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## NASHWAUK . . .

(Written by an Historian Especially for Skillings' Mining Review)

Located in Itasca county, Minnesota, on the Mesabi range about half way between Grand Rapids and Hibbing is the flourishing mining center of Nashwauk. For over half a century this district has been a heavy producer of iron ore, much of it high silica ore requiring concentration. Some of the first washing plants of the Mesabi were constructed at Nashwauk, and this area has been the scene of some outstanding developments in the treatment of low grade iron ore.

It was the logging and timber industry which came first in the Nashwauk district. Edmund J. Longyear, one of the Mesabi's early explorers, has related how he traveled on foot some 90 miles from Mesabi station to Grand Rapids in the summer of 1891, the journey requiring 21 days. He wrote that from the North Star logging camp near Buhl to the Wright Davis camp near Nashwauk was one continuous virgin forest of magnificent white and Norway pine, with considerable hardwood. Wright Davis Co. was a big timber outfit which operated in the early years in the area where Nashwauk was later founded. With no streams available, this firm built a logging road south to Jacobson, where the Swan and Mississippi rivers converge. James J. Hill took this road into the Great Northern Railway in 1899. The timber south and east of Nashwauk was hauled on this logging road to Swan Lake, and in the spring was driven

down the Swan river and the Mississippi river and thence to the saw mills of Minneapolis and Stillwater. In the area northwest of Nashwauk logs were hauled by railroad to Crooked Lake where they were dumped and run down the Prairie river to the Mississippi and to the same saw mills. The old timber pilings can still be seen in Crooked Lake. Other concerns early attracted by the splendid pine timber in this district were the Bovey-Delaitre Lumber Co. and the Mississippi River Lumber Co.

E. J. Longyear on this first trip to the Nashwauk area in 1891, found

considerable float ore. He also found an old well near the present site of Cooley, west of Nashwauk, at the Wright Davis logging camp which had bottomed at 44 feet in hard material which he was sure was clean, hard ore. In August 1891 he put down his first test pit in the Nashwauk district, to be followed by a drill hole which went down to a depth of 233 feet. A body of banded ore was found, alternately clean ore, and lean ore and sand. This was actually good wash ore but could not be handled at that time. Some 22 years later this ore body was opened

(Continued on page 4)



Hawkins Mine and Plant at Nashwauk, Minn.

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# NASHWAUK *(Continued from front cover)*

up by Butler Brothers as the Harrison mine, one of the great properties of the Western Mesabi.

The first merchantable ore was discovered in the Nashwauk district by the Itasca Mining Co. in 1900, the location being the Deering Harvester Co.'s property, later known as the Hawkins mine. Stripping at this property began on an extensive scale in 1901. The moving spirits in the Itasca Mining Co. were Senator E. B. Hawkins, O. D. Kinney and George H. Crosby. The lease was to the Deering Harvester Co., later merged with the International Harvester Co., whose mining auxiliary, the Wisconsin Steel Co., operated the mine until the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Co. took it over in 1947. Entering the shipping list in 1902, this great property has shipped every year since, except in 1946, with a grand total to date of 22,770,852 tons. The first concentrator in the district was erected at the Hawkins in 1910 and 1911, at an approximate cost of \$700,000. Other plants in the district followed within a short period of time. The Hawkins has been the mainstay of the Nashwauk district for many years and ranks as one of the great Mesabi range mines.

The village of Nashwauk was platted on the site of an old lumber

camp. It was said to have been named after a river in Frederickton, New Brunswick, spelled "Nashwaak", a city and river in New Hampshire bear the same name. The word is derived from the Algonquin "Nashau" meaning "land between".

The townsite company that developed Nashwauk was made up of a number of well known Mesabi range pioneers. These included Joseph Sellwood, G. G. Hartley, O. D. Kinney, E. B. Hawkins, George H. Crosby and E. J. Longyear. Business lots went on sale in the summer of 1902, residence lots a little later. A wagon road 14 miles long was constructed from Hibbing to Nashwauk in 1902. The Nashwauk Townsite Co. platted the village in 1903 and the community celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1953. A \$25,000 bond issue was floated in 1903 for the first water works. Electric lights came in 1908, the first telephone the same year. The first grade school was opened in 1903. The Great Northern Railway constructed an extension line to Nashwauk in 1908 and 1909.

The village had a population of 220 when incorporated, eight years later it had 2200. Mines were opened up rapidly and settlers moved in from Mesabi range towns lying further east. One of the early pioneers was

Charles Latvala, who moved over from Sparta. Dr. M. F. Hayes came in 1912 and administered to the residents of Nashwauk for many years. The Nashwauk State Bank was organized in 1903 with a capitalization of \$10,000. S. R. Kirby was president, John A. Redfern, vice-president and John T. Ring, cashier, well known names in the banking fraternity.

