

Itasca Reflections

By Don Boese

Coleraine Re-visited

To conclude the "Coleraine Re-visited" series as the Model Town celebrates its centennial, let's look again at the remarkable story of Coleraine's "window to the world," the Coleraine Lab:

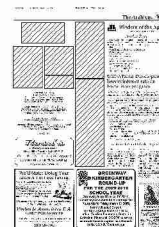
The USS Coleraine Lab facility was leased to the University of Minnesota, Duluth, in 1986. A reunion of those who had worked there (and when it was in Duluth) was held in September of that year and an effort to preserve memories and accomplishments of the lab in Coleraine resulted in a 100 page book. No author or authors are listed and no date of publication or publisher is provided in the work. It was an anonymous project designed as a "memory-jogger for all those who have worked over the past four decades on research projects for USS in Minnesota, North America, and around the world." Perusal of "People

and Projects - U. S. Steel Research, Duluth, 1943-1962, Coleraine, 1962 - 1986," provides many interesting stories and much useful information.

As no exploration for new sources of iron ore took place during WW II, and as available ore sources had been seriously depleted to fuel the war effort, the period between 1945 to about 1960 saw world-wide search for new iron ore deposits. Research was required to effectively utilize the differing ores from those new mines. The Oliver Iron Mining Company supplied much of the ore used by the steel corporation and in 1943, a new research facility was established in Duluth. The designated four-story building was remodeled and by 1947, a staff of 21 was working in what was referred to by some as "the world's greatest iron ore research

laboratory." For sixteen years the Duluth Grand Avenue facility served the Oliver's research needs and experimented with many differing types of ore. Then, by 1962, the steel industry was in a state of retrenchment, and closing the lab was given consideration by the Oliver management.

At that time the general superintendent position (first held by John Greenway and then by a succession of able administrators ending with E. A. Friedman) for the defunct Canisteo District was to be replaced by Hibbing-based personnel and buildings in Coleraine were to be vacated. C. F. Beukema, the new Oliver president, was interested in possibilities inherent in the oxidized taconites of the western Mesabi. For that reason and with those available buildings, the lab was saved. Everything in the Duluth facility was sent to Coleraine and most of the staff made the move also finding housing in Coleraine or Grand Rapids. Important ore projects lay ahead for the researchers and their support staff.



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