
Linden HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OPTIMO MINING CO. EXITED LINDEN RIGHT AFTER WORLD WAR I

The Optimo Mining company rode the World War I mining boom more successfully than perhaps any other Linden enterprise. In the last newsletter Optimo mines #1 and #2, located in the East and South edges of Linden were described.

Optimo mines #3 and #4 were on the Northern edge of Linden. In similar fashion to the other two mines, Optimo did prospect drilling ahead of other established mines and then secured a new lease from the adjacent landowner. When the prospect holes showed favorable results a vertical shaft was sunk and above ground buildings constructed.

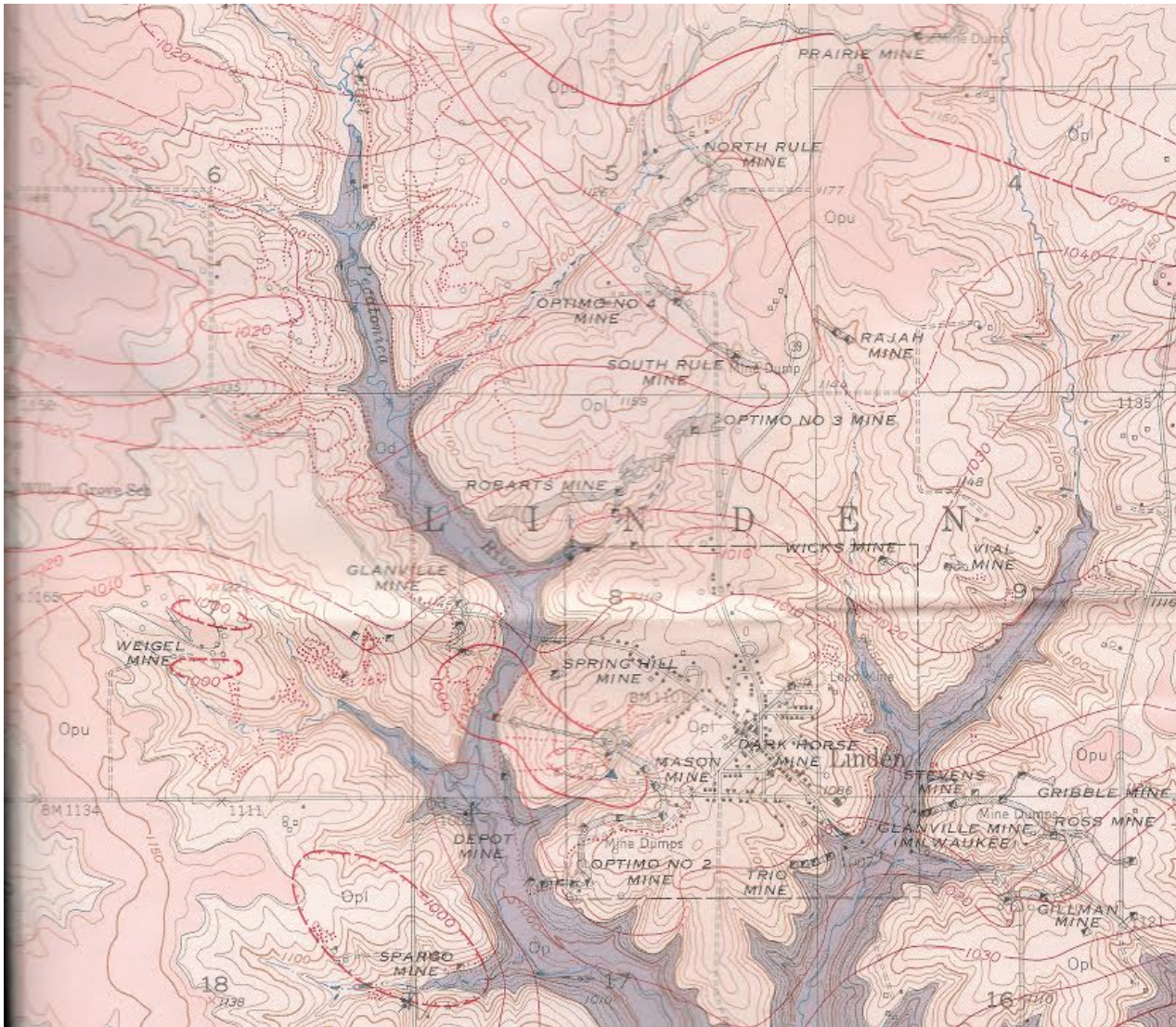


This "Might" have been a group of Optimo miners, the building behind the men appears to be new. This is one of several group shots of Linden miners that are unidentified.

