

Iron Mining & WWII



the history people .org

St. Louis County Historical Society

December 7th 1941

- ★ Just 21 years after the “war to end all wars” WWII would bring about many changes both here in the U.S. as well as around the world. On December 7th 1941, after the Imperial Japanese air strike on the U.S. Naval base at Pearl Harbor, the U.S. would officially enter the war.
- ★ The very next day, on December 8th the FBI sent agents to make a sweep through the MN Iron Range, in order to evaluate the county’s war assets and potential threats to the safety of the region.

In the North Land

- ★ An assessment of the region made it clear that any single enemy strike or act of sabotage—against railroad tracks, a mine, or a shipyard—would not disrupt the county's overall ability to sustain military production because resources and production facilities were highly diversified.
- ★ Coal docks, steel mills, fabricating plants, scrap iron piles, ore docks, cement plants, grain elevators, and flour mills were widely dispersed within a 250-square-mile area. Three separate watersheds provided water to the county, and the power grid, too, was strengthened by means of diversification.

On the Homefront

- ★ After the FBI sweep through the region, precautions were taken to secure St. Louis County following the attack on Pearl Harbor. The Coast Guard increased the number of its patrols on Lake Superior. Civilian planes at local airports were temporarily grounded. Many radio stations were voluntarily shut down, creating a temporary communications blackout. The lights at Enger Tower, a landmark sitting high on a hill, were turned off.

Minnesota Iron

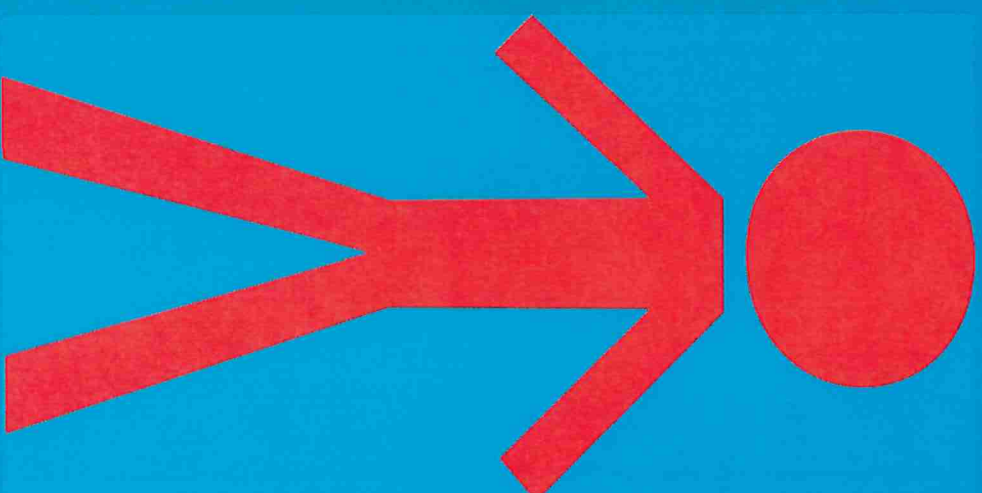
- ★ Minnesota has the largest deposits of iron ore in the United States, and for over 130 years iron has been mined in the northern part of the state.
- ★ Massive amounts of iron were needed to build ships, tanks, airplanes, and other materials for the war effort

Ships & Iron

- ★ The bombing of Pearl Harbor stirred patriotic feelings among many in the country. Soon citizens began to enlist to serve in the newly declared war. Those who did not enlist became part of the effort to keep supplies running to the allied forces.
- ★ One of the largest needs became keeping the iron mines running so weapons and machines could be manufactured. Because so many men were off fighting, women were asked to pick up the jobs left behind by men off in Europe and the Pacific.

Get ready for work

- ★ Imagine this stick figure is a woman who has been hired to work in the iron mines. How would you dress her for a day at work? Keep safety in mind!
- ★ Click insert on the top of the page, scroll down to images, and search the web to pick out work clothes for her to wear!



Kids in America

- ★ Kids were also encouraged to pitch in for the war. One important task assigned to children was “scrapping.”
- ★ Scrapping was collecting metal and other household waste objects that could be recycled and turned into things that would be helpful to people fighting in the war.



Scrap Time

What items do you think could be recycled for the war effort?

Drag and drop the items into the wagon you think would have been reused. Refer back to the image on the last page if you need some hints!

