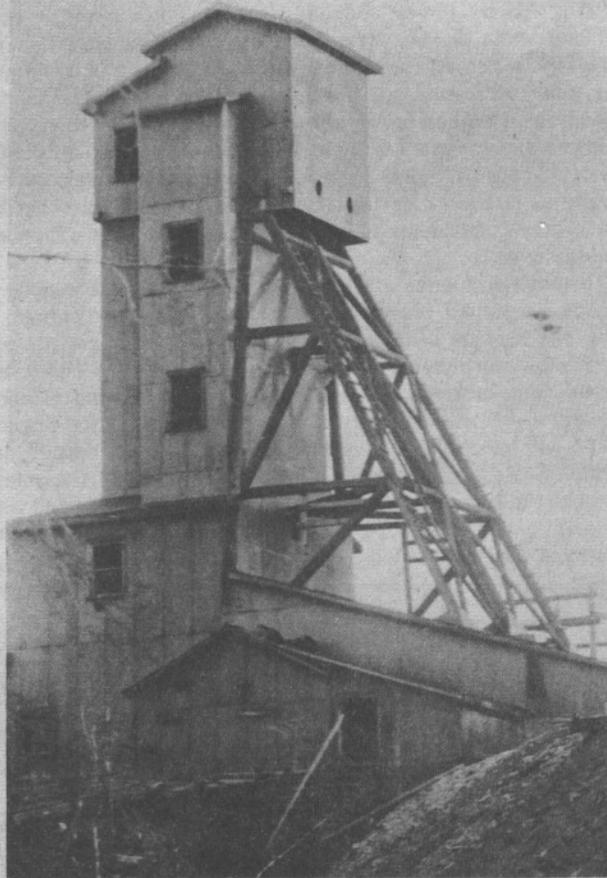


Students Visit Josephine Mine



By Donald E. Pugh

Twenty Wawa local history students have completed a sixteen mile hike from Hawk Junction to the Josephine Mine. As they walked along the tracks of the Algoma Central Railway, the low hog backed hills, and polished grooved granite rock, swept clear of trees by a major fire in the 1950's, provided an excellent laboratory on the effects of glaciation.

The mine itself, a forlorn scene of desolation and ruin, offered the students mute testimony of the transitory nature of mining enterprises. Shattered windows of the stark headframe overlook abandoned compressors, ore crushers and tangled steel. The old two storey bunk house, in which the students passed a cold night, was once home to a hundred miners. Now plaster peeling from the walls, covers ripped, sagging steam piping along graffiti smeared walls. Yet from viewing scattered boxes of ore samples in damp sagging buildings and from reading water soaked musty records, telling of men who once served 'graveyard shifts', the students learned of the mine and its history.

The rich hematite deposit had originally been tested by H. A. Willy with diamond drilling in 1899 to reveal a strike 2,800 feet by 80 feet. Optimism that the deposit would supplement the rich reserves of the Helen Mine in supplying the Algoma Steel Corporation proved fruitful in 1900 with the extension of the Algoma Central Railway to the mine. By 1906 ore from two shafts of 50 and 150 feet was being carried by rail to Michipicoten Harbour for shipment to Sault Ste. Marie.

The present mine was erected in 1941 by the Michipicoten Iron Mines Ltd., following the Frobisher Exploration Company's report of 3,840,000 tons of ore. The wide array of support buildings which emerged including private homes, stores and a school, were homes to many a Wawa resident. By 1945-46 some 61,637 tons of hematite had been shipped to aid the war effort. Unfortunately, in August, 1946 the shaft suffered a major cave-in and the mine was abandoned. So it remains today, symbolizing to visiting students the fate of many mining ventures in the Michipicoten region.

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