Optimo #3: Prospect drilling in 1915 revealed good cuttings ahead of the older established Robarts (also called Roberts) mine, a long established mine on the Northwest area of Linden. Optimo #3 was known locally as the Rolling mine, after the name of the landowner at the time. Iowa County plat book coordinates for Optimo #3 are, NE1/4 NW 1/4 NE 1/4 section 8 T. 5 N., R. 2 E. In February, 1916, *The Dodgeville Sun* newspaper reported, "Optimo #3 will turn wheels in new mill. Expect to work full force underground, running two shifts."

OPTIMO MINING, CONTINUED

In the book, *The Geology of the Upper Mississippi Valley Zinc-Lead District*, published in 1959, a paragraph or two mentions Optimo No. 3: "The tonnage mined is not known, but in 1917 about 200 tons of ore per day was mined yielding 10 tons of 30 percent zinc jig concentrate. The ore body was worked on four separate benches or levels." What is not recorded in any newspaper or USGS book is how many miners were employed at this mine alone, but the number had to be significant to have production figures of 200 tons a



Map, from US Geological Survey bulletin 1123-B: *Geology of the Montfort and Linden Quadrangles Wisconsin*. Map shows some, but not all, of the mines that once operated in Linden. Optimo #3 and #4 appear in the Northern part of map.

day. Optimo closed this mine sometime in 1918, sold the lease and mill property. The Fearless Mining company from Platteville operated this mine until sometime in 1922. From the book, *Mines Register and Handbook*, the 1922 edition, the former Optimo #3 showed an orebody that was 60 feet wide and 9 feet thick while using the 100 ton capacity mill on site.

From a small book, *Fire Insurance Rates for Lead & Zinc mines in Wisconsin*, is a listing of above ground buildings at the Fearless or Optimo #3. It shows a three story high mill, hoist and pump; a change house and a blacksmith shop. See separate story on the engineering marvel of moving the 53 foot high mill to a new Linden mine in this issue.

OPTIMO MINING, CONTINUED

Optimo #4: Located North of Linden on Rule road this mine was part of an orebody that stretched an incredible 10,850 feet long, was 40 to 150 feet wide and averaged 15 feet in height, according to the authors of *The Geology of the Upper Mississippi Valley Zinc-Lead District*. The authors of this book included the late Allen Heyl, brother-in-law to our own Catherine Whitford, and three other geologists. The authors surmised that additional zinc ore is still underground on this range.

Mining, of course, has always been a dangerous occupation. Optimo #4 registered one fatality before a shaft was even started. Walter Rundell was instantly killed when he was struck on the head by a 1,500 pound iron and steel drill which had broke loose from a drilling machine. Rundell was at work with another Linden resident, Bert Ovitz, prospecting with a churn drill when the rope holding the drill suddenly broke.

Details regarding the Optimo #4 are difficult to find, it was a short-lived property of the Indianapolis, Indiana based Optimo Company. Mine #4 evidently was worked by the Rule mining company in the 1920's. The *Fire Insurance Rates for Lead & Zinc mines*, revealed in 1922 Optimo #4 as a "not operating" mine. The above ground inventory of buildings showed a two story mill, hoist and pump; a change house and office; tool house, blacksmith shop, and harness shed. The book does not list the owner of the property in 1922..

The Optimo mining company invested heavily in modern milling equipment and other buildings at both of their Northern Linden mines and extracted as much ore as possible in a limited time frame while two daily shifts of miners employed at each mine was the normal practice. In early 1916, Optimo also built a boarding house at the site of their first Linden mine on the East edge of Linden which had closed a few years earlier. When Optimo made their Linden exit the house was sold and later moved to a farm where it still is in use West of Linden.

The Linden roaster, owned by Optimo, on the West edge of Linden on Roaster Road was dismantled in 1919. This facility often ran two shifts of workers to process the raw or "green" ore to remove the sulphide for further smelting elsewhere. The decision to sell off and dismantle all Linden properties was, no doubt, made in the Indiana board room of the Optimo directors. Perhaps they saw that the war era high zinc prices could not be sustained into the 1920's



The Optimo mines in Linden inspired Theodore Olson to name his new cafe in downtown Linden The Optimo Cafe

I forgot to include in the last newsletter article on the Optimo #1 mine that the company and miners also followed the ore from Valley Street South West underneath homes, across Main Street including the former Faull Grocery store to the cemetery. This drift or tunnel is not referenced in any USGS publication, however, two people now passed away told me the same story over twenty years ago. There was a ventilation hole that came up in Bud Faull's store which some of our readers may remember hearing about.

—Jim.

KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS ONE OF SEVERAL LODGES IN LINDEN

During the late 19th and early 20th century there was no shortage of fraternal organizations men and women could be members of. The Linden Achilles lodge, Knights of Pythias was organized here in 1897 with 23 charter members. When the lodge was formed in April more than 100 visiting Knights from other lodges attended. Members of the Knights of Pythias wore uniforms which definitely set them apart from other organizations, no photos of local Knights exist, however.

