Inviting a Pernicious Opposition: Company Stores on the Michigan Iron Ranges

By
Terry S. Reynolds

"Your directors have found that continuing in the [store] business invites an opposition which is pernicious and they deem it best to follow the example of the other mining companies in respect to disposing of the store."
—Annual Statement of the Iron Cliffs Company for the year ending November 30, 1887.

In 1955 Tennessee Ernie Ford recorded "Sixteen Tons." In that hit song a miner laments that he cannot afford to die because he owes his soul to the company store. Ford's ballad reflects the popular view of company stores as harmful institutions. In this view, mine owners compelled miners to shop at their company stores, which charged excessive prices. To reinforce this directive, companies paid miners in scrip, which could be used only at the company store. They also encouraged miners to charge goods at the store. As a result miners often found, at the end of a pay period, that their tab had exceeded their wages, some miners falling so deeply in debt that they—in the words of "Sixteen Tons"—"owe my soul to the company store."

Scholars long supported this view of company stores, especially those studying the bituminous coal mining industry of the eastern United States.[1] But in the last few decades, some scholars have found that company stores were more benign, especially as they operated in other industries and other regions. And a few have even questioned the accuracy of the traditional portrayal of company stores in the bituminous coal districts.[2]

The following study of the organization, operations, and functions of company stores on the iron ranges of Michigan's Upper Peninsula in

the late nineteenth century largely supports the more benign view of company stores. It finds, for example, that profits were not the primary focus of their operations and that the pernicious, or harmful, opposition to company stores was much more likely to come from regional merchants than from iron miners. This study also finds that company stores were not homogeneous, single-function entities, as they are often portrayed. Iron mining companies adopted a variety of methods for providing store services to their miners, and company stores sometimes had important functions beyond merely provisioning miners.

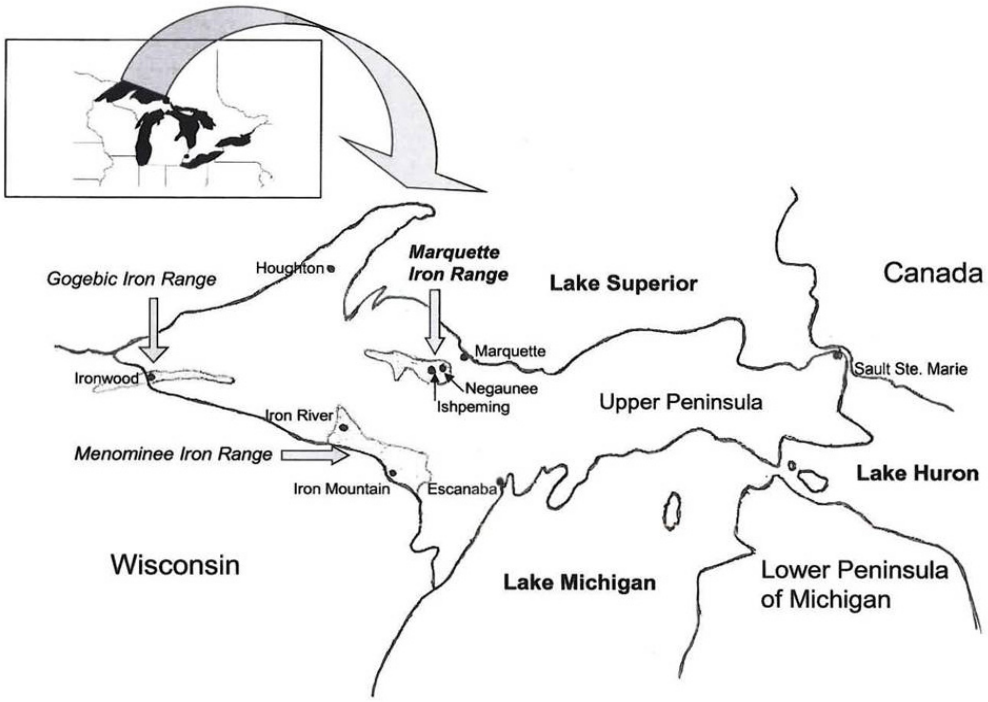
Michigan's Iron Ranges

Government surveyors first discovered evidence of rich deposits of iron ore on Michigan's Upper Peninsula in 1844. Around 1853 significant mining began twelve to fifteen miles inland from the newly settled port of Marquette on the south-central shore of Lake Superior. Production surged following the completion of a canal at Sault Ste. Marie in 1855, better linking Lakes Superior and Huron and allowing cost-effective, all-water bulk transportation of ore from Lake Superior to the lower Great Lakes. Production surged again during the Civil War. By 1870 the mines immediately inland from Marquette, called the Marquette Range, produced around 20 percent of the nation's iron ore.

A second area of iron ore deposits, called the Menominee Range, located forty to fifty miles south of the Marquette Range along the Wisconsin border, began shipping ore in 1877. These additional ores enabled Michigan to displace Pennsylvania as the nation's leading iron ore producer by 1880. In the mid-1880s a third Upper Peninsula iron field, called the Gogebic Range, began shipping from deposits at the western edge of the Upper Peninsula, extending across the Wisconsin border. By 1890 Michigan's three iron ore ranges produced over 50 percent of the nation's iron ore.[3] The quality and quantity of this ore, coupled with the economy of bulk shipping on the Great Lakes, fueled America's industrial revolution and shifted the center of the American iron and steel industry from the East Coast to the upper Midwest.

Although forty to seventy miles apart and opened in three different decades, the three Michigan iron ranges collectively provide a good object for the study of company stores. All three ranges had them. All mined the same bulk mineral product whose supply-and-demand cycle and bulk shipping needs were different than, for example, the product of the nearby Keweenaw copper mining region. Moreover, with the exception of the Menominee and Gogebic ranges' extensions into Wisconsin, the iron mining companies were all subject to the same mining and mercantile laws. Mining personnel and merchants from an older iron range often moved into a new range as it opened. Finally, the differing dates at which the three ranges opened provide a means of measuring the impact of improved communications on company stores. The Marquette Range, which began shipping in the 1850s, was not linked to the national rail network for almost twenty years. The Menominee Range, which began shipping in the 1870s, was linked to the national rail network by a spur line after several years of preliminary exploration and testing. The Gogebic Range, which began shipping in the 1880s, was opened as a direct result of the extension of a railroad's main line through its mineral belt.

The earliest company store on a Michigan iron range was established around 1850; the last disappeared around 1920. In the course of more than a decade of research, I have identified nearly fifty company stores associated with iron mining and smelting interests on the Michigan iron ranges. Almost certainly more existed.[4] But most upper Michigan iron mining and smelting companies left no records behind. Even where records exist, store records are not prevalent among them, with but one or two exceptions.[5] Often the only evidence that a company store existed at a mining locale is an isolated reference in a newspaper or



Michigan's Upper Peninsula with its three major iron ranges. (By the author.)

letter. Nonetheless, sufficient evidence survives to reach some general conclusions.

On Michigan's Upper Peninsula company stores first emerged, as in most other mineral regions, as an operational necessity. When surveyors discovered iron ore in the mid-1840s, the peninsula's population largely consisted of small and scattered indigenous bands engaged in hunting, fishing, and gathering. No established transportation systems linked the area to existing mercantile centers. Even after mining began in earnest in the early 1850s, the region's primary link to the outside world was through the small shipping port of Marquette on Lake Superior, which was frozen in for six months annually. Miners could be drawn to this cold and isolated region *only* if provided

Table 1. Distribution of Company Stores on the Michigan Iron Ranges

Iron Ore Range	First Significant Ore Shipment	Linked to National Railroad Network	Number of Company Stores Identified
Marquette	1853	1873	29
Menominee	1877	1877	12
Gogebic	1884	1884	6

Among the sources used to identify company stores were newspapers [particularly the Mining Journal *(Marquette, Mich.),* Iron Herald *(Negaunee, Mich.),* Iron Ore *(Ishpeming, Mich.), and* Current *(Norway, Mich.)], scattered remarks in the extensive papers left by the Cleveland Iron Mining Company in the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Co. Collections;* Polk's *city directories; A. P. Swineford's accounts of the mineral resources of Lake Superior; and the few surviving pre-1900 annual reports of Michigan iron mining companies.*

with housing and with some way to supply basic needs.

Thus, a company store became essential, one of the key means by which isolated mines attracted and retained a labor force, and often one of the early buildings erected at a mine site. In early 1875, for instance, the agent of the Champion Iron Company on the western edge of the Marquette Range noted: "Owing to our remote location, it is necessary to keep a store for the men." Similarly, in 1883 the Pittsburgh and Lake Superior Iron Company's chronicler noted that P&LSI operated a store so its workmen could avoid the "annoyance" of having to walk five miles to Negaunee for supplies.[6]

The influence of links to the national rail network on the geographical distribution of company stores is suggested by Table 1, above. Of the forty-seven identified company stores associated with iron mines or charcoal blast furnaces in upper Michigan, twenty-nine were on the Marquette Range, but only twelve on the Menominee and only six on the Gogebic. This discrepancy is notable because by the late 1880s all three ranges produced roughly comparable volumes of iron ore.

Two factors likely explain the discrepancy. First, urban centers near the mines on the Marquette Range emerged only in the mid- to late-1860s, more than twenty years after the discovery of iron ore and more than a decade after significant mining began. They emerged much more quickly on the two younger ranges.[7] Second, and related to the first, the national rail network reached the Marquette Range and its local rail lines only in 1873. Before then the region was isolated for months at a time when Lake Superior froze during winter.

