensive landholdings drew it into such diverse areas as railroads, shipping, lumbering, resort development, agriculture, and the production of both woodenwares and chemicals. Finally, the surviving CCI records cover a broad chronological time frame, from approximately 1850 to 1950.

How did these records come to be preserved and publicly accessible? In 1959 the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company donated Fayette, an abandoned company furnace town on Lake Michigan that had produced charcoal iron in the late nineteenth century, to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for restoration as a state historical...

Steamer Pontiac
After taking possession of the site, personnel from the Department of Natural Resources discovered that the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company had stored and left at the site a large volume of records, its own, those of its predecessors, and those of companies it had acquired over the years (e.g., the Jackson Iron Company, which had built and operated Fayette, and the Republic Iron Company). When the Department of Natural Resources transferred custody of Fayette State Park to the Michigan History Division in 1973, the state museum inherited these records. In 1976 it transferred them to what is now the Archives of Michigan. That same year Burton H. Boyum, then director of administrative affairs for CCI in Ishpeming, arranged to have additional CCI records relating to its land operations transferred to the state archives. All of these records remained in Lansing until the summer of 2002, when the Archives of Michigan transferred most of the materials, five different accessions, to the Northern Michigan University Archives in Marquette, one of the six regional depositories of the State Archives of Michigan. This move placed the records in the region whose mining and related activities had generated them and ensured their wider use.

The electronic catalog used to access the holdings of the Archives and Library of Michigan (http://opac.lib.umich.lib.mi.us/search/) provides descriptions of subunits within three of these five accessions: RG 65-37 (76.25 cubic feet), RG 66-36 (36 cubic feet), and RG 68-102 (41.5 cubic feet).

**RG 65-37, RG 66-36, & RG 68-102 (c. 154 cubic feet combined)**

Although these are listed as records of the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company, most of the records in these three groups are, in reality, those of the Iron Cliffs Company. This was one of the two firms that merged to form the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company in 1891. Although there are scattered records in these groups that postdate the merger (Iron Cliffs

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5 One of the leading figures in the Iron Cliffs Company was Samuel Tilden, who lost the controversial 1876 presidential election to Rutherford B. Hayes by one electoral vote. There is a very brief account of the history of the Iron Cliffs Company in Hatcher, *Iron and Men*, 169-75.
and the Cleveland Iron Mining Company continued to have a paper existence as separate companies until 1914), most of the materials in these accessions predate the 1891 merger. Many items are routine Iron Cliffs business records: bank and financial records, time books and payrolls for mining and blast-furnace operations, rental ledgers on company houses and lands, journals, manifests, weekly reports on mine and furnace production, and ore-transport records. The record groups, however, also contain considerable correspondence between Iron Cliffs Company officials in New York and management in the Upper Peninsula.

The records of the Iron Cliffs Company are particularly valuable for two reasons. First, Iron Cliffs was one of the major mining companies on the Marquette Range in the late nineteenth century, and these records provide insight into how this company operated, evidence of changing mining technologies, and clues about the company’s relationships with neighboring communities. Second, unlike many Upper Peninsula ore-mining companies, Iron Cliffs was deeply involved in the production of pig iron using local charcoal-fired blast furnaces. Michigan eventually became the nation’s leading producer of charcoal iron, an industry that flourished in the early nineteenth century, continued to produce large profits up through the 1860s, and died off only in the second quarter of the twentieth century. Because of its heavy use of timber as a fuel, the charcoal-iron industry had a major impact on the Upper Peninsula’s forest environment. Many Iron Cliffs Company records relate to charcoal-furnace operations, and these papers are supplemented by scattered materials in RG 66-36 and RG 68-102 from the Superior Charcoal Iron Company, which was formed in the 1890s (the exact date is unknown) to market the charcoal iron of a number of regional producers.