Within the first year of the Achilles lodge starting up they held a "gala evening" with a public installation of officers in their castle hall which was the upstairs ball room of the Pollard hotel on main street. According to an article in the January 26, 1898 issue of the local *Southwest Wisconsin* newspaper the event was by invitation which was extended to people in the village and to member Knights from lodges in Highland and Mineral Point.

The *Southwest Wisconsin* reported, "The M.E. choir did the singing, the Highland Orchestra furnished instrumental music, and their speeches by Boyle, (Levi) Pollard and White. About 225 took supper at Pollard's Hotel. It was a very pleasant and highly successful affair from beginning to end."



The Knights of Pythias held their charter 1897 meeting in the Pollard Hotel hall which was on the second floor. First floor housed the Pollard saloon and the hotel rooms were in that portion of the building on the right. Date of this photo is unknown. Pollard Hotel site is now the village of Linden offices and Fire Department on Main street.

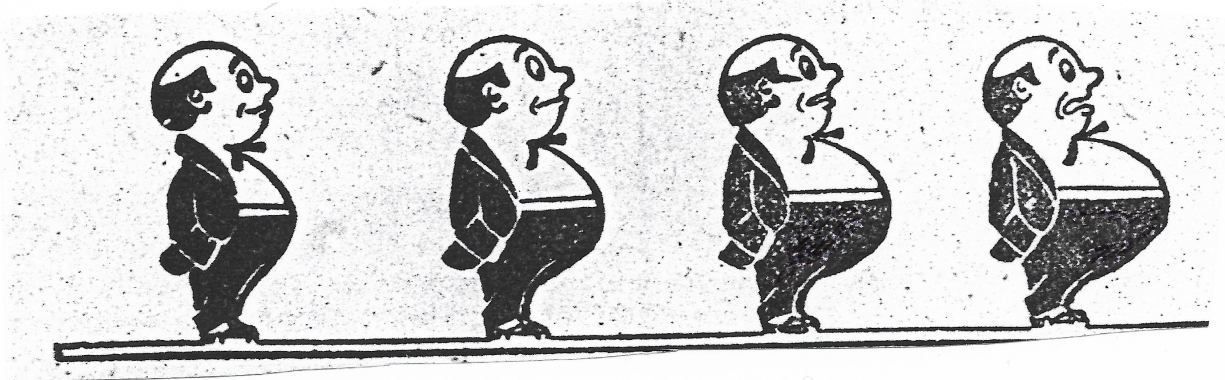
What was not reported are logistical questions for this event. I marvel at the ability of the food preparation in the small kitchen of the Pollard hotel; transporting the food upstairs, squeezing 225 people into the hall, serving the meal and keeping the food warm; the guests from Highland and Mineral Point who traveled out in cold January weather with a horse and cutter.

The Officers of the K of P lodge in 1897 were: John P. Williams; Wm. Smith; James Fisher; H. D. James; J. Hicks; Dr. Blanchard; Logan Thompson; B. Smith; Thomas Hicks and J. H. Carrow.

KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS, CONTINUED

The Knights of Pythias was organized in 1864 by Justus Rathbone, a music composer, actor and government clerk in Washington D.C. It was the first fraternal order chartered by an act of Congress and is still functioning. The aim of the lodge was to heal the wounds of the civil war, relieve suffering and promote friendship. Many of the charter members were civil war veterans.

Other lodges active in Linden at the same time as the Knights of Pythias were the Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.); Yeomen Lodge; Modern Woodmen which also had a lodge in Edmund at the same time and the Masonic lodge—the only one that remains in Linden. A common bond the lodges shared was friendship in a social setting and a life insurance policy. In Linden it was not uncommon for a person to belong to more than one lodge at the same time. Each organization also had an auxiliary group for Women.



LHS President Profile. On far left is how the President appeared on Nov. 15. Next shot is how he looked after the Thanksgiving meal. Third profile over was taken after Christmas dinner. Far right shows the President after the New Years Day feast. New Years resolution is to lose weight and finish editing the long awaited Linden book project.

******YOUR CAR AND TRUCK PHOTOS NEEDED FOR OUR SPRING NEWSLETTER******

Send a picture of your favorite car or truck to us with a note of your memories that made the vehicle special. Pictures will be scanned and returned.

PYTHIAN SISTERS HAD LIVELY MEETINGS IN LINDEN

The women's auxiliary to the Knights of Pythias were not to be out done by their male brethren, in fact they may have had more fun and interesting meetings. In January, 1910 the Sisters entertained themselves with a "Pink Tea".

