

# THE WHISTLE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IRONWOOD AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUMMER 2020

## FINDING A BOER WAR RELIC IN ABANDONED PURITAN LOCATION SCHOOLYARD

BY ROD SMITH, IAHS VICE PRESIDENT

If history is my passion, metal detecting is my hobby. In my 35 years metal detecting I have found over 6000 coins, dozens of rings including sterling silver and gold, along with all kinds of relics from ax heads to license plates.

There was still snow on the ground on April 24th last year when I decided to go and coin hunt at the Puritan School playground. I first went there back in 1993 when the school was still standing and the playground was wide open. Wheat pennies and Winged Liberty (Mercury) dimes were being discovered with as many as three per hole. Flash forward 26 years and in that quarter plus century, a lot had changed. The school had been razed and left in a pile of rubble with half the playground covered by trees 20 feet high. But on that day the first coin I dug out was a 1936 dime! I gave Miss Liberty a kiss on the cheek and put her away in my recovery box. I patiently swept the coil slowly and methodically for 20 minutes when I received a "quarter" signal on my Fisher F75. I had never dug up a quarter in the playground before so I cut out a plug and put my pin pointer in the hole. And then my eyes fell upon something I had never seen before! An 1896 South African Shilling with pieces of it carved out. I noticed a small loop

on the rim so it had been made to hang around a person's neck. The real surprise came as I flipped the coin over. The likeness of President Paul Kruger had been carved into a caricature of what appeared to be Sherlock Holmes! I couldn't go on any further and headed for home to research this bizarre coin. Google



BOER WAR RELIC

revealed the Shilling was worth \$30 just as a regular coin. As I scrolled down I found what I was hoping for!

It had been carved between 1899 and 1902 by a British soldier being held as a prisoner of war by his enemy, the Afrikaners. With nothing but time on their hands, hundreds of such P.O.W.'s passed the time by painting small portraits, carving wooden toys, or more dangerously, carving comical portraits of South African President Paul Kruger on a Schilling. If a soldier was caught by a guard with such a derogatory carving, he would receive a beating or possibly death. By late spring 1902 all the P.O.W.'s were released when Britain won the war and went home. The 7200 mile 30 day journey by steamer must have been a joy ride compared to what they endured, but the coin was in the pocket of one soldier in particular. But the coin and its owner were not finished with their ultimate journey, which was to America.

cont'd. on page 2

## HISTORIC IRONWOOD DEPOT MUSEUM TEMPORARILY CLOSED

The health and safety of our guests, volunteers and community is our highest priority. In response to ongoing concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic the Historic Ironwood Depot Museum remains closed.

Extensive safety and social distancing protocols will be in place upon our reopening to ensure the health and safety of our visitors and volunteers. If you need to access the Museum, please call 906-932-0287 and leave a message or email: [IronwoodHistoricalSociety@gmail.com](mailto:IronwoodHistoricalSociety@gmail.com).

## UPDATES TO IRONWOOD'S HISTORICAL DEPOT EXHIBITS

Updates and improvements to the Ironwood Historical Depot Museum have been made during it's down time throughout COVID-19. Historical Society members volunteered their time on appointed days, practicing social distancing, to change exhibits to showcase new acquisitions and refresh old exhibits. Exhibit updates include:

- New CCC exhibit
- New exhibit - Montreal River Detecting Finds
- Refresh of the Mining Exhibit
- All new LED perimeter lights on Depot
- New LED Christmas lights on Depot exterior
- Thorough cleaning of Depot
- Museum Store updated

More is yet to be completed with plans to update other exhibits in the Museum.

If you or a family member has historical artifacts *specific to the Ironwood area* that you would like to donate to the Depot Museum, please call or email the IAHS to discuss the acquisition of them.



