

Call of the Keweenaw: The Keweenaw

Nestled away from the industrially developed expanses of the United States lies a patch of wilderness untainted by urban complexity – the Upper Peninsula of Michigan – the U.P. It is interesting how this section of land became part of the State of Michigan, as there was no physical connection between the upper and lower peninsulas of Michigan at the time. Legend says that when the States of the Union were formed, both Michigan and Ohio wanted the port city of Toledo (which is on the western tip of Lake Erie, just south of Detroit). As a result of the bargaining and hostilities that followed, Ohio received Toledo; in exchange, Michigan received a remote northern tract of land, accessible only by road from Wisconsin. Thus, the U.P. became part of Michigan.

If you look at a map and focus on the U.P., you will see that it is characterized by being a little finger of land that juts boldly into Lake Superior (or Gitche Gumee, as called by the early Native Americans). The word “Keweenaw” (pronounced KEE-wi-naw) comes from the Chippewa Indian word that means, “The crossing place.” Houghton is located 550 miles northwest of Detroit, 421 miles north of Chicago, and 352 miles northeast of Minneapolis. The Keweenaw Peninsula extends northeast, with Houghton serving as its gateway. Houghton’s sister city, Hancock, lies just across the lift-bridge, which spans the Portage Canal. The Keweenaw Peninsula consists of two counties, Houghton and Keweenaw. The expanses of this peninsula begin at Keweenaw Bay near Baraga in the south, and extend north to Keweenaw Point beyond Copper Harbor.

Heritage and History

The Keweenaw was once the richest copper mining region in the United States, which explains the use of the name “Copper Country” for the area. Native Americans, who surface mined with primitive tools in scratch pits, discovered copper about 5,000 years ago. Father Dablon, who operated a mission in the Keweenaw during the mid-1600s, was the first to report the presence of copper deposits. About a century later in 1771-1772, European explorers reported the presence of large chunks of native copper on the clay banks of the Ontonagon River west of Houghton.

Douglas Houghton, after whom a plethora of local landmarks have been named, made outstanding contributions as a surveyor and state geologist, opening the doors to this area. He first arrived here in 1830 to estimate the potential of this land to yield copper, and wrote a glowing report to the Michigan legislature in 1840 that caught the attention of many miners who wanted a piece of the pie. The majority of the initial workforce was of Cornish, Italian, French Canadian, and German origin. The Finnish people, Croatians, and other Eastern Europeans followed this influx. Looking for work, the immigrant



miners chose to leave their homelands after their country's mining resources began to dwindle, and it became too expensive to mine efficiently. The lure of riches buried underground drew people from throughout Europe to the Copper Country. The Portage Canal allowed ships to reach Houghton and other Copper Country ports to load ore and deliver supplies, and became a lifeline for the area.

The Houghton-Hancock area became a prosperous mining community and remained that way for nearly a century. The Quincy Mine of Hancock, named "Old Reliable" (by stockholders who always received money on their investment), and the nearby Calumet and Hecla mines were the mainstays of copper production in the area. The Quincy Mine is still one of the deepest copper mines in the world, with the #2 Shaft being more than 9,000 feet long and over 6,000 feet deep. The Tamarack, Franklin, Centennial, Schoolcraft, Delaware, Ahmeek, and Mohawk mines were just some of the other mining ventures to grace the Keweenaw Peninsula.

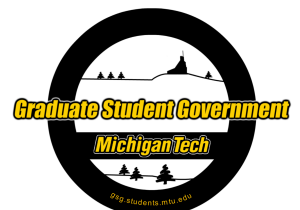
From 1840 onward, mines were opening and closing all along the Keweenaw. While certain parts of the Keweenaw were already ghost towns by that time, others declined from 1912-1913 until the end of industrial America took its toll on the region. By 1970, the last copper mine had closed; it was simply no longer cost effective to mine the copper still present in the regional mines. To this day, the area remains one of the richest copper deposits in the world.

Two of these historic mines remain open to the public as tourist attractions: the Quincy Mine and the Delaware Mine. The steam hoist at the Quincy Mine is the largest in the world, and the Quincy Mine Hoist Association is always refurbishing buildings. The Quincy mine is a major attraction; there is a tramcar available that will give tourists a ride from the Quincy Mine hoist house to the mineshaft, halfway down Quincy hill, for underground tours. The U.S. government has declared the site of the Quincy Mine a National Historical Park and is now managed by park service employees.

