



This group of miners includes Peter Toboła at the far right end of the second row. "Copper Miners," negative 00554, date unknown; MTU Archives & Copper Country Historical Collections, Michigan Technological University, Houghton, Michigan.

Calumet and Hecla mining records—a mother lode of information

By Joseph F. Martin

The Upper Peninsula of Michigan was for many years an attractive location for European immigrants, not necessarily because of the natural beauty of the lakes and forests, but because of the jobs available in the copper mines. The discovery of the Calumet lode led to the foundation of many mines in Houghton County, and eventually the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company was formed in 1871.¹ Soon immigrants were headed to the mines from England, Ireland, Russia, Germany, Finland, Hungary, Poland, and Croatia until more than thirty nationalities created a multi-ethnic population throughout the Upper Peninsula, with most of the men working in mining or related industries. The Calumet & Hecla Mining Company (C&H) became the largest of the employers, and it eventually bought out many

#1131 George Bomblinski; and son-in-law #2298 Anton Latowski. A number of other entries were blank, although check marks indicated that he could read and write and also spoke English. His date and place of birth were listed only as 1852 and Poland, which might not be much help, but previous research verified he was born on 20 June 1852 in Radzewo, Schrimm, Posen.⁵

Bomblinski, his brother-in-law, was listed as born in Province Posen, Poland, in 1852 and noted he started work in 1872, all facts that will require additional research for verification. His card #1131⁶ was clearly burned at the top and on the right side, thus obliterating some information. The front of his card showed that his aid expired in September 1912, which might be an indication of when the family moved to Detroit. On the back side of his card the line for “sons born” listed Stephen '78, John '82, Frank '84, Andrew '88, and William '91, all but one of which are not accurate years based on their baptism records. Other “relatives working for Calumet & Hecla” included sons #1131(a) Stephen, #7800 Frank, #3171 John, #12983 Andrew, and #2712 William; brothers-in-law #885 John Wojkiewicz, #3893 John Szatkowski, Peter Toboła with no number, and John Kobieski with no number; and sons-in-law #5820 with no name and #19223 Thomas Mulligan. Other information at the bottom recorded the years of employment for each of his sons. Research in the set of employment ledger sheets uncovered additional records for his sons William, John, and Stephen.

The mining card for Michael Siemowski #9492⁷ did not provide as much family information, but it did list accurate details that would be important to a family researcher. His card noted that he began work on 24 May 1900, and he lived at 126 Pewabic Street, which was in Laurium, the community adjacent to Calumet. It also showed that he quit on 10 June 1913, the year the family moved to Detroit, as verified by the obituary for his son Alex.⁸ The reverse side of Michael’s card listed his date of birth as 18 September 1867, which was actually his baptismal date,⁹ since many nineteenth-century Poles celebrated their date of baptism and not their birth date.¹⁰ His place of birth was Posen,

CALUMET & HECLA MINING CO
CENTRAL EMPLOYMENT

Toboła
APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

1. Name *Peter Toboła* 2. Date of Birth *6-15-1853*
3. Residence *721* 4. Place of Birth *Posen Poland*
5. Married *01* Single *10* Widower 6. Nationality Father *Pol*
7. No. of Children *2 6 5 1* 8. Nationality Mother *Pol*
9. I Read *4* Write *Pol* Speak English 10. Immigrated *3/88*
11. Name of Wife (if living) *Celia* Residence _____
12. Name of Father (if living) _____ Residence _____
13. Name of Mother (if living) _____ Residence _____
14. Names of Children and Date of Birth *53-85-87-89-93-96-00-06*
15. Names of Relatives Working in Michigan Copper Mines and Where Working *done 3698
June 10211 Jos. 12502 Peter 14749 E. J. 16220 Leo & Leo 16888 Frank
Ignacewski Deph 2493 Frank Lewacki 1128 Martin Smith*
16. Where Last Employed and by Whom _____
18. Why Did You Leave Your Last Place _____
19. By Whom, When and Where Employed During Last 12 Months

Name of Employer	Town or City	State	Occupation	Date Entered	Date Left

The left side of the employment card for Peter Toboła provides detailed family information.