VINTAGE BOTTLE FROM  
IRONWOOD BOTTLING  
WORKS FOUND IN  
MONTREAL RIVER  
CA1900

## 2020 IAHS BOARD MEMBERS

### Board of Directors

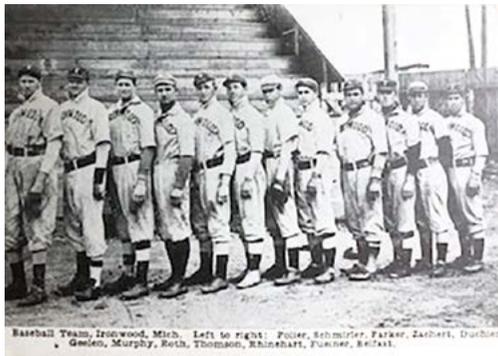
President: Sandy Sharp  
Vice President/Secretary: Rod Smith  
Treasurer: Dan Berlin

### Board Members

Mark Aho  
Ivan Hellen  
Gary Harrington  
Ed Lakner  
Mike Patrick

# HEY BATTER, BATTER, BATTER!

Imagine what life would be like in 1909, the year this photo was taken. Radio hadn't been invented yet so newspapers were the only source for professional baseball. People would skip the headlines and go straight to the box scores to see what their favorite players did. 1909 was smack dab in the middle of the dead ball era, when pitching and defense dominated the game.



Baseball Team, Ironwood, Mich. Left to right: Foster, Schmorler, Parker, Zacherl, Duchien, Gabel, Murphy, Roth, Thomason, Rhinehart, Fumner, Reifast.

The team pictured had won the 1908 Midwest regional championship and were determined to repeat. Their only

transportation for road games was by train. These players were good enough to have the blessings of their employers to take time off and go and play baseball and hopefully win.

It was a time when Babe Ruth was just learning the game at St. Mary's Industrial School for Boys. Ty Cobb and his Tigers would lose to Honus Wagner and the Pittsburgh Pirates in the 1909 World Series. But the Ironwood Baseball team had their own following and hundreds of fans including immigrants were obsessed with the National Pastime.

RELIC cont'd. from page 1

This time the actual year is unknown but this young man and possibly a bride took the 3,459 mile journey from London to New York. The journey by train must have taken almost a week chugging along at less than 30 miles per hour to the Bessemer depot. Almost immediately he would have started working at the Puritan Mine and in the process, began raising a family. His child years later, wearing a South African Shilling around his/her neck loses it at the edge of the playground at the Puritan school and 100 years later, found by me!

My question is, could you be a descendant of this man? Please let us know!

## JOIN US...STARTING AT \$15

Members come in all shapes and sizes in any organization. Some pay their membership and stay quiet in the background. Some don't miss a meeting and take an active roll in the growth and development of an organization.

No matter which role you want to play, please consider becoming a part of the important preservation work the Ironwood Area Historical Society does. Membership begins at only \$15.

*Please join us now by completing the enclosed reply envelope.*



Become a member or renew now for 2020-2021.

IAHS memberships are now on the calendar year schedule.



Would you like to receive the IAHS newsletters via email? Just send us an email and you will be added to our email list.

EMAIL: [ironwoodhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:ironwoodhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)

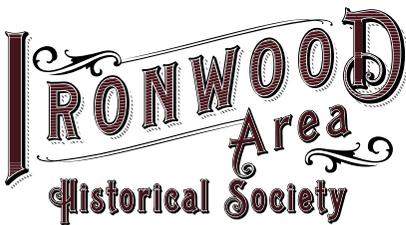
SUMMER HOURS: MON - SAT 10 AM - 2 PM

TELEPHONE: 906-932-0287



Newsletter Design: [SharpGraphicDesign.com](http://SharpGraphicDesign.com)

## MAKING HISTORY MATTER



150 N LOWELL ST  
P O BOX 553  
IRONWOOD MI 49938

*Return Address Requested*



## 2021 IRONWOOD HISTORICAL CALENDAR TO BE RELEASED IN OCTOBER 2020

*Mark your calendar!*

The new Ironwood historical calendar for 2021 will be available in October. It will feature all new Ironwood area photos along with daily doses of historical local wisdom. It makes a great Christmas gift!

This calendar is a fundraiser for replacing/repairing the old, tired historic Depot roof.

Check for future detail on the website:

[IronwoodAreaHistoricalSociety.com](http://IronwoodAreaHistoricalSociety.com)