

Ishpeming

**Area
Historical
Society &
Museum**

WINTER 2021

Edited by
Karen Kasper

This Past Summer

Usually in this space, we recap all of our summer activities. Since this was the summer of 2020, we had no activities, due to the coronavirus. We are hoping that next summer will be different and that we will be able to once again host the Historic Places and Interesting Spaces tour, present our summer cemetery tours, introduce our Main Street tour and open our doors to visitors.

Congratulations

Congratulations to board member Elizabeth Firby on her election to the Ishpeming City Council. She has done a great job for us during the time she has been on the board and we know she will be an excellent member of the council.

And we have a winner

Board vice president and editor of this newsletter, Karen Kasper, was awarded the 2020 Distinguished Volunteer Service award by the Historical Society of Michigan. This is a highly competitive award. Karen was nominated by Daniel Truckey, director of the Beaumier Upper Peninsula Heritage Center as she has been a volunteer there for seven years now. Karen also volunteers at the Central Upper Peninsula and Northern Michigan University archives as well as the Cliffs Shaft Mine Museum in Ishpeming. She also contributes to the Historically Speaking column published in the Mining Journal each week.



Picture courtesy of the Cliffs Shaft Mine Museum, Leo LaFond collection

Ishpeming Area Historical Society Board

President— David Aeh
Vice President— Karen Kasper
Secretary— Sue Boback
Treasurer— Sandee Smetana
Trustees—Jodi Firby, David
White, and Elizabeth Firby

The Trouble-shooter, Ishpeming's Favorite Son

By David Lee White
IAHS Board Member

John Donaldson Voelker was born in Ishpeming, Michigan in 1903 to George and Annie (Traver) Voelker. John's mother, a music teacher, instilled in her son a love of music, literature and encouraged him to pursue higher education. Upon graduating from Ishpeming High School in 1922, John attended Northern Michigan Normal School in Marquette where he received a Teaching Certificate in 1924. He applied to, and was accepted by the University of Michigan Law School, graduating with a law degree four years later in 1928. *A Lawyer Graduates*, a story John wrote that was intended for, but did not make the final cut for his first published book, *Trouble-shooter, The Story of a Northwood's Prosecutor*, tells us that in March of his last year in law school, he attended a dance where he met and fell in love with Grace Taylor of Oak Park, Illinois. Three months later, he graduated from Law School, a great accomplishment for the young man from Ishpeming. John's greatest accomplishment however, before returning to his home town, was to convince Grace Taylor to accept his marriage proposal, he returned home with a law degree and an engagement.

John's first job upon returning home was as assistant to the Marquette county prosecutor, Clarence Lott, who had an office above the Negaunee State Bank on the corner of Iron and Silver Streets in Negaunee. His function for the prosecutor was to handle the cases in the then widely scattered justice courts in Marquette County. While traveling throughout Michigan's largest county in what John referred to as his "mortgaged Model A", he had begun collecting the memories that would eventually fill the pages of his autobiographical narratives and novels. After two years of rambling around Marquette County performing his duties as the assistant prosecuting attorney, John and Grace were married on August 2, 1930 at the Sequanota Club on Lake Charlevoix near Charlevoix, Michigan where Grace's parents had a summer home. The newly married couple made their home near Chicago and for three years John worked for a private law firm in the city. After the tragic death of their 18-month-old first-born son, Robert Traver Voelker, in Oak Park, Illinois on June 8, 1933, John and Grace moved to Ishpeming where John began a private law practice and entered the race for Marquette County Prosecutor, a race he won late in 1934.