More than quarter century of semi-isolation (from 1844 to 1873) made company stores a ne-

The Menominee Mining Company's traditional-pattern store (the two-story white building on the right) near the Chapin Mine, Iron Mountain, Michigan, c. 1880. At Chapin, as in many mining locations, the company store was among the first buildings erected. (Courtesy of William Cummings, Iron Mountain, Michigan.)

cessity on the Marquette Range for a longer period than on the other ranges, which were tied into the national rail network from the time they began shipping. On both the Menominee and Gogebic ranges, these ready railroad connections permitted towns and private mercantile concerns to emerge early and quickly. On the Menominee, for example, the mining settlement of Crystal Falls went from virgin forest to a town with two hundred buildings and over two thousand inhabitants in a matter of a few months, largely due to the arrival of the railroad.[8] The same rapid growth characterized towns such as Bessemer and Hurley on the Gogebic for much the same reason.[9] Railroads promoted the rapid emergence of multiple independent mercantile establishments and meant company stores were much less of an operational necessity on the younger ranges.[10]

Types of Company Stores

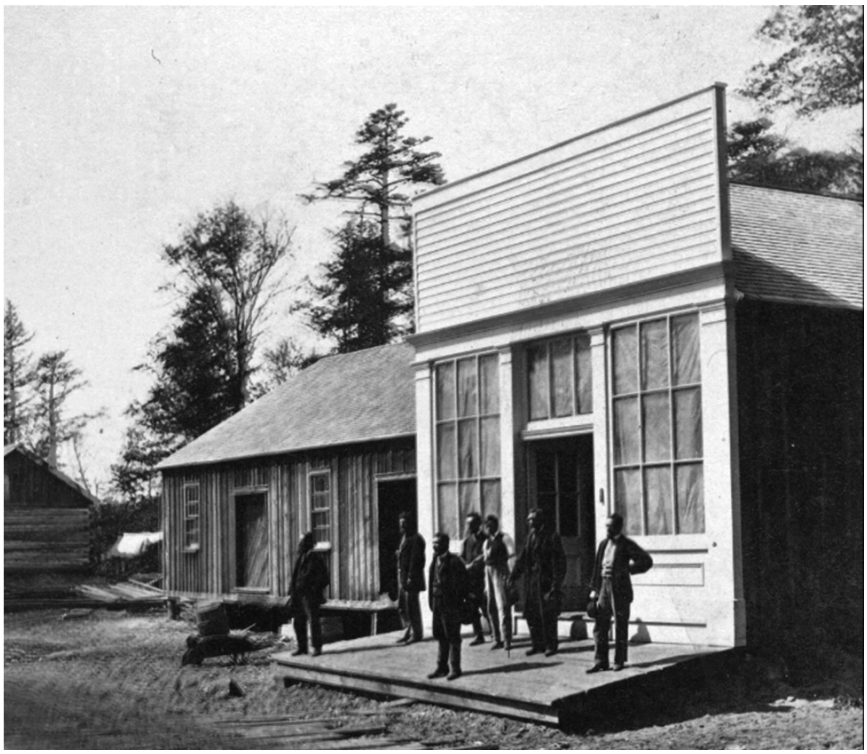
Most discussions of company stores in mining literature tend to treat them as standardized entities, organized and operated in a uniform manner. They were not. For example, company stores on the Michigan iron ranges—and I believe elsewhere—had four distinct organizational patterns: ad-hoc, traditional, leased, and competitive.

An ad hoc company store, typically, did not have a dedicated, specialized building, but was operated by a company manager out of a room, shack, or temporary structure, and provided bare minimum goods to company employees. In 1859-60, for example, Robert Nelson, the Cleveland Iron Mining Company's mining superintendent, used a room in the company's boarding house as a rudimentary company store to supply the company's miners with provisions. He kept a small amount of merchandise—shirts, blankets, tobacco, moccasins, and drawers—just enough, he said, to keep the miners "at home."[11] The contemporary Jackson Iron Company in Negaunee probably had a similar arrangement.[12] Another example of an ad-hoc company store appeared during the Panic of 1893. Fred Braastad, a Marquette Range merchant and part owner of two small iron mines, temporarily transformed his conventional mercantile businesses into ad hoc company stores. He kept the Winthrop and Mitchell mines open by paying miners with goods from his stores despite receiving orders from company directors to close the mines because the company had no currency for payroll.[13] An even later example of an ad-hoc company store occurred on the western Menominee Range near Iron River, where a mining captain operated one at the rear of the Forbes Mine's club house. He sold a few grocery staples beginning around 1912, closing the store a few years later when nearby Iron River merchants began making deliveries to the area by car or truck.[14]

Traditional company stores, the kind most usually found in extractive industries, were, of course, common on the Michigan iron ranges. Traditional stores usually had dedicated buildings,

Table 2. Organizational Patterns of Company Stores on Michigan's Iron Ranges

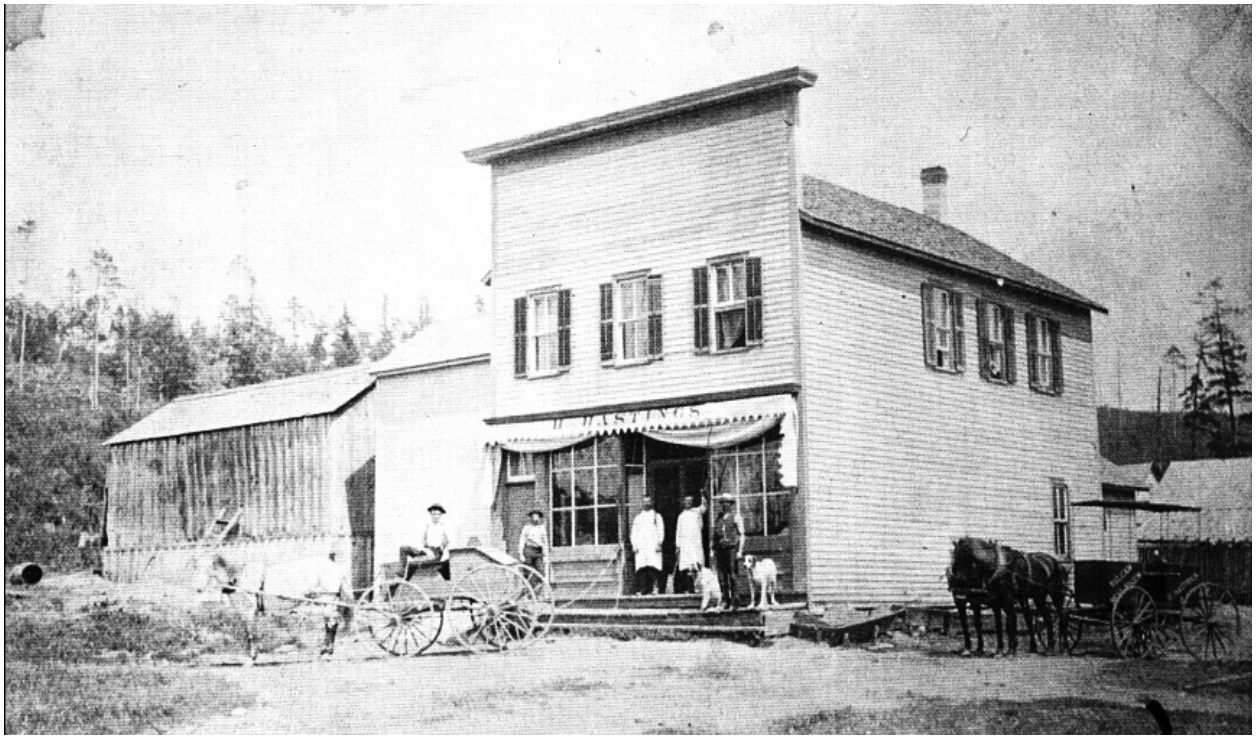
Organizational Pattern	Primary Clientele	Operator	Specialized Building (typically)
Ad Hoc	Company Employees	Company or one of its local mine managers	No
Traditional	Company Employees	Company	Yes
Leased	Company Employees	Leasing Agent	Yes
Competitive	Company Employees & the General Public	Company	Yes



The Schoolcraft Iron Company's store at Munising, Michigan, west of Marquette on Lake Superior, in 1868. Schoolcraft Iron operated a traditional-pattern company store at a blast furnace site supplied with ore from the nearby Marquette Range's iron mines. (Courtesy of the Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.)

their primary customers were a mining company's employees, and they were operated by company employees. Although the scant surviving records do not make it definitive, it seems certain that most company stores on the Michigan iron ranges were of this type. Examples abound. The earliest company store on the Michigan iron ranges was traditional, organized by the Marquette Iron Company in 1850 to serve the employees it had landed at Marquette Bay to mine iron and build and operate a forge.[15] A rare surviving day book of the Lake Superior Iron Company shows purchases from a wholesaler for its company store in 1858, and later inventories indicate a distinct building.[16] The Jackson Iron Company's charcoal iron furnace town of Fayette, founded in 1867 on Lake Michigan in the southern part of the Upper Peninsula near Escanaba, had a company store—initially of wood, but later stone—operated by company employees.[17] Beginning in the late 1870s, the Menominee Mining Company maintained traditional company stores at Quinnesec, Florence, Iron Mountain, and Vulcan (the last—when renovated in 1886—called "the best equipped mercantile house on the range").[18]

Some Michigan iron mining companies preferred to invest as much of their capital as possible in mining rather than in stocking store shelves and hiring store clerks, but, nonetheless, needed a store near their operations to attract and keep a workforce. These companies followed the lease pattern of operation. They erected a store building but then leased it to private commercial interests with the provision that they meet certain minimum stipulations, such as maintaining a reasonable stock of goods, charging reasonable prices, and abstaining from the sale of alcohol. For example, the Cleveland Iron Mining Com-



The H. Hastings meat market at Vulcan on the Menominee Range, c. 1885. An example of the leased pattern of company store operation. Hastings leased the building from the Menominee Mining Company. Company meat markets were more likely to follow the leased pattern than company general stores. (Courtesy of the Dickenson County Public Library System, Michigan.)

pany designated one of its rudimentary buildings as a store sometime in the early to mid-1860s and leased it to a private party. The result was unsatisfactory. The company's agent reported that no poorer store building with so poor a stock existed at any location along the Marquette and Ontonagon railroad line. Thus, in 1868, the company terminated its arrangement with its leasing agent, erected what one observer called "the best company store in the county," and leased it to a new and more satisfactory proprietor.[19] The Jackson Iron Company, at its furnace operations at Fayette, followed the traditional pattern in operating the company's general store. But the company-owned meat market—located in dedicated quarters beneath the town hall—operated on the lease pattern. In 1878 the Jackson company leased the meat market to George Harris. The surviving lease indicates that Harris agreed to charge fair prices and provide satisfactory service to the company's employees. In return the company agreed to prevent the establishment of a rival butcher shop on its lands and to forbid the peddling of fresh meats in the company town.[20]

While most company stores on Michigan's iron ranges focused on supplying company employees, a few went beyond that, actively seeking customers outside the company's work force and competing with local mercantile establishments. The most notable example of a competitive-pattern company store was the Iron Cliffs Company's store in Negaunee, on the Marquette Range, founded in 1867.[21] It was managed by E. S. Green, who reported to company officials in New York rather than to the company's local agent, and who often commented on his competition with local merchants for customers. In June 1868, for example, he reported: "Business in the Store is first

rate. We are having sharp competition from the Jews but I am inclined to think some of our competition will shake in their Boots before the expiration of another year." In 1871 he commented that the competition was "perfectly awful," but in 1872 noted that the Iron Cliffs' store was "selling more in proportion than all the Stores in Town." In December 1874 he bragged that the store had "done the business of the Town this year [*sic*]" and that the other merchants in Negaunee were "the sickest lot . . . I ever saw." In his 1880 account of iron mining on Lake Superior, A. P. Swineford described the Iron Cliffs store as one of the largest general stores in the region, and, he noted, while it was chiefly built to accommodate employees, it enjoyed "a large outside trade."[22] The Iron Cliffs store was not unique. The Penn Mining Company Store in Norway, Michigan, erected in 1880 by the Menominee Mining Company, also seems to have operated in competition with local merchants. After 1902, when it was legally separated from the Penn Mining Company and operated as the Penn Store, it certainly did.[23]

Iron Money

The primary function of all four types of company stores on Michigan's iron ranges was similar to company stores elsewhere: selling provisions to company employees. Many accounts of company stores do not go beyond describing this function. However, company stores sometimes had important additional functions. In Upper Peninsula Michigan's iron mining and smelting region these functions included buffering currency shortages, providing profits to stockholders or funds to continue mine operations, offering a check on local merchants, manipulating morals, furnishing distant management with another set of eyes, and, in at least one case, exerting political pressure.