The history and natural beauty of the area still enhance modern day Copper Country life. The vacant mine shafts, ore processing buildings, and piles of crushed rock make it almost impossible to travel anywhere in the Keweenaw without letting yourself slip back in time, imagining what it was like in the days when copper was king.

Michigan Tech – A Brief History

In addition to copper being mined in the Keweenaw, several very large deposits of iron ore were discovered and mined during the same time frame in other areas of the Upper Peninsula. The fast-growing iron mines in the Marquette, Ironwood, and Iron Mountain areas, along with the copper mining industries in the Keweenaw, demanded skilled and



knowledgeable people with a technical background to supervise both the subterranean efforts and the above ground exploration. On March 15, 1861, at the request of the mining community, the newly elected Governor of Michigan, Austin Blair, signed into law Public Act 207 of 1861, which decreed that the State create a school oriented toward mining. It was initially felt that such a mining school should be part of the State School at Ann Arbor. However, the distance from Ann Arbor, Michigan, to the mining area, and the fact that the population of the U.P. was increasing (from 20,000 in 1860 to over 100,000 at the turn of the century), led to the decision to establish the school in Houghton-in the heart of the copper district and sufficiently close to the three iron ranges of western and central U.P.

The Michigan College of Mines was founded in 1885 in the temporary quarters of the fire hall in the city of Houghton with the patronage of Senator Jay A. Hubbell and other influential people. There were three faculty and eight students. The first degree in mining engineering was awarded in July of 1890. In 1889, Hubbell Hall was built, becoming the first official building of the school. The name was then changed to Michigan School of Mines and, in 1927, changed to Michigan College of Mining and Technology. In 1964, the name was changed to what we currently know: Michigan Technological University.

Michigan Tech has contributed to both the State of Michigan and the nation in its own ways. Many of its students volunteered for the armed forces during World Wars I and II. As a memorial to these brave sons and daughters of the nation, the Memorial Union Building (MUB) was built in 1952. In 2014, a War Memorial Wall to honor Michigan Tech alumni who gave their lives in service during the Vietnam War and subsequent conflicts was dedicated. Today, Michigan Tech enjoys the reputation of being one of the top engineering schools in Midwest and in the United States, with an outstanding reputation in both industry and academia.

Though undergraduates form the majority of the 7,000+ student population, the graduate program consists of more than 1,400 graduate students and is growing. Areas of graduate study are expansive, including most types of engineering, natural and physical sciences, forestry, humanities, and business administration. The friendly, safe, and professional atmosphere has attracted students from around the world for decades.

Economic Situation

The Keweenaw enjoys the reputation as an outdoor community, and the community of Houghton received an award for being a Community of Economic Excellence in 1991-1992, largely due to the efforts of the self-sufficient folk. Houghton and Hancock are



chiefly university towns, and life for many revolves around Michigan Tech and Finlandia University in Hancock.

Small-scale manufacturers of electronic components, canoes, snow scoops, and copper gift products also contribute to the local economy. The logging industry supplies pulp for paper factories and lumber for construction and flooring. One of the largest industries in the area is tourism. Visitors from around the world make pilgrimage to the Keweenaw to splash in the lakes, ski and snowmobile in the snow, and to enjoy the breathtaking colors during the fall.

Evolution of Local Culture

The influences of miners from throughout Europe transformed the Keweenaw from wilderness to one of the richest in cultural diversity in the country. First came the Cornish, the German, and the Irish. Today the dominant ethnic group in the area is of Finish origin. To see just how large the Finnish influence is on the area, you need only to look at the bilingual street signs in Hancock, or attend Heikinpäivä, a mid-winter Finnish-American festival that takes place every year at the end of January.

Each ethnic group has contributed to the culture of the U.P. in its own way. For example, each language has contributed to the way English is spoken in the area today: a typical bumper sticker that accurately represents the local lingo is, "Say ya to da U.P., eh?", which would be equivalent to the State's early motto, "Say yes to Michigan."

The local cuisine is bursting with tastes from all across Europe. The Cornish pasty, pronounced "pah- stee," is a hearty meat and/or vegetable pie baked in a doughy crust. During the mining era, the pasty was the staple subterranean food of the miners. Other tasty dishes include panukakku, a Finnish pancake made of egg, milk and flour, often served with local thimbleberry jam or fruit sauce. In the Chippewa tradition, fish is caught and smoke locally. Brown, rainbow, and brook trout, along with bass, walleye, northern pike, salmon, and splake make up the majority of the fish in the area's lakes. The locally hunted game is also delicacy in the Keweenaw, both at home and in some restaurants.