John's passion for the written word, and what must have been a strong desire to supplement his income, if not make a living as an author, had a beginning with the short story titled *Iron* which was published in the February-March 1934 issue of *The American Scene* magazine. By 1941, John had at least 6 short stories published in small circulation American magazines under the pen name Robert

Traver. John had also been working on a full-length book which had the working title, *Country Prosecutor*. This manuscript, which was autobiographical in nature, consisted of stories of John's family, unusual characters, and for the most part, legal cases he was involved in as an assistant prosecuting attorney and as the Marquette County Prosecutor. On July 29, 1941 John sent the draft manuscript for *Country Prosecutor* to Modern Age Books for their consideration. Modern Age Books took their time considering the manuscript and

on October 22, 1941 sent a telegram to John stating *"Book now read by everyone. All agree shows real promise. But feel considerable revision necessary. We should therefore welcome opportunity to discuss changes with you on understanding that commitment to publish must follow satisfactory revision."* By the end of 1941, after what would amount to a series of long, and for John, exhausting revisions, he had the good news that Modern Age Books had all but decided to publish the manuscript under a new working title, *Prosecutor U.S.A.* In a letter dated December 22, 1941 John tells the Modern Age Books editor, Elliott McDowell that their possible publication of the manuscript would be *"as fine a Christmas present as I could receive."* In a letter dated February 7, 1942, David Zablodowsky of Modern Age Books informed John that finally, they had decided to publish the book. In his reply dated two days later, John's first paragraph states *"I am naturally pleased no end you have decided to take on the book. It is a heady feeling, not unmingled with something akin to dismay, this being informed one has become an author. Your formally asking me to let you publish my book enchants me. It is like Hedy Lamarr asking if she could spend the night with me. You may and she may."*

Modern Age Books had scheduled the publication date for September, 1942 and included the book in their Fall list under the new title *Northwoods Prosecutor*. Then came the Western Union telegram dated September 5, 1942 with bad, and good news. Due to staff at Modern Age Books responding to the call of service for the war effort, Modern Age Books folded. However, due to the strength and quality of the final manuscript, the editors at Modern Age Books cleared the way for The Viking Press, a much larger firm, to take on *Northwoods Prosecutor* for publication. A telegram from The Viking Press dated September 24, 1942 confirmed that Viking had decided to add the book to their list and they would publish John's first book in early 1943.

