

Most often, the museum gets donations of minerals that are boxed and delivered to the museum by the donor or via commercial shipper. In the museum's annual December newsletter, I'll be highlighting two recent large donations, one delivered by the donor from Texas and the other shipped from Seattle. Less commonly, on the other hand the donation follows a more complex path. In this issue of **Showcase** I'll be telling you about two unusual acquisitions.

Ross Lillie, Michigan Tech geology alum ('79) and owner of North Star Minerals, in Traverse City, Michigan, helped connect Patricia Carlon to the museum for donation of a kibble in honor of her late husband, John Carlon. A kibble is a Cornish mining term for an iron bucket used to raise ore and waste rock from early (mid-1800s) mine shafts in the Keweenaw Peninsula. Kibbles were hand forged and riveted by blacksmiths. This kibble was found at the Robbins or West Vein Mine near Phoenix by a local deer hunter about 50 years ago. The deer hunter sold it to mineral dealer, Don



Kibble, barrel-shaped, ~ 3 ft. high and 2.5 ft. across top opening, an estimated weight of 250 lbs.



Kibble strapped to a wood base with sides wedged. Base strapped to corners and wedged against side of the trailer to avoid sliding. Weigh added to avoid tipping

Olson, who re-sold it to Pat's late husband, John Carlon who was also a mineral dealer. Don transported it to the home of Patricia and John in Bloomington, Illinois where it was a yard ornament for many years. Ross was contracted by Pat to evaluate her mineral collection and described this 1860s vintage kibble as a "historically significant, desirable mining artifact in outstanding condition with superlative provenance." The challenges of inexpensively transporting a heavy barrel-shaped object were obvious. An open rental trailer was rejected because of vandalism concern during out-of-town overnights. Local woodworker Pat Reagan, designed a system to secure the kibble inside an enclosed rental trailer. The disassembled pallet-like base, ratchet strap, and wedge system was carried in my SUV to Bloomington. After two hours the

kibble was loaded and ready to transport. I admit contemplating a 250 lb. iron barrel rolling down a busy road akin to some car insurance commercials on TV. Fortunately, the transport system worked. Upon return, I contacted the Keweenaw National Historical Park for ideas on restoration and preservation for an outdoor setting. Close inspection indicated that in the past the kibble was painted black. Once again Pat Reagan is helping design an exhibit for the kibble. In the spring, the kibble will be a new outdoor exhibit in an extension of the Phyllis and John Seaman Garden.



This past July the museum received an unsolicited telephone call about a possible donation of float copper located off Pike River Road near Chassell, about 10 miles south of the museum. Chris Stefano, associate curator, and I arranged to meet the donors at their house. We parked at the road in a grassy area where there was a standalone garage. After finding our way through walking paths we reached the house where we met sisters Val Vaughan-Drong, of Minnesota, and Karen Brown, of Texas. Their late parents Harry and Aili Vaughan owned the property. Within an out building there were three float copper specimens, ~ 600, 500, and 200 lbs. which were found by their father many years ago. They agreed to donate the specimens to the museum in honor of their parents but the challenge for us was retrieving them. I

investigated multiple options but the width of the paths, the soft wet conditions, and the weight of the specimens negated most options as not viable. Finally, I arrived at a solution...a rubber tracked mini excavator. Using a mini excavator allowed for avoiding most of the paths by going through the woods. The float copper was successfully extracted. The largest specimen, with a beautiful green patina, will become a center piece in the Phyllis and John Seaman Garden next spring after a stand is fabricated.



This past summer the Phyllis and John Seaman Garden has gained in popularity. Monica Rovano, museum assistant in the gift shop, reported that during parents weekend in early October a couple told her: "I can't believe the garden is still in good shape. We were hoping to be able to walk through and we did. It looks great even though it's cold." The kibble and float copper will make the garden even better!