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Massive float copper specimen to arrive today in Marquette

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MARQUETTE - A massive piece of glacial float copper—thought to be the world's largest—is being delivered to Marquette today to be permanently displayed at Presque Isle Park.

"It should be arriving around noon on a trailer," said Carl Lindquist of the Superior Watershed Partnership. "It's going to sit on the trailer over the weekend. Next Wednesday, we'll be lifting it off with a crane."

The piece of copper will be laid against a gravel berm at the park, across the road from the Superior Watershed Partnership offices.

Weighing more than 40 tons, the natural copper slab is roughly 15 feet in diameter and several feet thick. Float copper is naturally formed and has been carried or "floated" along by the last glacier. The massive piece of copper was discovered in 1997 on private property in a wooded area, just north of Hancock.

The late Fred Rydholm, who was an Upper Peninsula historian, educator and founding member of the Ancient Artifact Preservation Society, had asked the partnership to assist the society in saving the copper from being melted down for industrial use.

In 1843, surveyors recorded veins of copper and silver at Presque Isle. Marquette was also an important shipping hub for the growing copper and iron industries. The famous Ontonagon Copper Boulder that is now housed in the Smithsonian Museum weighs in at less than 2 tons, the partnership said in a news release.

"This is really a labor of love in honor of Fred. Sharing the copper was his dream and it's just great to see all of these people pitching in to help make his dream come true," Lindquist said.

A number of regional companies have donated their services to help with moving and displaying the 80,000-pound specimen. Companies include, but are not limited to, Lindberg and Sons, Oberstar Excavating, Nagelkirk Landscaping, Tri-Media Engineering, Gary Moyle Contracting, Holli Forest Products, Cook Sign and the Ford Motor Company.

The Ford Motor Company history division will be filming the copper move as part of an upcoming documentary about Upper Peninsula copper.

The partnership is also assisting the society with a community capital campaign to complete the purchase of the copper from the private landowners. A total of \$350,000 needs to be raised. Individuals, businesses or corporations interested in helping to preserve the artifact can contact the partnership at 228-6095.

Article Photos



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