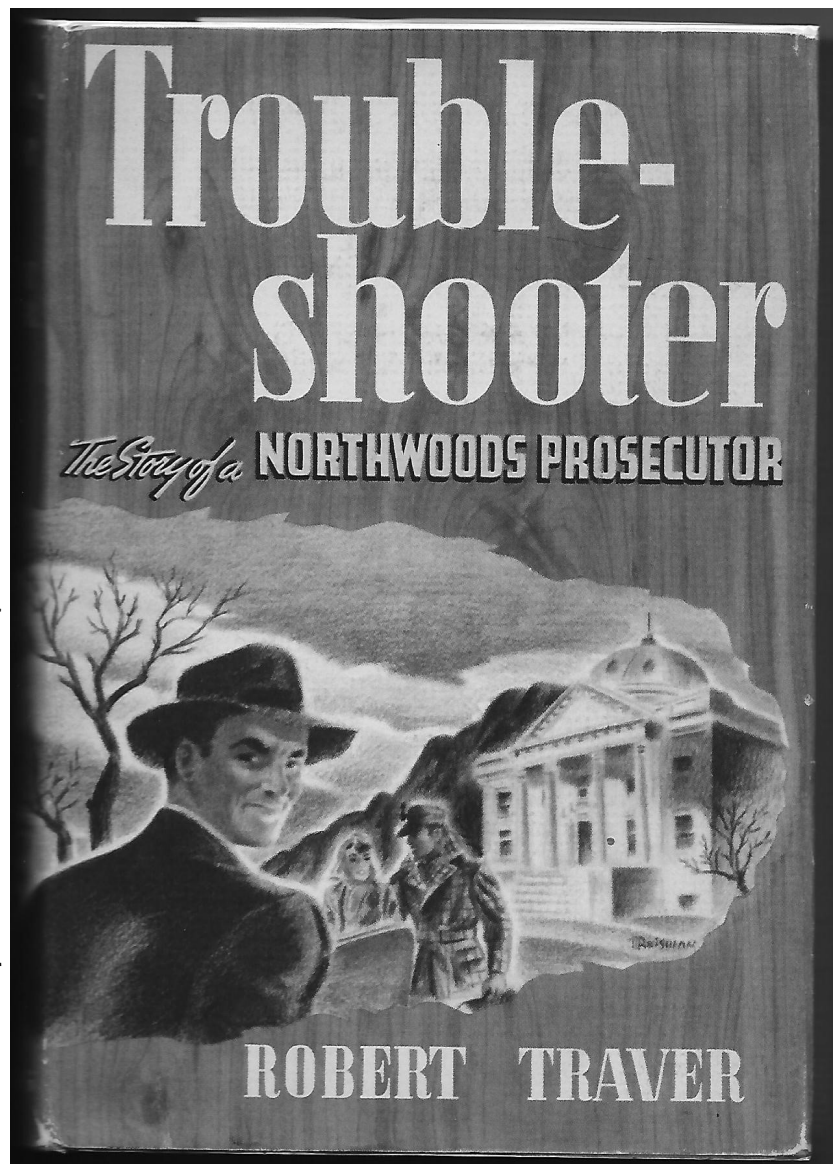
The opening line of a letter John wrote to Marshall A. Best, editor of The Viking Press and dated November 5, 1942 exclaimed *"Your Northwoods Prosecutor is a dead duck!"* John continued *"The east wind of November 3 blew an aroma of Ham and Fish far inland from the Atlantic – and Marquette County returned to its traditional Republican 'normalcy'"*. John had been elected as Marquette County prosecutor 8 years earlier as a Democrat, the surprising Republican gains in the 1942 mid-term election had reached the Upper Peninsula and booted the "Northwoods Prosecutor" from his post by a narrow margin. What to John must have been a surprise loss of his occupation stirred him to begin a long letter the following day to Marshall A. Best with a poem, *"As a doctor a day keeps the apples away, So a letter a day may hold ennui at bay."* In the same letter, John suggested that Viking restore his initial opening chapter, *A Lawyer Graduates*, a chapter that was dear to his heart, that Modern Age Books had cut, along with additional content for the forward. One gets a sense from the tone of the letter that John was anxious to get his literary career rolling. After consideration, Viking thought, as Modern Age Books had, that if *A Lawyer Graduates* was included as the first chapter, it would lean the book toward a "formal autobiography" which was not their intention, so with John's grudging agreement, it was again left out.

Before the end of 1942, Viking was to propose another major change for the book, namely the title. Marshall A. Best sent John a telegram with the suggestion that the title be changed to *Trouble-shooter, The Story of a Northwoods Prosecutor*. The telegram ended with *"Please take deep breath and wire"*. After 17 months of revisions and disappointment followed by hope, John received a letter from Viking dated January 11, 1943, announcing the publication date of February 15, 1943. John responded to the news of the publication date 4 days later with *"Life may begin at forty, but skiing ends at thirty-nine. 'Troubleshooter' had languished at home for the past week with a fine new set of crutches, the victim of a beautiful sprained*

ankle. Your letter was as good as a pilgrimage to Lourdes. (The Lourde help me, my puns are getting worse and Werfel!) This morning I arose, flung my crutches down the stairs, and soberly stalked to my office. That was your good deed for the week."

In late January, Viking sent their newest author ten copies of the newly bound and printed *Trouble-shooter*. John expressed his delight to his editor, Marshall A. Best *"I cannot begin to tell you how enchanted I am with the physical get-up of the book. I like everything about – the design and binding and printing – and Grace and I are in love with Monroe Reisman's painting on the jacket."* A couple weeks earlier John had a hint of the dust wrapper artwork from an ad in *The Retail Bookseller*, in a letter to Best, he praised the depiction of the Marquette County courthouse and the portrayal of the "Northwoods Prosecutor" on the front cover, *"He (the artist) even contrived to catch Voelker's lean and cynical smirk."* The colorful dust wrapper art also includes "Old Ish", the large statue of an Ojibwa Indian in the town square, an iron miner and his companion, along with a couple businessmen all set in a "Hematite" downtown scene.