Climate

In a nutshell, there are two seasons: (1) when it snows, about seven months long, and (2) when it does not snow, about 5 months long. Summer shines on the Keweenaw for most of June, July and August, with temperatures hovering between 60°F (15°C) and 80°F (26°C). The cooler temperatures of fall arrive with the beautiful display of colors lining every road of the Keweenaw. The first snow arrives by late October, when temperatures can totter between 20°F (-6°C) and 50°F (10°C). The temperature falls

steadily downward until the end of February. December, January, and February are the peak winter months. Spring officially begins in March, but the snow may stay on the ground until mid-May. Do not be too surprised by a snowstorm in early May! This far up north, anything can happen in terms of weather. The average annual snowfall is approximately 190 inches while the record snowfall is 355 inches.

Remember that you are in upper latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere, a prime location to view the sky. On clear nights during any time of the year, the sky may be lit by an eerie pale emerald green glow. This is the aurora borealis, commonly known as the northern lights.

Snow

On average, 190 inches of snow fall during the winter months, sometimes in excess of 12 inches per day. For days and days it snows, not unaccompanied by blistering winds. The following are some to help you best prepare for U.P. winters.

Clothing

During the warmer months, temperatures range from 60°F (15°C) to 80°F (26°C) on average. The days are warm and the nights are cool, both of higher humidity. In general, people wear shorts and t-shirts during the summer. During the cooler spring and fall seasons, pants, sweaters, and jackets are sufficient. During the colder months, temperatures range from 10°F (-6°C) to 32°F (10°C), with lows dipping well below 0°F (-18°C). This type of chill requires some extra layers you may not be accustomed to!

When the snow comes, very warm clothes are a necessity in Houghton. It is advisable to have a pair of tall waterproof and insulated boots, a heavy (many people purchase down-filled coats) and waterproof coat, and winter including hats, gloves, scarves, warm sweaters and snow pants. Many students wear ski goggles or safety glasses while walking around campus to prevent the snow from blowing in their eyes. When not wearing boots, shoes with a good tread are essential for navigating icy terrain. While some of these items might cost a little more, the expense is well worth it, as the snowy season can last from October to May. Most of these items can be purchased after your arrival in town from stores.

Be ready to expect any type of weather at any time of the year. If you are unsure if you should pack your boots and coat on a regular basis, do not think twice-pack them. Winter is easier to deal with when you are well prepared!



Driving

Driving can be challenging in Houghton during the winter. The City of Houghton is good about removing the snow on the streets, but sometimes the snow falls faster than they can remove it. Since Houghton is also quite hilly, driving up hills can be very difficult during the winter. All-wheel drive, four-wheel drive, or front wheel drive vehicles do the best in this area. Tire chains and studs are not legal, so be sure any vehicle you bring or buy is snow-ready. Putting snow tires on your vehicle is one easy way to improve the capabilities of your vehicle during the winter. Always remember to drive slow, and leave plenty of room between your vehicle and others on the road because snow and slush make braking more difficult.

Winter parking restrictions take effect the beginning of November and last through the end of April: no parking is allowed on city streets in both Houghton and Hancock from 2 a.m. until 7 a.m., allowing time for snow removal. The parking restrictions are strictly enforced. If there is snow, expect your car to be towed and a fine to pay once you get it back. Exceptions may be made on campus, but it is always best to contact Public Safety and check with Facilities about where to park during these early morning times.

Snow Removal

Snow removal can be quite a hassle at times, but the key is to keep up with it. You will probably need to shovel your walkway and clean off your car once every day, if not more. Keep your eyes open and check any apartment/house lease to see if the landlord provides plowing. Otherwise, you might spend a significant amount of time shoveling during the winter.

Travel Accessibility

Due to the remoteness of the area, the cheapest (and often fastest) way to get to Houghton is by car. Traveling by airplane and bus are options, but they are dependent upon the Michigan weather.

There is only one airline that currently offers services out of the local airport in Calumet (airport code CMX), and it only connects to Chicago. Traveling by air can be particularly difficult during the winter months with many students, staff and faculty members getting stuck in the Chicago airport. Regardless of method of travel, it's always best to be prepared for the worst when it comes to traveling to and from Houghton. If you are stuck in the Chicago airport, check with others around you. Many other residents may be stuck with you, and be looking at alternative ways to get back to town. The other airport some students use is in Marquette (airport code MQT, located 100 miles away from Houghton), which connects to Detroit. The Marquette airport is larger and is likely to combat bad weather better.