Post-1891 documents in the three record groups are scattered. In addition to those from the Superior Charcoal Iron Company noted above, which date from the late 1890s, the record groups contain some materials concerning Iron Cliffs’ and Cleveland-Cliffs’ nonmining activities between 1891 and 1914. These furnish information, for example, about the operations of the firms’ land departments and associated real-estate activities and about several landholding companies eventually absorbed by Cleveland-Cliffs, such as the Hall and Munson Company (RG 65-37) and the Osage Mining Company (RG 66-36). Detailed finding aids for these three collections are
available at either the Archives of Michigan in Lansing or the Northern Michigan University Archives in Marquette.

The two largest record groups transferred to the Northern Michigan University Archives have only bulk descriptions on the Archives of Michigan website: MS 76-90 (119 cubic feet) and MS 86-100 (1,025 cubic feet).

**MS 76-90 (119 cubic feet)**

MS 76-90 contains the records of the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company’s land department, lumbering department, and other units or companies associated with those units. In order to ensure sufficient supplies of timber to fuel their charcoal-iron furnaces and provide support timber for their mines, Michigan iron-mining companies were often large landowners. At one point in the early twentieth century, for example, Cleveland-Cliffs and its affiliated companies had holdings approaching one million acres. To manage these lands and the associated lumbering operations, Cleveland-Cliffs created a land department and, later, a lumbering department. The largest part of this collection consists of the records of the company’s land department (c. 1896-1926) and lumbering department (c. 1905-1940).

The records cover the company’s forest operations in several central Upper Peninsula counties, especially Alger and Marquette, but with some records relating to Delta and Baraga Counties as well. Many of the volumes in this accession are routine business records, such as journals, ledgers, receipt books, records of land sales and leases, banking files, insurance records, inventories, payrolls, contracts, and bills. The journals and ledgers cover a wide variety of companies controlled by CCI in the very late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some of these were companies that had been organized to mine iron but on whose lands little or no commercially valuable ore had been discovered. CCI

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6 The Archives of Michigan has two broad classifications of records: RG and MS. RG is the abbreviation for Record Group, and it is used for official state records (those produced by state agencies, governors’ correspondence, and so forth). MS is the abbreviation for Manuscript Collection, and it is used for various collections donated to the archives by nongovernmental entities and by people who did not act in any official state capacity. The designations for the Cleveland-Cliffs collections are confusing. Because some of the CCI papers first became the property of the Department of Natural Resources and were initially kept with materials about the Fayette State Park (only later being passed on to the Archives of Michigan), they have an RG prefix. Other materials were apparently passed directly to the Archives of Michigan without first being the property of a state agency, and these records have an MS prefix.
purchased these companies largely to acquire their landholdings as a timber reserve. For a short period after their acquisition, these companies were allowed to operate on paper as separate entities. Examples include the American Iron Mining Company, the Bunker Hill Mining Company, and the Excelsior Iron Company. MS 76-90 also contains similar records for landholding companies acquired by CCI (Bay Mills Land and Lumber Company and the Munising Company) or created by CCI to market its lands (Superior Realty Company). Most of these records date from 1905-1926.

The extensive records of the lumbering department contained in MS 76-90 provide insights into how corporate logging operations were carried out in the early twentieth century (for example, the transition from railroads to trucks as a means of transporting logs) and detail information about the evolution of forestry practices, since Cleveland-Cliffs was one of the earliest companies in the Great Lakes region to experiment with selective cutting. The collection also contains numerous maps of regions in which CCI held land, including early town maps of Ishpeming, Munising, and Negaunee.

CCI engaged in a variety of other enterprises in the Upper Peninsula related to its landholdings and blast-furnace operations. MS 76-90 has materials relating to these, including the company's experimental farms (designed to lure buyers for its cutover lands), a greenhouse, a tree nursery, a fish hatchery, a resort on Grand Island, sawmills, a plant to manufacture railroad ties, and a limestone quarry. In addition the collection contains miscellaneous records from various companies and organizations affiliated with CCI's lumber operations, such as the Cliffs-Dow Chemical Company (a wood-distillation operation run by CCI from 1902 to 1935, when Dow Chemical Company secured a controlling interest in the firm), the Northern Veneer Institute, the Pisqua Munising Wood Products Company (manufacturer of veneer and woodenware such as salad bowls, wooden spoons, and clothespins), and the Upper Peninsula Land Company.