The role of the company store as a currency buffer was of particular importance before 1873, when Michigan's Marquette Range was finally linked into the national railroad grid. Before

IRON CLIFFS STORE

New Fall and Winter Goods.

$50,000

Stock on Hand.

Every Department Full!

To The People of

Marquette.

Ishpeming,

Michigamme,

Iron City.

And surrounding country, together with the inhabitants of the

CITY OF NEGAUNEE

Advertisement of the Iron Cliffs' competitive-pattern company store, 1875. The store was located in Negaunee, but note that the ad also appeals to customers in other towns, including several where Iron Cliffs had no mining or smelting operations, such as Marquette, Michigamme, and Iron City. (Negaunee Iron Herald, *9 December 1875.)*

1873 the area was chronically short of currency due to its geographical isolation. Making the matter worse, workmen leaving the region for the winter, a sizable portion of the work force in the early years, took large blocks of currency with them. Getting currency into the remote area was risky even during the sailing season due to storms and shipwreck. In winter the only way to get currency to the region was overland across a hundred to a hundred and fifty miles of snow-covered wilderness where there was no law enforcement. Thus, securing the specie needed to meet payrolls before 1873 was costly and dangerous.[24]

Complaints about currency shortages were frequent. In 1859 Cleveland Iron's local agent, H. B. Tuttle, wrote to the company's treasurer in Cleveland that "there is little currency here." Two years later mine manager Robert Nelson quipped: "There is no money here to change a five nor no fives to change [*sic*]." He asked corporate headquarters in Cleveland to please send currency if able. And in December 1867 Cleveland Iron's agent informed the company's president that the local bank had "no currency of any kind."[25] The economic panic of 1873 made bad matters worse. E. S. Green, who ran the Iron Cliffs' store in Negaunee, bluntly noted in October: "We do not have any currency." Jacob Houghton at the Michigamme Mine on the western end of the Marquette Range complained at the same time that "this country is pretty well cleaned out of green backs and national currency."[26]

Regional mining and smelting companies responded to currency shortage by issuing what locally was called "iron money." These were essentially IOUs in the form of checks made out in small denominations ($1, $2, $3, $5, and $10), signed by the company's local agent and redeemable (sometimes with interest) in from thirty to ninety days—but only at company offices in Cleveland or New York. These drafts, or IOUs, were used to meet payroll and could be considered a form of scrip. However, iron money was widely accepted by all stores and banks in the region (even if sometimes discounted slightly), because national currency was simply unavailable—unlike conventional scrip, which could be spent only in the company store.

Regional stores and banks accumulated iron money, sorted it, and sent it in bundles down the Great Lakes to the appropriate company's headquarters for payment in regular currency. Iron money circulated locally throughout the winter months when communications with the outside world were difficult, typically reaching company offices for redemption only four to six months after issuance, giving companies a buffer, or breathing space, to come up with hard cash to pay miners or buy provisions locally. Traditional and competitive company stores played a central role in this system of currency buffering. They always accepted their companies' iron money at full face value, with no discounting.[27]

Mining companies began to use iron money during the financial panic of 1857, and it soon became a standard way of dealing with the shortage of national currency. When the Panic of 1873 hit, Jacob Houghton at the Michigamme Mine noted that the general impression was that the mining companies "must resort to the issue of Iron currency [*sic*]," since national currency was not available. That turned out to be the case. In April 1874 a regional newspaper noted, for example, that the head of the Cascade Mining Company had arrived but without national currency. He had, however, reopened the company's store to take the company's iron money at par in payment for goods.[28]

Sometimes area mining companies used company stores as a currency buffer without issuing iron money. In the winter of 1867-68, for instance, a currency shortage led a number of companies to suspend cash payments to their reduced force of miners from January until June, when navigation was again opened. To keep employees from leaving, they allowed them to draw from the company store, provided the value of goods purchased did not exceed wages. Any balance due

employees was paid out as a lump sum when navigation opened and currency again became available in June. Among the companies adopting this plan were the Bancroft and Morgan furnaces, Iron Cliffs, Lake Superior Iron, Washington Iron, and Champion Iron, all of which had traditional-pattern or competitive-pattern company stores.[29]

The Cleveland Iron Mining Company's agent lamented that his company could not adopt this policy, writing "had we the store we could go through the winter without half the currency we now have to use."[30] Cleveland Iron, at the time, had a lease-pattern store and thus less control over operations. A similar scheme of substituting store goods for conventional wage payments was used by several companies with traditional or competitive stores during the Panic of 1873.[31] Again, companies without stores to buffer the impact of currency shortages faced difficulties. In 1874 a contractor who provided fuel for the Morgan Iron Company's blast furnaces had insufficient currency to pay his employees. They struck for back pay. A regional newspaper commented that because the employer had no store where colliers could trade on account, the company was now "without men, credit, or subsistence."[32]

By 1875 federal judicial decisions made issuance of "iron money" both risky and taxable. By then, also, rail lines linked the Upper Peninsula's iron mining regions to the national rail network, sharply reducing currency shortages. Nonetheless, when the Panic of 1893 hit, one of the few companies still operating a company store again used it as a currency buffer. When the cost of obtaining currency rose sharply during the panic, the Penn Mining Company—which operated what was likely a competitive-pattern store at its Norway Mine and a traditional-pattern store at its Vulcan Mine—deferred regular wage payments, "giving to employees when desired the full amount of their wages in goods from the Companys [*sic*] store."[33]

Besides operating as a currency buffer, some company stores on the Michigan iron ranges were expected to serve as profit centers. This was particularly the case for competitive-pattern stores, like the Iron Cliffs Store in Negaunee. As previously noted, that store's manager, E. S. Green, actively competed with local merchants for customers, including Iron Cliffs' employees, who were not compelled to use the company store. To vie for customers, he had to charge competitive prices. Green did this by traveling to major merchandising centers early in the spring and acquiring new merchandise before his less affluent non-company competitors could do so. He took advantage of his connection to Iron Cliffs to procure goods at reduced cash prices, he could survive on lower profit margins due to his link to the company, and he was also effective in bargaining with wholesalers. One supplier commented to an officer in Iron Cliff's New York headquarters: "Your Mr. Green buys goods lower than any other house in that country and he always manages to make our profits very small."[34] In addition, Green's company links provided him with information on the credit risk of company employees that independent merchants did not have, and, through the company, he had a better means of collecting debts than his rivals, lowering his operating costs.[35]

Prices and Profits

With these advantages, the Iron Cliffs Store was expected to make a profit and did so. It averaged $150,000 in sales annually. While its yearly profits are not known, in 1871 and again in 1880 it provided around $20,000 in profits to company coffers.[36] The company's profits from the sale of pig iron and iron ore were higher, but the contribution was nonetheless substantial.

The profits brought in by the traditional-pattern company store of the Washington Iron Company on the Marquette Range were even more essential to that company's operations, primarily because its mining operations struggled to turn a profit (see Table 3). Washington Iron's an-

Table 3. The Washington Iron Mining Company's Store

Year	Company Store Profits	Comments
1867	$1,820	Stockholders assessed $1 per share
1868	$4,581	
1869	$9,722	Profits cover nearly 2/3 of payroll, January 1-May 1, 1870
1870		Mine loses money
1871	$14,443	
1872	$11,792	Company "barely able to do a living business"
1873	$13,281	Company deeply in debt; stockholders assessed $5 per share to keep the mine operating
1874		Mine shut down; owners attempt to lease the operation

Handwritten annual reports of the Washington Iron Mining Company found in multiple folders of Box 1, Peter White Papers, Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor, MI.

nual report for 1869, for example, noted that the store's profits would pay "nearly two thirds of our expenses for labor this winter." And in January 1873 the president reported to stockholders that the company had been "barely able to do a living business" the previous year, but profits from the company store were $11,792.[37] The Washington Iron Company probably lasted as long as it did (closing in 1874) because it could draw on the profits from its store.