There are some long-range bus routes that connect Houghton with cities like Marquette and Chicago, however be advised that travel by bus takes considerably longer than by car.

Many students offer rides to nearby cities, especially around vacation time, which typically makes for more convenient and faster travel. Barkboard is a good place to look for rides and many other resources.

Potentially Useful & Interesting Websites

Keweenaw Convention & Visitor's Bureau: <http://www.keweenaw.info/>

Keweenaw Peninsula Chamber of Commerce: <http://www.keweenaw.org/>

The Keweenaw County Historical Society: <http://www.keweenawhistory.org/>

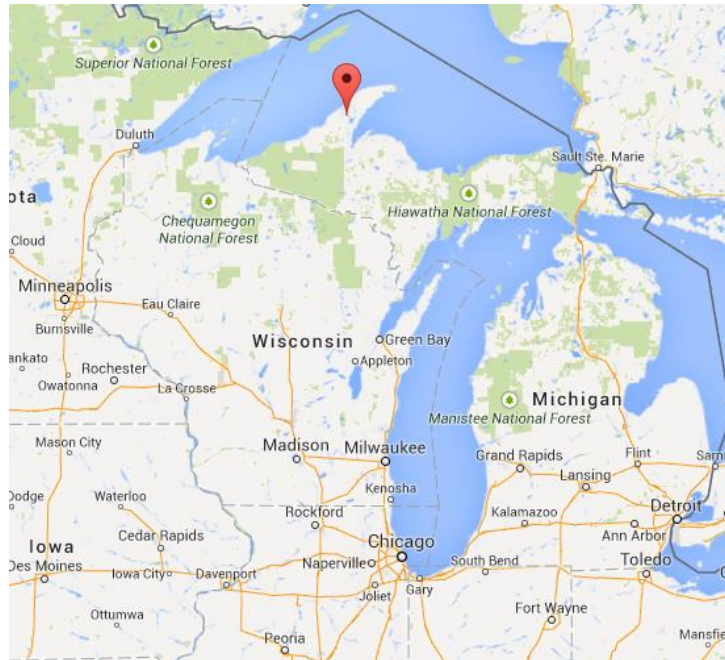
City of Houghton: <http://www.cityofhoughton.com/>

City of Hancock: <http://www.cityofhancock.com/>

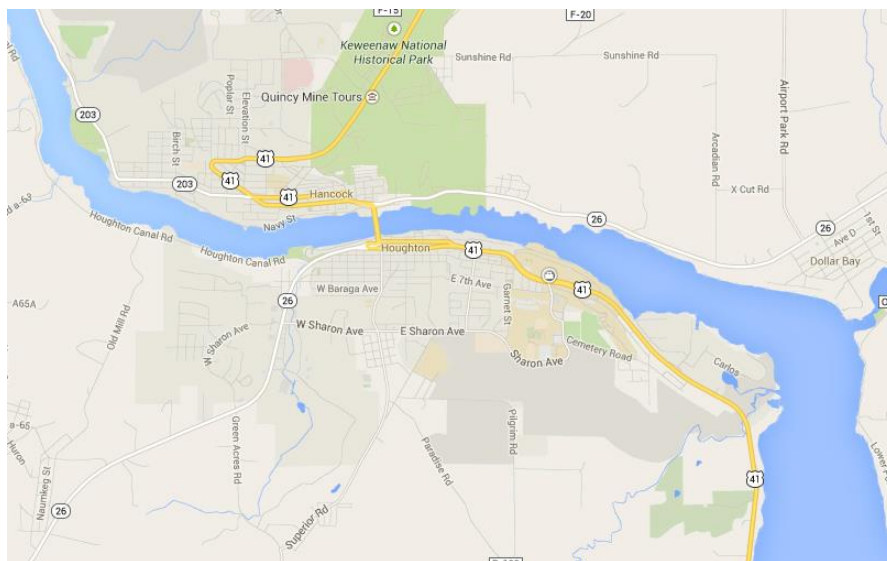
Barkboard: <https://barkboard.mtu.edu>

Campus Map: <http://www.mtu.edu/maps/campus-map.pdf>





Map 1: Michigan Technological University indicated on the map with the red marker, with a view of some neighboring states and cities.



Map 2: A view of the towns of Houghton and Hancock, and the Portage Canal that separates them

5th edition
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Graduate Student Government

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