For the next few months, when John had time away from his private law practice, he traveled around the Upper Peninsula to autograph copies of his book at drug stores, bookstores and *"the establishments of local purveyors of nostrums and rubber goods."* In early March, John had the opportunity to appear at J. L. Hudson's in Detroit to autograph copies of *Trouble-shooter*. He told his editors, *"Inasmuch as they didn't say anything about paying my expenses, and I understand the trout fishing is very poor in the Detroit River, I am declining their kind offer."* John would be re-elected as the Marquette County prosecutor late in 1944, the publication of his first book was timely as it came at a time of emotional and financial need. The Viking Press published *Trouble-shooter, The Story of a Northwood's Prosecutor* in February 1943 with a print run of 7,500 copies in the first edition. High initial public demand for the first edition spurred Viking to publish a second printing only a month later in March. John Donaldson Voelker had begun his literary career.



100 Years Ago

Will Find Jobs for Ex-Fighters

The employment committee of Albert V. Braden Post, American Legion, is making a survey among ex-service men to determine how many former fighters are jobless.

Return cards have been sent to all former service men, except those who are known to have jobs. It is thought by Legion chiefs that the survey will disclose that the ex-servicemen have had a hard row to hoe since returning home.

An effort will be made to find work for all idle service men, and although jobs are now at a premium, the members of the committee feel that these men should be given first consideration.

At the next meeting of the post one of the important questions to be decided will be the institution of a death benefit fund for Legionnaires. This subject was broached at the last meeting and met with approval. A committee composed of C.B. Randall and Alfred Cousineau was named to draw up a set of rules to govern this fund and their report will be presented at the next meeting.

A meeting of the committee appointed to organize the Women's Auxiliary of the post will meet with the officers this evening at the Y.M.C.A. to discuss plans of organization. The members of the special committee are Mrs. David Littlejohn, chairman, Mrs. Stephen Simons, Mrs. Fred Tonnesen and Miss Sophie Goethe.

(Mining Journal, February 17, 1921)

Miner Is Killed At Cliffs Shaft

Oscar Kiviniemi, a miner at the Cliffs Shaft mine for the past fifteen years, was instantly killed Thursday evening when he was struck on the head by a chunk of ore which fell from the drift in which he was working.

Kiviniemi and his partner had completed blasting. Upon their return to the place in which they had fired the hole a large chunk of ore, left hanging by the blast, slipped and struck the miner.

Kiviniemi was well known in the city during the many years he had been employed at the Cliffs Shaft and had many friends. He was about forty years of old and was single. His parents and other relative reside in Finland.

The remains were removed to the undertaking rooms of the Ishpeming Furniture & Hardware company. The funeral will be held tomorrow afternoon from that establishment.

Coroner William Prin conducted an inquest into the death of Kiviniemi yesterday afternoon and the jury returned a verdict "that the deceased came to his death by being struck by a piece of rock falling from a hanging after a blast."

Those who composed the jury were Matthew Eddy, Arthur Mode, Patrick Cronin, Robert Wilcox, John Trebilcock and Peter Sormunen. The inquest was held in the office of Municipal Judge St. John. Among the witnesses who testified were the dead man's partner and officials who had been in the mine prior to the accident.

The accident which snuffed out the life of Kiviniemi is the first fatality that has occurred in an Ishpeming mine in several weeks. During that time a few minor accidents have occurred.

(Mining Journal, January 29, 1921)

Volunteers Needed

If we had a crystal ball, we could accurately predict what is going to happen next summer. But we don't, so we can only guess. We are hoping to open our museum this summer, but in order to do so, we will need volunteers to keep the doors open. The more volunteers we have, the more days we can be open. This would be a perfect job for someone who is only in the Ishpeming area during the summer. We do offer training.