While it was important for some company stores to turn a profit—either because they were established to compete with outside vendors, had to support a struggling mine or had to support the merchant leasing a company store—many company stores on the Michigan iron ranges deliberately sought to do little more than break even. This was particularly the case with many traditional-pattern stores. These were operated primarily as a labor recruiting and retention tool, company officials recognizing that profiteering at the company store would only increase the cost of living and spark demands for higher wages. Jay C. Malone, agent of the Cleveland Iron Mining Company, for instance, saw a good store as a means to retain labor. He noted in the spring of 1867: "I am only anxious to get a store at the mines that will be a credit to the location and that will give satisfaction to the men." His company opted to put up a new store building and lease it out rather than run the store itself. The agent of the Champion Iron Company commented in 1875 that "the idea of making money off [the company store] has been abandoned." His company switched from a traditional-pattern store to a lease-pattern store. The Pittsburgh and Lake Superior Iron Company operated in Palmer, five miles south of Negaunee on the Marquette Range. It had a traditional company general store and meat market. Company policy was to run both "more as a convenience to its employes [*sic*] than as a source of profit." The company boasted that it "sold at prices that will compare favorable [*sic*] with those of any retail store in Chicago."[38]

Significant profit seems to have been eschewed at many company stores on the Menominee and Gogebic ranges as well, particularly traditional-pattern stores. Michigan's commissioner of mineral statistics reported in 1878 that the company store at Quinnesec sold dry goods and groceries "at reasonable rates." Swineford, in his review of the Upper Peninsula's mining industry in 1880, noted that the large Menominee Mining Company general store at Vulcan provided provisions "at

the lowest cash prices," and that employees could buy elsewhere if they chose. On the Gogebic Range the store at the Palms-Anvil location was operated on a non-profit basis, and *Skillings' Mining Review* noted in 1919 that there was "no profiteering in the Yale [Mine's] store." The Montreal Mining Company, on the Wisconsin side of the Gogebic, set prices at its club house and in its company town of Hamilton so that the company could break even. The regional reputation of company stores was such that miners at Lake Angeline in 1893 reportedly were "anxious to have a store started by the company so that supplies can be had at [the] lowest possible price." In summary, surviving evidence suggests that prices in company stores on the Michigan iron ranges—no matter what their organizational pattern—were reasonable and generally as low as, or lower than, what miners could obtain elsewhere.[39]

The reasonable-to-minimal-profit policies of many company stores reinforced another function that company stores served on Michigan's iron ranges: providing a check on local merchants out to make as much money as possible. The Iron Cliffs' store manager complained, for example, that when he ran low on any item, Negaunee merchants would immediately raise their prices on that merchandise. In the absence of a company store, particularly at small and isolated mining locations, an independent merchant might well have held a monopoly and would have been likely to exploit that advantage by charging high prices. This would have hurt company employees, but also damaged the company by creating unwanted pressure to raise wages. Company stores prevented this. The directors of the Iron Cliffs Company, for example, noted that before their store had opened in 1867 "there was no competition at Negaunee to protect the Company's employees." In 1887 the directors concluded there was "adequate competition . . . so that the employees are fully protected," and they decided to close down their store.[40]

Paternalism and Politics

Generally, Michigan iron mining companies got out of the store business as soon as multiple independent store operators established themselves in their immediate area, depending on competition between multiple operators to keep prices under control. The very rapid emergence of multiple independent mercantile establishments near major concentrations of mines on the Menominee and Gogebic ranges reduced the need for company stores to serve as a check on local merchants and, as noted previously, helps explain the lower number of company stores on those ranges.

In Michigan's iron mining regions, as in other mining regions, companies sometimes used their stores as a way to control, or manipulate, what products employees consumed. Not surprisingly, company stores did not usually stock alcohol. Charles T. Harvey, the Pioneer Iron Company's manager, noted in June 1859 that his company's store made it possible for employees to get the necessities of life "free from the baneful effects of liquor traffic." At Fayette, the Jackson Iron Company did not allow sale of intoxicating liquors at its store or anywhere on its properties. The Menominee Mining Company, similarly, used its stores to keep liquor out of the company towns of Quinnesec and Vulcan.[41]

Morals, however, are difficult to control. Often bars grew up just outside of company property, within walking distance of mining locations. This compelled mining companies to moderate policies. In 1868, in the middle of a political dispute involving the nearby village of Negaunee, the Cleveland Iron Mining Company considered allowing the sale of whiskey in its lease-pattern store to keep employees from trekking three miles to Negaunee and patronizing merchants selling alcohol there. At the company town of Gwinn, erected in the early twentieth century, the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company permitted a single saloon, where miners could drink in controlled surroundings. At one of its blast furnace sites

near Gladstone in the southern part of the Upper Peninsula, the same company adopted a similar policy, deciding that it was better to have some control over alcohol consumption at a company-controlled site than to have employees go off-site for uncontrolled consumption.[42]

In addition to controlling alcohol consumption, an occasional function of company stores on the Michigan iron ranges was to give distant management another set of eyes. This was potentially important in the first decades of mining due to the distance between mines in upper Michigan and company headquarters in either Cleveland or New York, and slow, pre-telegraphic communications. A company's first set of eyes was its local agent. Appointing a director from the mining region, a common practice in the era, often provided a second set of eyes. Company store managers could serve as a third. The best example on the Michigan iron ranges is the manager of the Iron Cliffs store, Edward Green, who reported independently of the local mine agent to company officials in New York. Green provided New York management with independent views on matters not normally the purview of a store clerk. In 1871, for example, Green complained to the company president that the mining captains at the Barnum mine were not encouraging employees to trade at the Iron Cliffs store. He also complained that he should be put in charge of the company's hay farm because those appointed were "pets of Mr. Isham [the mine superintendent] and I can not direct

The Jackson Iron Company's company town of Fayette on Lake Michigan, c. 1900. The traditional-pattern company store and its accompanying warehouse are near the center of this photograph, to the right of the blast furnace complex (far left). The company hotel is to their rear. The original store was wood framed, but, after a fire in 1886, was rebuilt using stone. The two-story structure with an exposed basement immediately to the right of the company store is the town hall. The lower level of this structure housed the leased-pattern company butcher shop. (Courtesy of Fayette State Park, Michigan History Center.)

them at all or even demand that they be on duty during business hours." In 1872 he damned mine superintendent E. B. Isham with faint praise, noting in a letter to the company's president, William Barnum, that Isham was improving and looked more like he was "not drinking to such excess and taking better care of himself." In that same period Green reported to company officials on a variety of other matters outside of what one would expect of a store manager, including the supply of hay for company horses, the Parson Mine's new opening, exploration taking place on company land, the level of outside interest in purchasing iron lands, the quality of the horses the superintendent had purchased, and the performance of the Chicago and Northwestern Railway, which hauled the company's ore to the port of Escanaba.[43]

Finally, on very rare occasions mining companies used their stores as political weapons. There is at least one clear case. In 1867 politicians from the new mining town of Negaunee moved to split Marquette County by creating a new county, to be called Washington County, with Negaunee as its county seat. The Marquette Range's iron mines would have been almost entirely in the new county. Marquette, county seat of Marquette County and one of the range's ports, would remain in a new, truncated Marquette County. Supporting the split were Negaunee boosters, who resented the prominence of Marquette; local Democrats, who saw themselves as more likely to secure office in a new county by separating it from the Republican-dominated city of Marquette; and, probably, a handful of politically aware miners who recognized that they would have a bigger voice if Marquette's voters (largely mercantile and including company agents) were cut out of county affairs. The Peninsula Railroad, which hauled ore to the non-county port of Escanaba rather than to Marquette, and the Iron Cliffs Company, which had ties to the Peninsula Railroad and was the largest landowner around Negaunee, also supported the new county, probably as a means for increasing their influence. Iron Cliffs' lawyer, who had been elected to the Michigan House of Representatives, headed the effort and secured passage of the bill creating the new county.[44]

However, the iron mining companies operating outside of Negaunee opposed the split, since it would involve erecting new county buildings and paying county officers from a reduced property base, thus raising their taxes. More important, they would have less control of county politics. The largely pro-company population of Marquette, which included wholesalers, many mine agents, and company shipping agents, would be in another county. The new county's officials were perceived as being less likely to intervene in case of a strike, since their political support would be more heavily dependent on miners' votes.[45]

Responding to the threat, in the spring of 1867 the local agents of iron mining companies met to determine a response to the surprise formation of Washington County. They failed to agree because the Iron Cliffs Company and Jackson Iron Company, whose primary works were located in or adjacent to Negaunee, either saw advantages in the new county or feared to antagonize Negaunee's residents. Not deterred, the iron mining companies centered on Ishpeming, three miles west of Negaunee, continued to work cooperatively. As part of their response, they planned to undermine Negaunee economically. The essential weapon in pulling this off was company stores. The plan called for Ishpeming-area companies to break with past tradition in the region and compel their men "to buy goods in the location in which they work, . . . but not allow them to buy a thing not even whiskey at Negaunee." Within a year, predicted the Cleveland Iron Mining Company's agent, Negaunee would lose strength. Prominent Marquette banker Peter White, on the Cleveland Iron Mining Company's board of directors, backed the idea, declaring that his company should prevent its miners from "in any way patronizing those miserable fellows at Negaunee." To this end, he concluded, it was "very desirable to have a good store at our Mine." In the aftermath the Cleveland Iron

Mining Company, which had a poor company store, replaced it with an improved facility.[46]

In the end, those opposing the new county did not have to use their stores as a political and economic weapon. They succeeded in challenging the new county's creation in court and in the state legislature in Lansing. A technicality in the enabling legislation (failure to subdivide the new county into townships) led the courts to invalidate the county and the election it had conducted. The iron mining companies, now alert to developments in Lansing, prevented any new enabling legislation.[47]

Miners and Merchants

In contrast to the conventional view of company stores as homogenous, exploitive entities—a view especially applied to stores in the eastern bituminous coal fields—company stores of all patterns on the Michigan iron ranges seem to have operated in a more benign manner. Some of their functions—beyond the provision of essentials to company employees—involved alleviating problems faced by both miners and the companies that employed them, such as enabling mining operations to continue in the face of economic depression and currency shortages and keeping potentially exploitive independent merchants in check. For only brief periods and only at a mine or two did companies compel miners to use their stores; miners could generally buy goods where they wished. They likely patronized company stores anyway, not only because of their convenience, but also because, as we have seen, the stores charged prices below or competitive with those of outside merchants. In addition, company stores were far more willing to extend credit to miners, even in times of economic crisis, than were outside merchants. This was, of course, because company stores could tap into miners' earnings for repayment, an option not available to non-company operations. Of the eighty or more labor actions that occurred on the Michigan ranges between 1855 and 1905, *none* involved complains about a company store. Complaints about company stores were also practically nonexistent in newspapers. A comment made by the editor of the Norway *Current* in 1902, prompted by the Penn Mining Company's divestiture of its stores, seems to be applicable to company stores generally on the Michigan iron ranges. The writer noted that Penn had conducted its stores in an "honorable and fair" manner, carrying numerous employees through sickness and trouble when other merchants could not or would not.[48]

Miners on Michigan iron ranges apparently did not have serious objections to their company's store, since its prices were usually competitive and they did not have to use it. But they probably still regarded it with suspicion simply because the company—with which they sometimes had issues—operated it. Iron Cliffs' agent, Alexander Maitland, noted that Iron Cliffs' store manager, E. S. Green, did "as well as any man we could probably put there," but he faced "the universal opposition and dislike to a company store which you will find wherever they are established and kept." Some of this discontent, he observed, came from the company's employees. The miners' discontent in this case may have been partly due to store manager Green's frequent (but unsuccessful) attempts to persuade company management to compel employees to use the company store. In a similar vein, an Escanaba newspaper in 1890 commented that a company store, "no matter how fairly it is managed," was generally considered a "pluck me," presumably cleaned up language for "fuck me."[49]

