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Postmark to honor Douglass Houghton

By KURT HAUGLIE, DMG Writer

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HOUGHTON - There are two communities in Michigan named for Douglass Houghton, and there are many people who think that influence should be recognized nationally.

Besides the city and county of Houghton, the community of Houghton Lake and the lake it sits next to in the north central Lower Peninsula are also named for Michigan's first state geologist.

After a two-and-a-half year effort, the United States Postal Service will honor Houghton's contribution to geology and the copper-mining industry from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday at Michigan Technological University's Douglass Houghton Hall with the presentation of a pictorial postmark made from a painting of Houghton made by Michigan-born painter Robert Thom showing Houghton kneeling on a rocky beach in Keweenaw County looking at a specimen with his dog next to him.

As a member of the Keweenaw National Historical Park Advisory Commission, Allan Johnson worked in a group, which included former Portage Lake District Library director Jim Curtis, and Wayne State University instructor Phil Mason, seeking to get some sort of countrywide recognition of the bicentennial of Houghton's birth in 1809 in Troy, N.Y.

"We started this in 2007," Johnson said. "We were trying to get a commemorative stamp."

Houghton drowned in October 1845 in a boating accident caused by a sudden storm on Lake Superior off Eagle Harbor.

Although the effort to get the commemorative stamp took two and a half years, Johnson said the USPS Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee recommends a three-year effort.

Johnson said another well-known American born in 1809 sort of pushed Houghton out of the way for receiving a postage stamp.

"President Lincoln was born the same year as Houghton," he said. "He was more famous."

Johnson said the effort to get the commemorative stamp had important champions, including Sen. Carl Levin, D-Detroit, and New York senators Hillary Clinton and Charles Schumer.

Johnson, who is a retired geologist, said he mentioned it to a colleague at a university in Troy, N.Y., and because of that, the effort to create the stamp spread around the country.

"We had people in a number of states helping with the stamp," he said.

Johnson said although the efforts to create a commemorative stamp for Houghton failed, the USPS did approve the pictorial postmark.

"I was quite disappointed we didn't get the stamp," he said.

Johnson said he was able to find some living relatives of Houghton to be at the postmark presentation ceremony, including great-great-great granddaughter Susan Kosier, who was living in Ahmeek in 1967, but now lives in the Lansing area. Her uncle, Kermit Morgan, who is a Houghton relative in his 80s, may attend also.

Despite his disappointment at not getting the stamp, Johnson said he is pleased by the postmark.

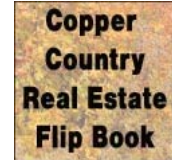
"This is a wonderful rendition of Douglass Houghton in his natural element," he said.

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Article Photos



Kurt Hauglie/Daily Mining Gazette
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