The Linden newspaper of the day, *Linden Conservative*, reported, "Mesdames James Wicks, J.N. Vial, Wilbur White and John Adams acted as hostesses, and after the regular work of the lodge the members partook a most bounteous repast. The dishes and tableware were all pink and everything was served in 'Pink' style. For entertainment a live pigeon was let loose in the room and each lady was given a 'pinch' of salt and told to 'catch him'. This furnished much amusement. Mrs. John Treloar, Sr., and Mrs. Thomas Hicks carried off the prizes of the evening."

The very next month in February, 1910 the Pythian Sisters had a Valentine party. The *Linden Conservative* recorded, "A Valentine entertainment was given by the Pythian Sisters. Mesdames H. Goldsworthy, F. Duncan, W. Graham and Clara Anding were on the entertaining committee. Part of the evening's entertainment was a comedy entitled, 'Mr. Beau Too Slow and Mr. Beau Too Fast.' After the lodge work a splendid supper was served the members. The table, also the hall, were beautifully decorated with cupids, hearts, bows and arrows, suggestive of Valentine's birthday. Each member of the lodge was given a souvenir turtle and a valentine."

This property is for sale or rent.

THE BUSY BEE RESTAURANT

ROBT. STEPHENS, Proprietor

The place of life and good things to eat.

Ice Cream and Cold Drinks a Specialty.

Fine Candies, Bon Bons, Chocolates and confectionery of all kinds. Fruits in season.

STAPLE and FANCY GROCERIES

Come in and see what good Bread, Rolls and Cream Puffs we have. Special attention given to good laundry work.

Another restaurant in Linden during the early 20th century mining boom. "Special attention given to good laundry work," targeted single miners living and working in Linden. This ad is from 1911 and the cafe was sold to Emma Gilman and Hannah Nelson.

WHEN A THREE STORY MINING MILL WAS MOVED IN LINDEN

It was common when one mine closed in the Linden area to sell off and dismantle the mill and hoist house. What was very uncommon was the move of a three story, top heavy, 53 foot high mill from one mine to another. The concept was new to this area, it was the talk of the town and people lined the roads to watch.

The Dodgeville Chronicle reported on the project, "J. C. White, well-known contractor of Mifflin, has undertaken to move for over a quarter of a mile probably the tallest and heaviest building ever attempted in this county."

The Chronicle explained in their May 24, 1923 news story, "The task of moving the mill is a large one and requires great engineering skill. Contractor White is moving the building in two sections, the part which houses the hoist being moved first. This measures sixteen feet wide by thirty-six long and towers in the air fifty-three feet. Built of heavy timbers and with the additional weight of the steel hoist and motor in the loft, this top heavy structure is estimated to weigh between sixty-five and seventy-five tons."

The old Optimo #3 mill was moved from what was then the Smith Rule farm, just North of Linden to the Jerry Rule farm, just up the road. The move took three days to accomplish the feat.

The Chronicle, stated, "False sills were inserted and Wednesday noon, May 16, it was pulled onto rollers and started on its quarter mile journey. On Friday noon, May 18, the journey was completed and it was ready to be lowered to the cement foundation previously prepared for it. Work is now begun on moving the main part of the mill which is twenty-six feet wide by sixty-six long but not nearly so tall as the derrick room. Many interested spectators have watched this feat and Contractor White, who is 76 years young, declares he enjoys the work and feels that he may as well continue in the business for another 25 years."

According to the same article 45 prospect holes proved up a large ore body on the Jerry Rule land and a shaft was sunk soon after the mill was in place.

The coal business in Linden was big in the early 1900's for both the mines and homes. This ad is from 1909.

TO OUR CUSTOMERS

We have purchased the coal business of Mr. Elmer Alton and wish to announce that until further notice will sell the following grades of

COAL

At the following prices

HARD COAL	
Nut Coal, Delivered,.....	\$9.50
Pea Coal, Delivered,.....	8.50
Nut Coal, on board cars,.....	9.00
Pea Coal, on board cars,.....	8.00
Egg Coal, Delivered,.....	9.25
Egg Coal, on board cars.....	8.75

SOFT COAL	
Splint, Delivered,.....	\$6.25
Splint, on board cars,.....	5.75
Pocahontas Lump, delivered.....	7.25
" " on cars.....	6.75
Washed Egg, delivered.....	5.50
" " on cars.....	5.00

SMART & TREDINNICK

******PHOTO AND DOCUMENT DONATIONS ALWAYS APPRECIATED******

If you have any photos or documents on Linden area history we would love to make a copy for our archives. Photos and documents can be scanned and returned to you if desired. Contact either the President or Vice-President listed below, who just happen to be next door neighbors in "East Linden".

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