In 1887 the directors of the Iron Cliffs Company explained their decision to get out of the store business by noting that "continuing in the business invites an opposition which is pernicious."[50] As the previous paragraphs suggest, this "pernicious opposition" did not come from the company's miners. While perhaps suspicious of company stores, they accepted them for their convenience, credit policies, and very competitive prices. On the Michigan iron ranges the "perni-

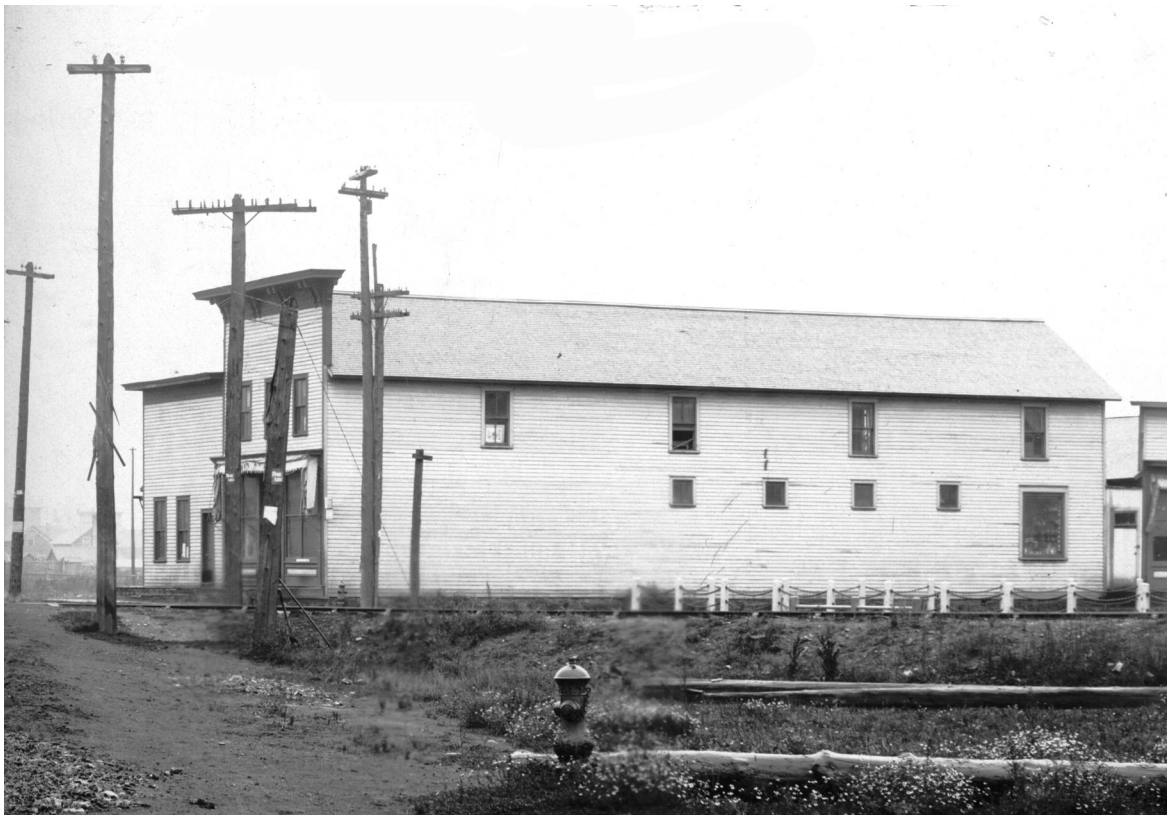
cious opposition" came not from the miners who used company stores, but from the merchants who competed against them.

Henry Mather, a Marquette businessman, provides an early example of a merchant's objection to company stores. He wrote in 1861 to his brother Samuel, then secretary of the Cleveland Iron Mining Company, warning that the operation of company stores, "with their advantages," inhibited business growth and real estate sales—"the population of this place will be small and but little realty will be sold." Alexander Maitland, Iron Cliffs' local agent, in an 1883 letter to the company's treasurer, noted that company stores were "a great source of trouble" because they caused "a great deal of opposition to the company." He noted, in particular, opposition from merchants, adding that private citizens and even "our own men" might feel "aggrieved in some way or another." Significantly, however, he listed merchants first. When Iron Cliffs quit the store business four years later merchants were jubilant. The editor of an Ishpeming paper observed that now "between the merchants and mining companies there exists the most friendly feeling." This was, the editor explained, due to "a total absence of company stores that have proved a great hindrance to the growth and success of any places on the peninsula where mining is the chief avocation. The pernicious system is [now] unknown in our town." The editor of a rival paper in Ishpeming agreed, arguing that the very friendly feelings between local merchants and the mining companies could be explained in part by the absence of company stores. When the Chapin Mine's store in Iron Mountain closed in 1886, the editor of a regional paper noted that local merchants would "hail with glee" its closing, because they had "always looked with disfavor on company stores." When the Penn Iron Mining Company got out of the store business in 1902, a local paper noted that its store had been "a source of much adverse comment by other merchants." These merchants, the paper noted, hoped to acquire the trade of the company store.[51]

Closing Company Stores

Because of miners' ambivalence—they used company stores but still suspected them—company stores had few strong or loyal supporters to balance the vociferous opposition of local merchants. This spelled their doom once they were no longer operational necessities. Thus, as Michigan mines were tied into the national rail network and as commercial centers with multiple independent, competitive commercial enterprises emerged in areas of high mining density, most Michigan iron mining companies got out of the company store business as quickly as possible. Local mine management, the group that might have influenced companies' boards of directors to keep company stores operating, offered little support. Managers seem to have regarded the stores as a distraction from the company's primary business: the mining, smelting, or both, of iron.[52]

The first wave of company store closings came soon after the mines on the Marquette Range were linked to the national rail network in 1873. The Morgan Iron Company closed its store in 1874. That same year, the Champion Iron Company's agent reported that he was shaving his store's inventory because "easy communication with Chicago" made it unnecessary to carry so large a stock. Two years later Champion rented the building to independent merchants, noting that this arrangement gave the company use of its money "for our legitimate business." The Republic Iron Company, which began production in 1872 on a rich but isolated pocket southwest of the main part of the Marquette Iron Range, opened a company store because it was "necessary for the convenience of the company and its employees." By 1875, however, the company had the store up for sale, seeking to be "without the annoyance and disadvantages incident to its continued prosecution by the Company." These were all traditional-pattern stores. Lease-pattern companies also took the opportunity to get out of the store business. In 1877 Cleveland Iron Mining Company's president,



The Chapin Mine's traditional-pattern store, c. 1895, about a decade after it had been sold to private interests. (Courtesy of the Menominee Range Historical Society, Iron Mountain, Michigan.)

Samuel Mather, urged his agent on the Marquette Range to get out of the store business completely, commenting: "I say keep clean of all complications, let us attend strictly to our mining, then no one can complain of us."[53]

Significantly, competitive-pattern stores escaped this first wave of company store closings, perhaps because their profits gave them some protection. However, the mid-1880s saw a second wave of closings, and this wave included several of the best run and most profitable company stores. In 1883 Alexander Maitland, local agent in charge of Iron Cliffs properties, wrote to the company's treasurer recommending closure of the Iron Cliffs Store, the best example of a competitive-pattern store on the iron ranges. He commented: "There was no doubt a necessity for our store when it was started but that necessity I think has ceased some years ago and I believe we ought now to follow the example of every corporation that has kept a store in this district and abolish ours." The company's management initially ignored Maitland's recommendation, either because they could not get a fair offer for the store or because the store's profits were too attractive. Subsequently, however, sales declined, dropping from around ten thousand dollars a month in 1882 to around five thousand to six thousand dollars monthly in 1887. In 1887, as the company prepared to move its offices from the floor above the store to a separate location, Maitland noted that the store was having trouble meeting expenses and "after the office is moved it certainly wont [*sic*]." The company's directors, undoubtedly influenced by collapsing profits, then decided to close the store, citing the existence of sufficient competition, the "pernicious" opposition company stores invited (presumably from the local business community), and the ex-

ample of the other regional mining companies. The *Negaunee Iron Herald* commented, however, that "many consumers" would "regret the loss of this establishment."[54]

By 1885 company stores begin closing down on the younger Menominee Range as well. Business directories, for example, suggest that the company stores in Quinnesec and Waucedah, which opened in the late 1870s, had closed by 1885.[55] The Menominee Mining Company had established a store near the Chapin Mine in 1879. As the town of Iron Mountain grew up adjacent to the mine, the company decided that the store was no longer necessary. It closed the store in 1886 and sold the building to private interests.[56]

One of the last holdouts on the Menominee Range was the Penn Mining Company, successor to the Menominee Mining Company. It inherited stores at Norway and Vulcan, the one at Norway likely of the competitive pattern. Only in July 1902 did the company finally divest itself of its stores, forming an independent company to operate them. The editor of Norway's paper commented: "This move marks the disappearance of the last of the so-called 'Company' stores in this peninsula [*sic*]."[57] Contrary to this assertion, a company store or two did exist after the Penn Mining Company got out of the business, but they were isolated exceptions.

Reassessing Company Stores

Too often in accounts of mining history, company stores are pictured as standardized entities focused primarily on fleecing miners. The record of company stores on upper Michigan's iron ranges suggests otherwise. Company stores were not homogenous entities; they were organized in at least four different ways. Unfortunately, both the quantity and quality of data on company stores on the Michigan iron ranges is too sparse for a detailed analysis of how these different patterns influenced operations. But a few tentative conclusions are possible. First, competitive-pattern stores were more likely to be sponsored by larger, well-financed mining companies, such as Iron Cliffs or the Penn Mining Company. Second, it is likely that most companies—including most large companies—operated traditional-pattern stores. If they operated meat markets, however, there was a good probability that they used the lease pattern for those operations. That was the case with the Jackson Iron Company at Fayette and the Menominee Iron Company at Vulcan. Third, companies sometimes jumped from one pattern of organization to another, depending on circumstances. The Cleveland Iron Mining Company, for example, inherited a traditional-pattern store located in the port city of Marquette when it purchased the Marquette Iron Company in 1853. It sold that store in 1855. As its mines expanded fifteen miles inland, it depended at first on an ad hoc store and then on lease-pattern stores. Fourth, evidence is insufficient to determine whether any particular pattern of company store was more or less acceptable to miners. Presumably they preferred a lease-, traditional-, or competitive-pattern store to an ad hoc store because of the wider variety of merchandise available, but beyond that evidence does not permit speculation. Fifth, companies with lease- or traditional-pattern stores tended to abandon them more quickly than companies with competitive-pattern stores. Two of the longest-lived company stores were competitive-pattern stores: both the Iron Cliffs Store at Negaunee and the Menominee/Penn Mining Company store at Norway lasted twenty years or more. The typical life of most traditional-pattern company stores in the Michigan iron fields seems to have been much shorter, typically five to ten years.

