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# Linden HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## INDIANA COMPANY MAJOR PLAYER IN LINDEN MINES

In the early 1900's an Indianapolis, Indiana group of investors pooled their money into Linden's lead-zinc industry and formed the Optimo mining Corporation. For almost a decade, beginning in 1909, they owned four mines within and adjacent to the village of Linden. The company also constructed and ran the Linden Zinc processing roaster formerly located on Roaster road, on the western edge of Linden.

Each company owned mine, in a different location, had the same name only a different number: Optimo #1; Optimo #2; Optimo #3 and Optimo #4. The impact of the Optimo mining corporation went beyond the operation of the four mines. The company was involved in several other Linden mines including the St. Croix and the Gilman mine property adjacent to the old Linden cemetery on cave road.

The Indiana investors had earlier formed the Frontier Mining Company with mines at Benton and Hazel Green where they made handsome dividends. Frontier was actively involved in the rich Lafayette county mines from 1905 onward. When the company first entered Linden they decided to form a new separate entity—The Optimo mining corporation. The Linden Zinc Company was also organized as a separate organization but with the same team of corporate officers as the Optimo.



This was the first mill constructed by the Optimo company at the very end of Valley street in Linden

The four Optimo mines here were all very profitable for the corporate shareholders as well. The Linden Zinc company flourished during the zinc mining boom but no documents or records survive to indicate how successful it may have been.

The Optimo company in 1909 purchased from local resident and mining promoter Levi Pollard the option on the John Adams property, straight East past the end of Valley street in Linden. Adams' property adjoined land owned by the Dark Horse mine which still has some waste rock piles remaining on Valley Street.

Pollard was active in the lead-zinc district mining circles and may have started the interest in the Adams property with the Frontier company even though he himself was unsuccessful on the lot. It was Pollards conviction that the Dark Horse orebody continued onto Adams' land and prospect drilling by Frontier proved that to be true.

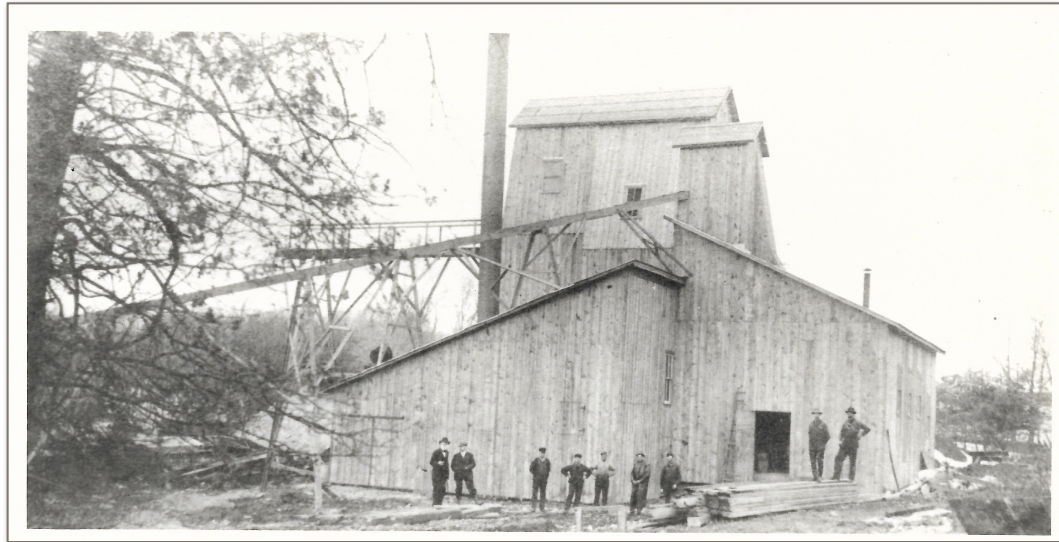
The newly formed Optimo mining company hit a bonus when they sunk the main shaft on the Adams property and struck a surprise sheet of solid zinc, missed by prospect drilling.

By August, 1909 the *Linden Conservative* newspaper reported that the Optimo had the mill and above ground machinery installed and were working with two shifts of miners underground. In December, 1909 the Optimo bought out the adjacent Dark Horse mine for \$20,000 and combined the two operations into one.

The Cornish miners in Linden, with their dialect habit of putting H's where they don't belong, called this new mine the "Hoptimo". Before the Dark Horse takeover, Linden locals quickly gave the original Optimo the nickname of "White Horse" mine.