Finally, this collection has some material that illustrates the relationship between a large landholding company and local units of government. Because CCI was concerned about tax rates in the townships in which it had large property holdings, it paid relatively close attention to township operations. MS 76-90 contains some materials relating to township governments, including reports provided by an auditor retained by the company to look into township bookkeeping practices.
A detailed finding aid for this collection is available at either the Archives of Michigan or the Northern Michigan University Archives.

**MS 86-100 (1,025 cubic feet)**

The MS 86-100 accession is almost four times larger than the other four Cleveland-Cliffs accessions combined, but it has undergone the least processing. The only breakdown of its contents (2,908 items, including 235 maps and a number of Hollinger boxes, each with hundreds of letters numbered together as a single item) is a Microsoft Access 2.0 database inventory that lists the contents at item level only. The Archives of Michigan and the Northern Michigan University Archives have both electronic and paper (roughly a ream thick) versions of this inventory.

For many purposes, the item-level inventory provides reasonable access. For example, the listing for item 304 (“Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Mining Co., Spies Mine, Payroll, 1918-1920, volume”) is quite sufficient. For other materials, the item-level inventory conceals the depth of the collection. For instance, item 2,776’s description is “Cleveland Iron Mining Company, Correspondence, 1874, box (odd).” The “box (odd)” is a nineteenth-century letterbox stuffed full of hundreds of original letters written in 1874 and received by the company’s agent on Michigan’s Marquette Range, many from corporate officials in Cleveland. Dating from 1849 to 1885, some of the other twenty-four letterboxes (there are twenty-five in all) from the Cleveland Iron Mining Company in the accession have the letters arranged chronologically, some have them in reverse chronological order, and some have them arranged alphabetically by author or vendor. Each of the boxes contains hundreds of letters. Item 2,725 is a Hollinger box labeled “Several Companies and Individuals, Correspondence, 1874-1879.” That box contains several thousand letters, including six years of correspondence from the agent (Jacob Houghton) of the Michigamme Mining Company (1874-1879), two years’ worth from the agent (Jay Morse) of the Cleveland Iron Mining Company (1877-1878), and smaller amounts of correspondence from the McComber Iron Company and Marquette Iron Company.

The extensive and varied records contained in MS 86-100 can be grouped in the following major categories:

1. **Routine Business Records:** This is undoubtedly the largest category. This portion of the collection includes such items as payroll books, timebooks, checkrolls, ledgers (general, mine, ore, rent, and stock),
journals and blotter books, tax records, and supply records (including some inventories). The records date from as early as 1849 and as late as 1960 and come not only from Cleveland-Cliffs, but also from its predecessors (Iron Cliffs Company, Michigamme Iron Company, Republic Iron Company) and companies controlled by CCI (St. Clair Steamship Company, Lake Superior & Ishpeming Railroad). Genealogical researchers might find the payroll books and rent ledgers of particular interest.

2. **Formal Business Records.** This group includes record and minute books of various boards of directors’ meetings and annual financial balance sheets for CCI and companies controlled by or eventually absorbed into CCI. The accession also contains occasional deeds, leases, bondholder agreements, contracts, and other formal legal documents.