While no single mining property reached the stature of the Hawkins as to size, the Nashwauk district was the scene of great activity starting in at the turn of the century and continuing to the present time. The Crosby mine, later called the Hoadley, was opened in 1903 as an underground property. Named for George H. Crosby, this property was operated by the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Co. from 1906 to 1922, as the Hoadley (an open pit) in 1928 by the Benore Co., by the Argonne Ore Co. 1934-1942, by the Argonne Ore Co. (Butler Brothers agent) 1947-48 and by Butler Brothers (The M. A. Hanna Co. agent) in 1950. With a total output of somewhat over 3,000,000 tons this mine is now considered exhausted. Last shipment was in 1951.

Another of the early mines at Nashwauk was the LaRue mine, opened by the LaRue Mining Co. (Joseph Sellwood, manager, in 1903), later it was operated by The M. A. Hanna Co. and then by Butler Brothers. The LaRue was worked as an open pit



One of the first large electric shovels to be employed in open pit iron mine operations on the Mesabi range was the one shown at the left which operated at the LaRue iron mine at Nashwauk, Minn. This mine was opened by the LaRue Mining Co. and was later operated by The M. A. Hanna Co. and Butler Brothers.



then, by top slicing and caving with belt conveyor to pit and surface plant. It had one of the first underground conveyor installations on the Mesabi. Total shipments came to nearly 8,000,000 tons. Now under control of The M. A. Hanna Co., it has been idle since 1943, but has some reserve tonnage remaining.

Nashwauk has long been the headquarters of one of the most colorful and most efficient mine organizations on the Mesabi range—Butler Brothers. The mining branch of Butler Brothers was an off-shoot of the contracting organization of the same name. The father of the family, Patrick Butler, emigrated from Ireland over 100 years ago, going first to Pennsylvania, then Illinois, then settling in Minnesota where he was engaged in contracting and farming. Of the six sons of Patrick, one, Pierce, studied law and eventually reached the United States Supreme Court judgeship, the greatest office to which an attorney can aspire. The other five brothers, William, Walter, John, Cooley and Emmett, engaged in construction work and became famous in their profession, building the Minnesota State Capitol Building and completing many other large projects. In 1902 the brothers went into stripping on the Mesabi range and in 1913 leased their first mining property. John, Emmett, and Cooley Butler continued in the mining business in the Lake Superior district for many years and made many innovations in mining practice, being the first to go into standard gauge rail equipment, introducing the use of large steam shovels, dragline and conveyor installations for stripping and were always in the forefront in the concentration of iron ores. It was in the Nashwauk district that Butler Brothers made their headquarters, this being at Cooley, just west of Nashwauk, named for Cooley Butler. Butler Brothers continued for many years to carry on stripping contracts in the iron ore region and operated mines elsewhere also, but it was in the Nashwauk district where this firm did most of its mining until 1949 when The M. A. Hanna Co. took over the operation.

The Harrison group, opened in 1914, was one of Butler Brothers' great properties. Others included the North Harrison, Quinn, Kevin, and Patrick-Ann, the latter being a very



The Harrison concentrator tailings pile is a landmark on the Mesabi iron range as it is located along the main highway (U. S. No. 169) between Nashwauk and Cooley, Minn.

active producer and just under the ten million ton mark in total shipments at the present time. All these former Butler Brothers mines are now operated by The M. A. Hanna Co.

While Nashwauk has to date boasted of only one ten million ton producer, the Hawkins, it has had many medium sized mines that have been consistently operated and have given steady employment. One of these is the York mine, opened in 1911 as the Platt mine by The Platt Iron Mining Co. It was operated as the John Jr. mine by the John Jr. Mining Co. in 1913, and as the York mine by the York Mining Co. (Coates & Tweed) 1917-1947. The Pacific Isle Mining Co. has operated the York since 1948, the last shipment having been made in 1954. The total output of this property to date is a little under 3,500,000 tons.

The Shada mine was opened as the Pearson by the Pearson Mining Co. (A. P. Silliman) in 1911, operated as the Shada mine by the Shada Mining Co. (Clement K. Quinn & Co. agent) 1917-1920; by Clement K. Quinn Co. 1923-1927 and 1937; by Butler Brothers in 1943 with stock pile shipments 1944-45 and by the Pacific Isle Mining Co. presently with a small shipment recorded in 1957. Total production is slightly over 1,500,000 tons.

A number of other small properties have contributed to the activity

of the Nashwauk district. Many prominent mine operators spent part of their careers in Nashwauk in addition to those men already mentioned. A partial list would include Ben Batchelor, Max Barber, James MacKillican, Ted Siebenthal, Nels Nelson, Martin Madsen, James H. Williams, Clark Henry and many others. Of the Nashwauk founders and early pioneers, one who is still with us and deserves special mention is George H. Crosby. A highly respected and honored citizen of Duluth and member of the Duluth Hall of Fame, Mr. Crosby had a great deal to do with the opening of many properties on the Mesabi and Cuyuna, and the platting of a number of townships, including the village of Crosby on the Cuyuna range. He is one man whose life span has encompassed a great deal of the mining history of Minnesota and he can look back with pride and contemplate the important part he played in the early development of our iron ore industry.

Nashwauk was indeed an area where much pioneering was necessary in order to make merchantable the lean ores existing there. The operators and mill men were equal to the task and the mining and concentrating practice has always kept pace with the demands. Nashwauk has many present day producers and the indications are that it will be an active district for many years to come.

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