The Dark Horse and Optimo #1 mines worked the same orebody that was more than 1,500 feet long with an average width of 130 feet and a height ranging from 6 to 48 feet. There was also a branch of ore that ran southward and then back north similar to a horseshoe.

In July, 1914 the Optimo #1 was abandoned and the company's attention was diverted to a new property in Linden the Optimo #2.



The Optimo #2 mill on the South end of Linden near the railroad depot.

Number two Optimo was located on what is today the John Trace property due West of Miners Park in the valley just South of County X. This was an established mine taken over by Optimo in 1912 and had been extensively mined by a series of companies who worked the same orebody. It appears that mining on this area, near the old railroad depot, involved the Linden Mining Company, then the Mason mine, followed by the Mifflin and Linden mining company who sold out to the New Jersey Zinc Company, and finally the Optimo #2.

Optimo #2 followed a zinc ore vein from the valley across Galena Street and broke into the underground workings of the old Anaconda mine, last worked in the 1890's. Considerable zinc ore was mined out of the Anaconda by Optimo. Newspaper and mining trade magazines show that Optimo #2, running two shifts, produced steady results.

The February 17, 1916 *Mineral Point Democrat*, reported, "Optimo No. 2 are milling 10 to 15 tons per shift." A remarkable figure given the previous mining done in the general area prior to Optimo taking over.

While weekly figures were published on a random basis in area newspapers and trade magazines a total production figure from Optimo #2 is not available. The *Geology of the Upper Mississippi Valley Zinc-Lead district*, stated, "The production from this mine is not known but undoubtedly a considerable tonnage of high-grade lead, zinc, and zinc carbonate was mined."

Sometime late in 1915, Optimo #2 was abandoned and the Optimo company was already established on the North end of Linden by this time with Optimo #3. In the January newsletter a brief look at Optimo mines three & four.

## LINDEN SCHOOL NEWS FROM 1911



This frame school building was in use until it was destroyed by fire in January, 1913.

The *Linden Reporter* newspaper is on micro-film at the Mineral Point Archives on loan from the Linden Historical Society. The school news is selected from October and November 1911.

**October 12, 1911:** All pupils bringing their dinners to school will hereafter have to eat in the High School room. One of the faculty will also eat dinner in the High School so as to preserve order during the noon hour. All members of the High School who come in tardy will hereafter have to stay after school.

**November 9, 1911:** Linden takes Rank Among the Best Equipped High Schools of This Section of the State. The physics laboratory at the High School has recently been fitted with water supply and a sink for experimental purposes. The building was wired for electric lights last Saturday. Nine lights were placed in the high school room, which will furnish a good light for the Literary Society and for lectures and entertainments.

Some very satisfactory results were shown by the examinations last week. There was a marked improvement in English on some of the papers. Some of the pupils are advised to study harder the next quarter.

## CHRISTMAS MORNING IN LINDEN - 1911 STYLE

From the December 21, 1911 *Linden Reporter* newspaper

The sportsmen of this village are arranging to hold a shooting match in this village on December 25, at 10:30 a.m. Clay pigeon, standing target and rifle shooting matches will be held. All the sportsmen in the country should be present to prove their ability.

## LINDEN MAN IN MINERAL POINT HIGH STREET ACCIDENT

From the October 12, 1871 *Mineral Point Tribune*

A young man named Richards, residing in Linden, was driving a team down High Street, when the gearing became in some way detached, allowing the wagon to run onto the horses. This so frightened them that they became unmanageable, and ran at the top of their speed down the street, the wagon swaying from side to side, the tongue dragging on the ground. At the corner of Chestnut street the point of the tongue struck under the covered water course, careening the wagon over and throwing Mr. Richards 15 feet into the air, and landing him in the middle of High Street. The horses got free from the wagon as it tipped, and ran round to the north side of City Hall and stopped. It is almost miraculous that Mr. Richards was not seriously hurt.

### \*\*\*\* 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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#### CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL FOR RENEWAL TIME

If the date to the right of your name on the envelope your newsletter arrived in reads 10-16, your membership is due for renewal on October, 2016.

New or renewal memberships to the Linden Historical Society are \$10 per year for either individual or family. We now offer a lifetime membership for \$100. Make check payable to Linden Historical Society and send to Jim Jewell, 2073 Sunny Slope Road, Mineral Point, WI 53565