We are looking at starting a mobile museum, but at this stage its just a dream. We need someone to take our dream to reality and help us build or buy what we need and then update the displays as needed.

Please renew your membership

Our members are the lifeblood of our group. This past year has been hard, we have had very little income due to the pandemic. If its been a while since you renewed your membership, consider sending in your dues today. You can use the form provided or go to our website.

New Lifetime Members

We wish to recognize our new lifetime members. They include:

Bob & Cheryl Mariette

Pamela McLaughlin

Daniel & Kathleen Rydholm

A. Lindberg & Sons, Lifetime Business member

Next summer

In addition to opening the museum, we are hoping to have the cemetery tour and a new Main Street tour (July-August-September).

Plus we are also exploring doing a garden tour instead of our usual home tour. Please watch our Facebook page and website for more details.

Become a member

Ishpeming Area Historical Society

The Ishpeming Area Historical Society is a 501(c)3 Michigan Non-Profit Organization
Our mission is to promote and encourage a better appreciation for and a sustained interest
in the history of the Ishpeming area. Your membership allows us to carry out this mission.

Yearly membership (Renewable January 1st)

\$5 Student (high school-College)

\$10 Individual

\$20 Family (One household)

\$25 Non Profit Business

\$35 Business

\$200 Lifetime Individual or Family, \$250 Lifetime Business

Additional donation _____

Name _____ Date _____

Mailing Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone # _____ Email: _____

In memory/honor of (if applicable) _____

I do NOT wish my name to be used in any publicity or on a membership plaque.

Is this a New Membership Renewal Membership

Is this address my/our year round address? If not, what months do I/we reside here?

(We send out newsletters in the spring and fall.)

Visit our website at www.ishpeminghistory.org or:

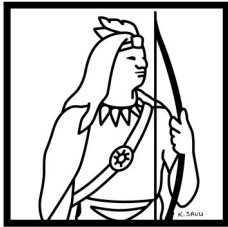
Mail completed form and payment to:

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 at www.ishpeminghistory.org



The Winter 2021 newsletter is sponsored in part by Globe Printing.

AT THE CO-OPERATIVE STORE

212 Cleveland Ave., Ishpeming, Mich.

Tomato Juice, Co-Op Fancy, 2—20-oz. cans	19c
Catsup, Co-Op Fancy, made from delicious ripe tomatoes, 2—14-oz. bot.	27c
Prunes, Santa Clara, medium size, 10-lb. box	69c
Peaches, Co-Op Blue Label Sliced, 1-lb. 13-oz. can.....	19c
Salmon, Co-Op Blue Label Pink, 2—1-lb. cans	27c
Salmon, Co-Op Fancy Red Alaska, 1-lb. can	28c
Sardines, in Mustard or Tomato Sauce, 2—15-oz. cans.....	19c
Coffee, Co-Op Blue Label Bag, 1-lb.	17c
Rye Hardtack, 2-lb. pkg.	27c
Gaffelbiter, Special Co-Op Product, ½-gallon jar.....	77c
Rolled Oats, 42-oz. pkg., with Cup and Saucer or Dinner Pate.....	24c
With Cereal Bowl	23c
Candy, Tickle Jellies, 2 lbs.	19c

QUALITY FRESH MEATS

Home Made Corn Beef, per lb.	20c
Lamb Roast, per lb.	20c
Chuck, Rib or Pot Roast, 2 lbs. for.....	35c
Fresh Made Hamburger, 2 lbs.	29c
Veal Roast, per lb.	16c
All Steaks, 2 lbs. for	43c
Rolled Rib, Rump, Sirloin or Round Roast, per lb.....	20c
Fresh Pork Loins and Pork Butts, per lb.	23c
Veal Patties, per lb.	20c
Rib Boiling, 2 lbs. for	25c

Come in Early to Give Us Your Easter Ham Order
 WE CLOSE AT 8:00 P. M.

