

# FROM MINE TO MILL

A study of the transport of iron ore and taconite on the Great Lakes from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the decline of the U.S. steel industry in the 1970s:

- 1) from the mines, both underground and open pit, in the Lake Superior region,
- 2) by rail to the loading docks and onto the ships in the Upper Lake ports,
- 3) through the Soo locks carried in a variety of Great Lake ore carriers,
- 4) to the ore docks of the Lower Lake ports with a variety of unloading facilities.

Time frame is 1900, the golden age of the postcard, to 1975 when the steel industry was in major decline and most heavy shore based unloading equipment had been scrapped.. The story ends with a look at taconite mining and processing into pellets since taconite replaced the natural ores in the later years. Coal car dumpers are treated in the respective ports since most ships unloaded ore and proceeded directly to a car dumper for a back haul cargo of coal.

(Not included - Canadian ports and other bulk cargoes such as grain, cement, salt, limestone, sand, etc. The rail journey to inland steel towns like Pittsburgh, Youngstown, etc. is only mentioned since the railroads and mills are a separate theme). NB. One jury could not find the Mills in the exhibit; at least ten with unloading facilities are shown).

**TREATMENT and IMPORTANCE:** Representationally complete and balanced in all respects. Much emphasis is on the ship unloading machinery at the various Lower Lake ports - most of which is unique to the Great Lakes. Overall organization is geographical and then geographical and chronological within a port, starting with the earliest dock facilities. Subject matter is of importance and is developed using cards of deltiological importance.

## **RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE:**

**Subject:** A modest familiarity with the following areas will aid greatly in understanding the exhibit: mining, dock construction, shipping, and mechanical engineering for the unloading machinery. Iron ore is not a free flowing material; it is sticky when warm and freezes hard when cold. Subject matter expertise was acquired by growing up on the Lakes, working on the Lakes for 6 years, and twenty years of casual research including visits to historical archives, site visits, and extensive correspondence.

**Cards:** Printer, publisher, etc. info is shown wherever possible. Information on real photo cards from obscure locations is nearly impossible to determine without actual visits to local historical societies, museums, port offices, etc. (and even then the info may not be available). All cards are divided-back type unless identified otherwise, e.g. Private Mailing Card, undivided-back (UDB), jumbo, leather, aluminum, etc. Several small deltiological studies are shown since publishers shamelessly stole images and reprinted some scenes for over 50 years.

**RARITY:** In general, the earlier the card, the rarer it is. Real photo cards, pre 1940, are the rarest. Cards from smaller ports are usually rarer than from large ports. Double and triple panoramic scenes are scarce. Most linens and chromes are common and appear frequently on eBay. Views with people in them are scarce.

**CONDITION:** Most cards are in fine or better condition.

**PRESENTATION:** Neat and clean. Thematic information is above the card; deltiological and philatelic (when applicable) information is below. The exhibitor has avoided the dreaded 'railroad track' look to create visual interest. Note the effective use of double pages.

**REFERENCES:** There are no good comprehensive references. A few Wikipedia articles are your best bet for general background information. Try iron ore, taconite, iron ranges, ore dock, Hulett, Great Lakes, etc.