While company stores of all patterns had the central function of providing provisions to a mining company's employees, the stores could serve a variety of other functions. Some, such as controlling morals, are often mentioned in accounts of company stores since they fit the traditional picture of the store as a means of exploitation. However, as we have seen, company stores also

served a variety of other functions that previous accounts of company stores have often ignored. Some of these functions, such as serving as a currency buffer in regions short of specie and keeping local merchants from exploiting miners, were very important.

On Michigan's iron ranges, company stores were not generally viewed as exploiting miners or being overly manipulative, especially since, with few exceptions, miners were not compelled to use a company store and company store prices were competitive with or better than those of independent merchants. In fact, the "pernicious opposition" to company stores seems to have come primarily, if not entirely, from the region's merchants. Merchants likely viewed company stores as having "unfair" advantages. They were usually located closer to the mine and miners' housing. They had lower overhead, since their buildings were provided by the company and repaired by company crews. They likely had superior buying power thanks to their parent companies. They had greater ability to operate with minimal or no profit (if associated with a prosperous mine) and greater ability to grant and collect credit. These "unfair" advantages made regional merchants, not miners, the primary opposition to company stores.

Mining companies ultimately gained twofold when they got out of the store business. First, they were able to devote their resources entirely to mining, smelting or both, eliminating the financial and managerial distractions of store operations. Second, by getting out of the store business they insured that local business owners—no longer resentful of the competitive advantages possessed by the local company store—were far less likely to sympathize with labor over management in disputes. Companies no longer faced their "pernicious opposition."

Terry S. Reynolds is professor emeritus of history at Michigan Technological University. He has written numerous books and articles on various aspects of the history of technology, but his recent work has focused on the history of the Lake Superior iron district. His most recent book, with Virginia Dawson, is Iron Will: Cleveland-Cliffs and the Mining of Iron Ore, 1847-2006 *(Wayne State University Press, 2011).*

Notes:

1. Examples of the negative view of company stores are: Curtis Seltzer, *Fire in the Hole: Miners and Mangers in the American Coal Industry* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1985), 19, 21; David Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880-1922* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 10; John Meller, *The Company Store: James Bryson McLachian and the Cape Breton Coal Mines, 1900-1925* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Ltd., 1983), *passim*; Homer L. Morris, *Plight of the Bituminous Miner* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1934), 166-9; and Harold W. Aurand, *From the Molly Maguires to the United Mine Workers: The Social Ecology of an Industrial Union* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1971), 47f.
2. Examples of scholars taking a more benign view of company stores are: Larry D. Lankton, *Cradle to Grave: Life, Work, and Death at the Lake Superior Copper Mines* (New York: Oxford, 1991), 165-7; Elaine S. Tan, "Regulating Wages in Kind: Theory and Evidence from Britain," *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization* 22, no. 2 (Oct. 2006): 442-58; Gene Rhea Tucker, *Oysters, Macaroni, and Beer: Thurber, Texas, and the Company Store* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2012), *passim*; and Linda Carlson, *Company Towns of the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 101-14. Price V. Fishback, "Did Coal Miners 'Owe Their Souls to the Company Store'? Theory and Evidence from the Early 1900s," *Journal of Economic History* 46 (Dec. 1986): 1011-29, questions whether company stores were as bad as often pictured in the eastern bituminous mining districts.
3. Production statistics are from: William T. Hogan, *Economic History of the Iron and Steel Industry in the United States*, v. 1 (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1971), 20, 196. Hogan's figures are based on tons of iron ore and do not take into account the iron content of those ores. Because Michigan's ore contained up to fifty per cent more iron than the ores in most other regions, Hogan's figures moderately underrate Michigan's contribution to American iron production. For popular historical overviews of mining on the Michigan iron ranges see: Harlan Hatcher, *A Century of Iron and Men* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950) or Stewart H. Holbrook, *Iron Brew: A Century of American Ore and Steel* (New York: Macmillan, 1939), 1-82. For a more scholarly study see: Terry S. Reynolds and Virginia P. Dawson, *Iron Will: Cleveland-Cliffs and the Mining of Iron Ore, 1847-2006* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011).
4. According to "Negaunee," *Mining Journal* (Marquette, MI), 28 May 1870, the use of company stores to supply goods to company employees "was ... a plan ...carried out in all the mining locations."
5. The primary exception is the store of the Iron Cliffs Company in Negaunee. Some records from this store (a few legers and journals and correspondence from the store's manager) are in the very extensive Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company Collections (hereafter CCIC-C) of the Archives of Michigan, held by the Northern Michigan University Archives, Marquette, MI. The Cleveland-Cliffs Collections contain the records of several major mining companies. The relevant collections for this study include RG 65-37 (Iron Cliffs Company Papers-I); RG 66-36 (Iron Cliffs Company Papers-II), RG 68-102 (Iron Cliffs Company Papers-III), and MS 86-100 (Cleveland Iron Mining Company and Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company Papers). MS 86-100 also contains the papers of some smaller companies, including the Michigamme Iron Company and the Marquette Iron Company. Hereafter, I will cite the specific collection identifier followed by CCIC-C to refer to specific collections within the overall Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company Collections (e.g., MS 86-100, CCIC-C).
6. Champion Iron Company, *Report of the Treasurer to the Directors of the Champion Iron Company, for the year ending Dec. 31, 1874* (Boston: Rand, Avery, & Co., 1875), 4; *A Brief History of the Pittsburgh and Lake Superior Iron Company, January 1, 1883* (Pittsburgh, PA: [Pittsburgh and Lake Superior Iron Company], 1883), 18-19. "A Stranger's Impression of Marquette County," *Beard's Directory and History of Marquette County...* (Detroit: Hadger & Bryce, 1873), xi (comments generally on the need for a company store at isolated locations).
7. Urban centers emerged more slowly on the Marquette Range in part because the earliest iron mining companies were able to purchase the property around their mines and were reluctant to sell land for platting settlements. They began to do this only in the mid-1860s. Mining companies on the two younger ranges generally leased rather than owned their properties because timber companies and land speculators had purchased much of them before the ranges were opened to mining. These interests were not as resistant to selling land for platting town sites.
8. WEP [author], "The Mineral Peninsula," *Land and Water*, 23 Dec. 1882, 509-10.
9. "Gogebic: Its Unbounded Wealth," *The Herald* (Lake Geneva, WI), 23 Apr. 1886 (for Hurley); Roy Eckrose, *America's Gogebic Range: The Gogebic Iron Range of Upper Michigan and Northern Wisconsin* (Saxon, WI: Exploration Press, 1994), 52 (for Bessemer).
10. The Menominee Range had more company stores than the Gogebic probably because it covered a more dispersed area and various segments opened over a

wider spread of years, both factors that contributed to more isolated mines.

11. Quote from R. Nelson to [indecipherable], 14 Dec. 1859, Folder: "CIMC, Correspondence from Marquette, 1860-1863, Agency at Marquette, Letters, 1860," Item 2724, MS 86-100, CCIC-C. See also: Henry Mather to Samuel L. Mather, 1 Nov. 1861, Folder 614, Container 70, MS 4578, William Gwinn Mather Family Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, OH [hereafter WGMFP], and H. B. Tuttle to G. O. Williams & Co., Detroit, 10 July 1860, Item 2432, MS 86-100, CCIC-C.
12. A letter from the Cleveland Iron Mining Company's agent in December 1867 implies that the Jackson Iron Mining Company had a company store (Jay C. Malone to Samuel L. Mather, 22 Dec. 1867, Item 2434, MS 86-100, CCIC-C). No surviving evidence indicates that the Jackson Company ever erected a distinct store building.
13. [Short note], *Mining Journal*, 19 July 1893.
14. *Mineral Hills Golden Jubilee Historical Album* (Ishpeming, MI: Globe Printing, 1968), 64.
15. "Agreement, May 1, 1855, between Cleveland Iron Mining Company and Peter White and brother of Marquette," Folder: "Papers 1854-1855," Box 1, Peter White Papers, Bentley Research Library, Ann Arbor, MI [hereafter PWP].
16. Lake Superior Iron Company, "Lake Superior Iron Mines Daybooks, Journal," Oct. 8, 1858-Nov. 30, 1859, and *ibid.,* Nov. 1, 1859-Dec. 30, 1861, A-84-485, Iron Range Research Center, Chisholm, MN (See, for example, the entries for 8 and 14 Oct. 1858; 9 Nov. 1858; and 10 Nov. 1859); Lake Superior Iron Company, "Annual Report for 1864," handwritten, Folder 13: "Lake Superior Iron Company," Box 3, Burt Papers, J. M. Longyear Research Library, Marquette, MI [hereafter LRL].
17. Sarah Cowie, *The Plurality of Power: An Archaeology of Industrial Capitalism* (New York, Dordrecht, London: Springer, 2011), 67-8; Thomas Friggens, "Fayette: 1867-1891, Economic and Cultural Origins, Development and Decline of a Michigan Company Town" (master's thesis, Wayne State University, 1973), 41-3.
18. *Dickinson Diggings: The Quarterly Publication of the Dickinson County Genealogical Society* 24, no. 3 (Aug. 2005): 1. Quote from *The Current* (Norway, MI), 14 Aug. 1886. The Vulcan store is described in more detail in: Marcia LeMire, *Vulcan 1920 Revisited: The Charlotte Armstrong Festival 2008* (n.p.: the author, 2008), 15-16.
19. Jay C. Malone to John Outhwaite, 27 Mar. 1867, Item 2434, MS 86-100, CCIC-C (no poorer store building); "Marquette County . . . for 1867," *Lake Superior Mining Journal* (Marquette, MI), 1 Feb. 1868 ("best company store building in the county"). The *Mining Journal* ("The Cleveland Mines," 8 Oct. 1868) noted that, leased by B. W. Wright, the new store was doing $85,000 a year in business.
20. From a contract between the Jackson Iron Company and George W. Harris, 1 Oct. 1878, at Fayette State Park, MI, cited by Friggens, "Fayette: 1867-1891," 44, and by Cowie, *Plurality of Power*, 67.
21. Plans for the Iron Cliffs Store are in Folder 42: "Iron Cliffs-Store, 1866-1867," Box 2, RG 86-22, Archives of Michigan, Lansing, MI. RG 86-22 is titled "Jackson Iron Company, Fayette Operations, 1866-1892." It is not clear why a file on the Iron Cliffs Store is found in a record group focusing on the Jackson Iron Company's Fayette operations.
22. E. S. Green to James Rood, 10 June 1868, Folder 4: "Letters Out by E. S. Green, 1867-1869," Box 60, RG 68-102, CCIC-C (sharp competition from Jews); Green to Wm. H. Barnum, 3 Feb. 1871, Folder 3: "Letters Out from E. S. Green, Aug. 1869-Nov. 1871," Box 39, *ibid.* (competition "purely awful"); Green to Barnum, 11 Jan. 1872, Folder 2: "Letters from Supts, 1872-1874," Box 41, *ibid.* ("selling more in proportion"); Green to Barnum, 19 Jan. 1874, *ibid.* ("sickest lot"); A. P. Swineford, *Annual Review of the Iron Mining and Other Industries of the Upper Peninsula for the Year Ending Dec. 1880* (Marquette: *Mining Journal*, 1881), 80. For other examples of correspondence referring to competition between the Iron Cliffs store and outside merchants see: Green to Rood, 25 July 1870, and Green to H. Benedict, 16 Jan. 1871, Folder 3 "Letters Out from E. S. Green, Aug. 1869-Nov. 1871," Box 39, RG 68-102, CCIC-C. Green frequently capitalized common nouns; his capitalizations have been retained in quotations.
23. "Range Items," *Iron Port* (Escanaba, MI), 22 May 1880; "A New Corporation," *Current*, 14 June 1902. Mining companies operating competitive stores had to be concerned that such operations were not authorized by their charters, leaving them open to legal action. For this concern see: C. J. Canda to Alexander W. Maitland, 24 June 1882, v. 20: "Iron Cliffs, letters from C. J. Canda, Treas., Jan-Dec. 1882," RG 66-36, CCIC-C. Also: Canda to Maitland, 4 Sept. 1883, and W. P. Healy to Maitland, 15 Sep. 1883, v. 21: "Iron Cliffs, Letters by Canda, July 1883-May 1884," *ibid*.
24. On the difficulty of supplying the region with currency see: *United States v. Isham* 84 U.S. 496 (1873); Peter White's testimony in the Supreme Court of the United States, No. 476, U.S. vs. E. B. Isham, filed 5 Dec. 1871, 8-14 (transcript of testimony) in LRL. Fishback ("Did Coal Miners Owe Their Souls," 1015-16) notes that, in isolated areas of the eastern bituminous coal region possessing few banks, the cost of obtaining, protecting, and holding currency—since at the time cash payments rather than checks were the norm—encouraged the use of scrip.
25. H. B. Tuttle to Samuel L. Mather, 1 Oct. 1859, Item 2432, MS 86-100, CCIC-C ("there is little currency here"); see also: Tuttle to Mather, 6 Oct. 1859, *ibid.*;

