

Trestle and Stock Pile Audio Tour

Chapter 11, Stop 10

2:26

Once ore left the crusher house, it traveled up the conveyor (located in the enclosed section of the trestle) to the loading pocket. The loading pocket is located beneath the “Head House”, which is the building at the top of the trestle. This is where the conveyor and pocket systems were controlled.

After the crushed ore reached the loading pocket, it went one of two directions. It was either sent directly to an awaiting ore car for transport on the railroad to Two Harbors (formerly known as Agate Bay) and the ore barges of Lake Superior or it was run out to the stockpile area at the end of the trestle.

You may be wondering why they would stockpile the ore. Was there too much for the ore cars to hold? No. Unlike many mining operations in the past, the Soudan Mine continued to operate in the winter; however, the barges on Lake Superior needed to stop their operation due to ice up on the lake. During the winter the ore would be stored at Soudan in the stockpile until spring when it could be transported to Two Harbors and loaded on the awaiting barges. If you have never seen the barge loading process, you should visit Silver Bay or Two Harbors to see how it was done. While in Two Harbors you can also visit the first locomotive 3 Spot Train that ran up to Soudan in 1884. It is on display at the Depot Museum in Two Harbors.

In the spring when the barges were operating again, the mine would bring in a steam shovel to help load the ore from the stockpile into awaiting ore cars. The entire stockpile was removed to make room for the next winters supply. The stockpile area consisted of the level ground to the South of the trestle – the area where trees and brush have been removed.

The first shipment of ore did not leave the property until 1884, even though the mine opened in 1882. Why was this the case? Were they waiting until they had enough ore to ship? No. The railroad was not completed from Two Harbors to Soudan until 1884. On July 31, 1884, the first shipment of ore left Soudan. When the mine closed in December 1962, it was not until the following summer of 1963 that the remaining ore was removed from the stockpile.

One must remember that while the crusher and trestle were the heart beat of the community, the Engine House could be seen as the heart beat of the mine. Without the Engine House and the hoist located in it, the mine would never have been able to go so far underground.