Poland; previous research showed that he was born in Broniszewice, Pleszew, Posen. He was “last employed” at the Tamarack Mine and before that at the South Kearsarge Mine. His date of immigration was given as June 1888, and indeed, he traveled from Antwerp on the S.S. *Waesland* and arrived on 8 June at Castle Garden.¹¹ His only relative at the C&H mine was his brother-in-law #1272 Peter Toboła. None of his sons worked for C&H because the family moved to Detroit.

Peter Toboła #1272 started working at the C&H mine in March 1885 and quit in November 1919.¹² His employment sheet gave his date of birth as 15 June 1853 in Posen, Poland, but he was born on that date two years earlier in Mieczewo, Schrimm, Posen.¹³ His record included a three-paragraph printed statement indicating that he was “not now a member of or in any way connected with the Western Federation of Miners or any branch or local thereof,” an effort on the part of the company to avoid some of the challenges faced by mine owners in the West. Other information on his card noted that he was pensioned on 1 August 1919 and he died on 2 October 1924. An

John Szatkowski received this Silver Medal for his many years of service. It depicts Edwin J. Hulbert (back) who discovered the Calumet copper lode and Alexander Agassiz, the long time president of the C&H Copper Mining Company. Photo courtesy of Tim Bausano of Calumet, Michigan.



interesting note on his record stated “Silver Medal in 1916.” The C&H Mining Company awarded gold, silver, and bronze medals to long-time employees. Gold medals were awarded to one hundred and sixty nine men who had worked for more than forty years, silver medals to three hundred and seventy men who worked from thirty to forty years, and eight hundred and six men received bronze medals for working between twenty and thirty years.¹⁴ Peter and his family lived in Laurium for many years, and all of his sons worked for the mines at some time, although two later became long-time employees of the U.S. Post Office in Calumet.

Conclusion

The employment records of C&H from Calumet, Michigan, provide an abundance of information about the men who worked in the copper mines. These four sample reports demonstrate the kinds of family and historical information that can be obtained. Not all the surviving cards are completed, and some have very little information on them. Several letters of the alphabet have no cards that survived the fire. This project concentrated on the Polish miners, but many other immigrants worked at these mines, and their information is also accessible. The availability of the CD, *Calumet & Hecla Pay Office Personnel Records*, that indexes the twenty-five boxes of small cards means that family historians can obtain the information without having to make a trip to Houghton to search the cards. With these valuable records for C&H, researchers will be mining details about their ancestors for years to come. 🌳

Notes

1. Arthur W. Thurner, *Calumet Copper and People: History of a Michigan Mining Community* (Hancock, Mich.: The Book Concern, 1974), 7.
 2. Jeanette Medlyn, Thomas Gordon Ellis, and Jean Fisher Ellis, *Calumet & Hecla Pay Office Personnel Records, 1865–1914* (Michigan: T.G. Ellis, 2004); CD-ROM. For more information, contact <jellis@pasty.com>.
 3. John Szatkowski, employment record, Calumet & Hecla Copper Mining Company (C&H) Collection, MS-002, box 365/022, MTU Archives & Copper Country Collections; Michigan Technological University, Houghton, Michigan.
 4. John Szatkowski entry, *S.S. Frisia* passenger manifest, 29 October 1872, sheet 8; *Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, NY (1820–1897)*; National Archives micropublication M237, roll 368.
 5. Poznan, Poland, Brin Catholic Parish Registers, Family History Library (FHL) microfilm 1169512.
 6. George Bomblinski, employment record, C&H Collection, Michigan Technological University, Houghton.
 7. Michael Siemowski, employment record, C&H Collection, Michigan Technological University, Houghton.
 8. Alexander Siemowski obituary, *Detroit News*, 14 August 1991.
 9. Poznan, Poland, Broniszewice Catholic Parish Registers, FHL Microfilm 2103162.
 10. “Polish Naming Customs,” *PolandGenWeb*, 3 June 2008, accessed 12 December 2008, <<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~polwgg/naming.html>>.
 11. Michael Siemowski entry, *S.S. Waesland* passenger manifest, 8 June 1888; in *Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, NY (1820–1897)*; M237, roll 521.
 12. Peter Toboła, employment record, C&H Collection, Michigan Technological University, Houghton.
 13. Poznan, Poland, Brin Catholic Parish Registers.
 14. “Calumet & Hecla Mining Company: Semi-Centennial Edition, 1866–1916,” *Keweenaw Miner* (Calumet, Mich.: Keweenaw Printing Co., 1916), 39.
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