3. **Agents’ Annual Reports.** MS 86-100 contains a large collection of detailed reports written or assembled by the agents of the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company in the Upper Peninsula and then transmitted to corporate headquarters in Cleveland. These reports cover operations in the company’s Michigan (and several Minnesota) iron mines, furnaces, and forests and date from c. 1890 to c. 1960. The agents’ annual reports are very rich sources of information, containing not only the detailed comments and descriptions of local management regarding mine, furnace, chemical, land, and lumbering operations, but also detailed quantitative data on the costs of operating mines, furnaces, and logging and chemical operations. Information is also given about the ethnic composition of the workforce in each mine and the company’s safety and social-welfare programs (pensions, sick funds, and visiting nurses). In addition, the accession contains CCI’s reports to outside agencies at both the state and federal levels. The agents’ annual reports contain some of these, but others are compiled as separate items in MS 86-100. Among these are reports to the state on mining output and basic financial matters (capital invested, names of stockholders), as well as reports to federal agencies like the U.S. Bureau of Mines, the Bureau of the Census (for the Census of Manufacturing), and the Interstate Commerce Commission (on railroad issues).

4. **Mining Records.** Records dealing with specific mines are found in the payroll books noted above and in the previously mentioned annual reports. In addition, the accession contains items such as drill reports (one item7), reports on specific mines (two items), analyses of the cost

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7 Unlike the situation in ordinary speech, where one item equals one report or document, in archival usage an “item” may be a file or volume containing multiple reports or other documents.
of mining ore, chemical analyses of ore produced, and a collection of
daily and weekly mining reports.

5. Transportation Records. In the late 1880s the management of the
Cleveland Iron Mining Company created the first of a number of
subsidiary companies to build, maintain, and operate Great Lakes
steamships designed specifically for transporting the company’s ores
from Michigan’s Upper Peninsula to ports on the lower Great Lakes.
MS 86-100 contains considerable material on ship operations.
Substantial material is contained in some of the agents’ annual reports
(see above), but in addition the collection includes a number of ship’s
and captain’s logs as separate items.

6. Correspondence. Potentially one of the richest segments of MS 86-
100 is its extensive collection of correspondence, both original letters
collected in letterboxes and letterbooks containing pressed copies of
original letters and, in the typewriter era, carbon copies. The bulk of this
correspondence dates from 1850 to 1910 and originated with the
Cleveland Iron Mining Company, one of the major firms operating on
the Marquette Range. But the collection also includes extensive
correspondence over shorter periods from the Michigamme Mining
Company and Cleveland-Cliffs, as well as lesser amounts from other
firms such as the McComber Mining Company and the Iron Cliffs
Company. Because the collection includes both correspondence from
corporate headquarters in Cleveland and letters sent from the Upper
Peninsula to Cleveland, it provides considerable information about the
internal workings of Michigan’s iron-ore-mining companies, the
operation of iron mines, and corporate interaction with local
communities.

7. Miscellaneous Documents. MS 86-100 also contains a variety of other
documents. For example, in the early twentieth century the Cleveland-
Cliffs Company, in conjunction with other local iron-mining companies,
built and supervised the operation of a major regional hospital in
Ishpeming, in the center of the Marquette iron-mining district. The
collection contains patient invoices from this hospital.

8. Maps and Plans. The MS 86-100 collection includes nearly 250
maps and plans. These date from 1882 to 1937 and cover a wide variety
of subjects. Many of the maps deal with individual mines and their
surrounding areas, mainly on the Marquette Range, but there are some
maps of CCI mines in Minnesota and on the Menominee Range in
Michigan. Some of these are maps of the surface plant, while others deal
with underground workings or details of shaft houses. A considerable
number detail the timber interests of CCI and other large landholders in
the central and western Upper Peninsula. Still other maps relate to the development of the watersheds that CCI tapped in the early twentieth century to produce hydroelectric power for its mining and other related operations. Some maps in the collection are of towns or subdivisions where CCI held extensive lands, such as Negaunee, Ishpeming, Gladstone, and Munising. A few deal with the routes of railroads in regions of CCI interest. At this time a seventy-nine-page finding aid, organized chronologically rather than topically, provides some help in locating items in this portion of the collection.

Iron-ore mining and smelting played a key role in shaping Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The five accessions of Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company Papers owned by the Archives of Michigan and currently housed at the Northern Michigan University Archives in Marquette provide researchers with an extraordinarily rich resource for studying both the history of Michigan mining and the history of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula in general.

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