Robert Nelson to Mather, 17 June 1861, *ibid.* ("no fives to change"); see also: Nelson to Mather, 9 Aug. 1861, *ibid.*; and Jay C. Malone to Mather, 12 Dec. 1867, Item 2434, MS 86-100, CCIC-C (bank has "no currency of any kind").

26. E. S. Green to Ira M. Davis & Co., 7 Oct. 1873, and Green to Heath & Durand, 7 Oct. 1873, Folder 2: "Letters from Supts, 1872-1874," Box 41, RG 68-102, CCIC-C; Jacob Houghton to William Barnum, 4 Oct. 1873, Item 2724, MS 86-100, CCIC-C. See also: Houghton to James Rood, 8 June 1874, Item 2725, MS 86-100, CCIC-C ("Greenbacks are now very scarce here").
27. For the wide acceptance of "iron money" by merchants see, for example: E. S. Green to Home Office, N.W.M. Life Insurance Co., 13 Nov. 1873, Folder 2: "Letters Out Supt. E. S. Green, 1872-1874," Box 41, RG 68-102, CCIC-C ("We never have any national currency here and all the diffnt [*sic*] companies issuing their own money its always been customary to receive it here in payment of all dues."). See also: *United States v. Isham* 84 U.S. 496 (1873).
28. Jacob Houghton to William Barnum, 4 Oct. 1873, Item 2724, MS 86-100, CCIC-C; "Negaunee," *Mining Journal*, 18 Apr. 1874.
29. Jay C. Malone to Samuel L. Mather, 20 Dec. 1867, Item 2434, MS 86-100, CCIC-C. See also: Malone to Mather, 22 Dec. 1867, *ibid*., and T. B. Brooks to Edmund H.. Miller, 6 Dec. 1867, Folder 11: "Letters In from T. B. Brooks, VP, Iron Cliffs, 1866-68," Box 4, RG 65-37, CCIC-C. The Pittsburgh & Lake Angeline Mining Co., New York Iron Mining Co., and Cleveland Iron Mining Co. eventually decided to continue paying by the month at reduced rates, see: Malone to Mather, 29 Dec. 1867, and 6 Jan. 1868, Item 2434, MS 86-100, CCIC-C.
30. Malone to Mather, 25 Jan. 1867, Item 2434, MS 86-100, CCIC-C.
31. For example: Jacob Houghton (Michigamme Co.) to James Rood, 3 Dec. 1873, Item 2724, MS 86-100, CCIC-C.
32. "Negaunee," *Mining Journal*, 24 April 1875.
33. "Vulcan," *Current*, 2 Sept. 1893; "Among the Iron Mines," *Iron Trade Review,* 26 (7 Sep. 1893): 7.
34. For Green's travels to procure merchandise and other techniques for securing goods see: "Reform in Trade," *Iron Herald* (Negaunee, MI), 29 Mar. 1877; Clarence J. Thoren, "Shades of Old Negaunee: A 19th Century History of Negaunee, Michigan," unpublished typewritten manuscript, 1969, 322, VF 251, Northern Michigan University Archives, Marquette, MI; E. S. Green to William H. Barnum, 19 Jan. 1874, Folder 2: "Letters Out Supt E. S. Green, 1872-1874," Box. 41, RG 68-102, CCIC-C; and Green to Barnum, 4 May 1871, Folder 3: "Letters Out from E. S. Green, Aug 1869-Nov. 1871," Box 39, *ibid*. For the quote on Green buying goods at lower [emphasis his] prices see: Woodard & Stone, Watertown, WI, to C. J. Canda, 17 Feb. 1876, Folder 1: "Letters by Canda 1876," Box 2, RG 65-37A, CCIC-C. Surviving Green correspondence with merchants also suggests that he bargained hard.
35. Fishback ("Did Coal Miners Owe Their Souls," 1015) cites these as reasons company stores persisted even after independent stores were available in the bituminous coal mining region of Appalachia. T. Egleston ("Copper Mining on Lake Superior," *Transactions, American Institute of Mining Engineers* 6 (1877-1878): 279) notes that company store accounts were secured by the company to the store in the nearby copper mining region and had preference over all other debts owned by the men. Samuel L. Mather to J. C. Morse, 16 Nov. 1877, Item. 2780, MS 86-100, CCIC-C, indicates that the Cleveland Iron Mining Company collected debts owned by miners to its leased-pattern store.
36. *History of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan . . .* (Chicago: Western Historical Co., 1883), 459, reports the $150,000 average but notes that the store had sold as much as $240,000 in a year. The *Mining Journal* ("Negaunee," 21 Oct. 1871) reported that the Iron Cliffs Company Store was "a very large establishment" doing an annual business of not less than $200,000, but this was in the very prosperous early 1870s.
37. "Annual Report to President and Directors of the Washington Iron Company for 1869," Folder: "Papers Jan-June 1870," Box 1, PWP; "Annual Report to President and Directors of the Washington Iron Company for 1872," Folder: "Papers Jan-June 1873," ibid. See also the 1866 annual report in Folder: "Papers, Jan.-June 1867," *ibid*.
38. Jay C. Malone to John Outhwaite, 16 Apr. 1867, Item 2792, MS 86-100, CCIC-C; Champion Iron Company, *Report of the Treasurer to the Directors of the Champion Iron Company, for the year ending Dec. 31, 1874* (Boston: Rand, Avery, & Co., 1875), 4; *Brief History of the Pittsburgh and Lake Superior Iron Company*, 18-19. For P&LS see also: *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Mineral Statistics of the State of Michigan for 1880* (Lansing: W. G. George & Co., 1881), 199 (goods furnished "at as low a cost to them as they can procure those articles elsewhere"; goods secured "at the lowest possible price").
39. For Quinnsec see: *First Annual Report of the Commissioner of Mineral Statistics of the State of Michigan for 1877-8 and Previous Years* (Marquette: Mining Journal Steam Printing House, 1879), 123. For Vulcan see: Swineford, *Annual Review of Iron Mining for 1880*, 141. For Palms-Anvil see: "Housing Report for Mining Properties of Oglebay-Norton & Co., August 1921," 27, Montreal Mining Company Records, 1921-1931, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, WI. For Yale see: "Yale Iron Mine,"

Skillings Mining Review 8, no. 17 (13 Sep. 1919): 11. For the Montreal Mining Company see: "New Club Building Recently Opened on the Gogebic Range," *ibid.*, 8, no. 8 (12 July 1919): 9. For the Lake Angeline Miners see: [Short note], *Iron Ore* (Ishpeming, MI), 11 Nov. 1893. According to Egleston ("Copper Mining," 279) company stores in the Upper Peninsula's copper mining region also kept their prices low and competitive.

40. E. S. Green to James Rood, 25 July 1870, Folder 3 "Letters Out from E. S. Green, Aug. 1869-Nov. 1871," Box 39, RG 68-102, CCIC-C (for Negaunee merchants raising prices). Alexander Maitland to C. J. Canda, 16 Sep. 1883, attached to C. J. Canda to Wm. H. Barnum, 22 Sep. 1883, v. 21, "Iron Cliffs, Letters by Canda, July 1883-May 1884," RG 66-36, CCIC-C ("no competition at Negaunee"); Iron Cliffs Co., "Annual Statement of the Iron Cliffs Company for the year ending November 30, 1887," handwritten, Historical Files cabinet, Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company office, Cleveland, OH ("adequate competition"). Fishback ("Did Miners Owe Their Souls," 1016) comments on the role of company stores in providing a check on potentially abusive practices by independent merchants in the eastern bituminous coal mining regions; Larry Lankton (*Cradle to Grave*, 165-6, and *Hollowed Ground: Copper Mining and Community Building on Lake Superior, 1840s-1990s* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 171) does the same for Michigan's copper mining region.
41. For the Pioneer Iron Co. see: C. T. Harvey to Wm. Pearsall, 11 June 1859, Folder 38, Pioneer Iron Company Papers, LRL. For Fayette see: "Fayette," *Mining Journal*, 6 Nov. 1869; Friggins, "Fayette: 1867-1891," 49-50; and Cowie, *Plurality of Power,* 72-3. For Quinnesec see: Mary Louise Dulan, *Our Frontier Days on the Menominee Range* (Iron Mountain, MI: Keep Michigan Beautiful, Inc., 1973), 37, 42. For Vulcan see: "The Menominee Ranger," *Mining Journal*, 5 July 1879. More broadly, Henry R. Mather (in a letter to Samuel L. Mather, 1 Nov. 1861, Folder 614, Container 70, MS 4578, WGMFP) indicates that a number of mining companies were "anxious to keep liquor away from the men."
42. Two examples of drinking establishments emerging just beyond company-controlled properties are (1) the emergence of the village of New Swanzy, filled with saloons, near Cleveland-Cliffs' company town of Gwinn, where only one saloon was allowed (Clyde Trudgen and Cordella Trudgen, *Forty-Eight Years in the Iron Mines* (Marquette, MI: the authors, 1980), 17) and (2) the appearance of saloons just beyond company property near the Jackson Iron Company's town of Fayette, where no alcohol could be sold (Cowie, *Plurality of Power,* 72-5). For the Cleveland Iron Mining Company's consideration of alcohol sales see: Jay Malone to Samuel L. Mather, 3 Apr. 1867, Item 2792, MS 86-100, CCIC-C. For Gwinn see: Brideson Wills, "Early Day Business Area," *Diamond Jubilee of the Founding of the Village of Gwinn and Gwinn High School, 1908-1983* (Gwinn, MI: n.p., 1983), non-paginated. For Gladstone see: Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company, "Agents' Annual Reports and Statistics," 1904, v. 1, pt. 7, 37, Item 2077, MS 86-100, CCIC-C; and William G. Mather, MS speech, 23 May 1904, 3, Folder 34, Container 4, MSS 4578, WGMFP.
43. E. S. Green to Wm. H. Barnum, 3 Feb. 1871, Folder 3: "Letters Out from E. S. Green, Aug. 1869-Nov. 1871," Box 39, RG 68-102, CCIC-C (not encouraging employees; "pets of Mr. Isham"); E. S. Green to Wm. H. Barnum, 13 Aug. 1872, Folder 2: "Letters Out from E. S. Green, 1872-1874," Box 41, RG 68-102, CCIC-C ("not drinking to such excess"). The other examples of Green's reports on company affairs are all in Green's correspondence in Folder 2: "Letters Out from E. S. Green, 1872-1874," Box 41, RG68-102, CCIC-C. See also: Green to Canda, 2 Feb. 1869, Folder 4: "Letters Out by E. S. Green, 1867-1869," Box 60, *ibid*.
44. Discussions of who supported the new county are in: "The Lake Superior Region," *Chicago Tribune*, 22 Feb. 1867; Peter B. Barbeau Diary, 14 Feb. and 22 Mar. 1867, Manuscript Collection, LRL; Jay Malone to Samuel L. Mather, 29 Mar., 30 Mar., and 3 Apr. 1867, Item 2792, MS 86-100, CCIC-C.
45. Jay C. Malone to Samuel L. Mather, 3 Apr. and 11 Apr. 1867, Item 2792, MS 86-100, CCIC-C; Malone to John Outhwaite, 9 Mar. 1867, and Malone to Mather, 20 Feb. 1867, Item 2434, MS 86-100, CCIC-C.
46. That local tradition was *not* to compel miners to shop in company stores is evidenced by a February 1868 letter to a local newspaper. The anonymous writer complained about being required by employers to pay for a physician not of his or her choice, but, the writer noted, "if we do not want to buy pork or flour at the company store, we can get them at some other place, without the company having anything to say about it." ("Letter from Remonstrator to the Editor of the News," *Lake Superior Mining & Manufacturing News* (Negaunee, MI), 13 Feb. 1868.) For a similar statement about Vulcan mine employees being able to buy where they wished see: Swineford, *Annual Review of Iron Mining for 1880*, 141. For not letting employees buy even whiskey at Negaunee see: Jay C. Malone to Samuel L. Mather, 3 Apr. 1867, Item 2792, MS 86-100, CCIC-C. For the quote about the "miserable fellows at Negaunee," see: Peter White to Samuel L. Mather, 4 Apr. 1867, Box 26 (Letterbook, 10 Nov. 1864 to 6 Apr. 1867), PWP.
47. The only published accounts of the rise and fall of Washington County are: LeRoy Barnett, "The County That Disappeared," *Michigan History* 65, no. 3 (May/June, 1981): 6; and Burton H. Boyum, "Washington

County," *Harlow's Wooden Man* 21, no. 3 (Sum. 1985): 5. See also: "Washington County, Lake Superior, Michigan, 1867," Works Progress Administration Michigan Historical Records Survey, Sixth District, 1936, pamphlet file, LRL.

48. Scattered reports from the manager of the Iron Cliffs store to corporate headquarters in New York indicate the importance of credit sales. Over 90 percent of the store's business was done on credit. See, for example: E. S. Green to C. J. Canda, 5 June 1868, 6 Dec. 1868, and 16 Apr. 1869, Folder 4: "Letters Out by E. S. Green, 1867-1869," Box 60, RG 68-102, CCIC-C. See also: *Current*, 14 June 1902. For an account of labor conflicts in the period see: Terry S. Reynolds, "Calm or Conflicted: Labor-Management Relations on the Michigan Iron Ranges, 1855-1904," *Michigan Historical Review* 33, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 1-45. The two letters critical of company stores that I have discovered in local newspapers were likely written by merchants rather than miners. An anonymous letter to the editor of the *Mining Journal* ("Negaunee," 21 Mar. 1874) accused the Iron Cliffs Co. of dominating Negaunee and of compelling its employees to trade at the company store by issuing its own currency. The writer called Iron Cliffs "more illiberal, more selfish and more penuriously grasping than any other corporation or firm . . . in the county." However, Iron Cliffs "iron money" *was* accepted by other merchants and the local bank. Moreover, while the manager of the Iron Cliffs store periodically pushed management to compel Iron Cliffs employees to trade at the company store, management did not follow his recommendation. And because the store actively, and successfully, competed for business with independent merchants, the prices it charged had to remain competitive. A very disjointed letter, almost certainly written by a merchant, appeared in the *Ishpeming Iron Agitator* ([Letter to the editor from "Wendel"], 12 Feb. 1881) complaining that Menominee Mining Company officials, in order to get back at him, issued orders to their workmen to patronize only the company store. The quote about "honorable and fair manner" is from: "A New Corporation," *Current*, 14 June 1902. The same editorial notes that the company store often sold building materials to company employees at cost.
49. Maitland to Canda, 16 Sep. 1883 ("as well as any man"); "Around the Country," *Iron Port*, 16 Aug. 1890 ("pluck me").
50. "Annual Statement of the Iron Cliffs Company," 1887 ("opposition which is pernicious").
51. Henry R. Mather to Samuel L. Mather, 1 Nov. 1861, Folder 614, Container 70, MS 4578, WGMFP ("with their advantages"); Maitland to Canda, 16 Sep. 1883 ("great source of trouble") [The same letter is also found in Folder 1: "Letters by A. W. Maitland, March 1883-June 1884," Box 58, RG68-102, CCIC-C]; "Ishpeming," *Iron Ore*, 31 Dec. 1887 ("most friendly feeling"); [Short note], *Daily Iron Agitator* (Ishpeming, MI), 31 Dec. 1887 (rival paper in Ishpeming); "Vulcan Mites," *Current*, 27 Mar. 1886 (merchants will "hail with glee"; "always looked with disfavor"); "A New Corporation," *Current*, 14 June 1902 ("much adverse comment").
52. For instance, William Barnum, the president of the Iron Cliffs Company for about two decades, opposed company stores, but apparently stayed in the store business, in part, because he could not find a merchant who would buy the company store for what he thought it was worth. (More Anon., "A Response [letter to the editor]," *Iron Herald*, 26 Mar. 1874.) Iron Cliffs' local manager, Alexander Maitland, pushed to get the store sold shortly after taking his position.
53. "Local News," *Iron Herald*, 10 Dec. 1874, for Morgan Iron; Champion Iron Company, *Report of the Treasurer to the Directors of the Champion Iron Company, for the year ending Dec. 31, 1874* (Boston: Rand, Avery, & Co., 1875), 4; Champion Iron Company, *Report of the Treasurer to the Directors and Stockholders of the Champion Iron Company for the Year Ending Dec. 31, 1876 (*Boston: Rand, Avery, & Co., 1877), 7; Republic Iron Co., *Articles of Association, By-Laws, Etc., of The Republic Iron Company* (Cleveland: Sanford & Co. 1875), 15; Samuel L. Mather to J. C. Morse, 16 Nov. 1877, Item 2780, MS 86-100, CCIC-C.
54. Maitland to Canda, 16 Sept. 1883 ("no doubt a necessity"); Iron Cliffs store sales averages based on correspondence in Folder 5: "Letters Out by E. S. Green, 1880-1887," Box 60, RG 68-102, CCIC-C (see, for instance: E. S. Green to Alexander Maitland, 2 May1882, and 3 Nov. 1887); Alexander Maitland to C. J. Canda, 6 Sep. 1887, Folder 2: "Letters by A. W. Maitland, Dec. 1886-Dec. 1887," Box 58, RG 68-102, CCIC-C ("after the office is moved"); "Annual Statement of the Iron Cliffs Company" (directors close store) [see also: [Short item on p. 5], *Iron Herald*, 24 Nov. 1887]; "To Close," *Iron Herald*, 22 Dec. 1887 ("many consumers" will "regret the loss").
55. R. L. Polk & Co., *Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory* (Detroit: R. L. Polk & Co., 1879, 1881, 1885). The Polk directories for 1879 and 1881 indicate that the Quinnesec Mine had a company store, but no listing for the store appears in the 1885 directory. The 1881 listing for the Emmet Mine in Waucedah, Michigan, indicates a company store, but no store is indicated in the 1885 directory.
56. Entries for Quinnesec and Waucedah in: Polk, *Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory*, 1879, 1881, 1885; "Vulcan Mites," *Current*, 27 Mar. 1886, for the closing of the Chapin store.
57. "A New Corporation," *Current*, 14 June 1902.