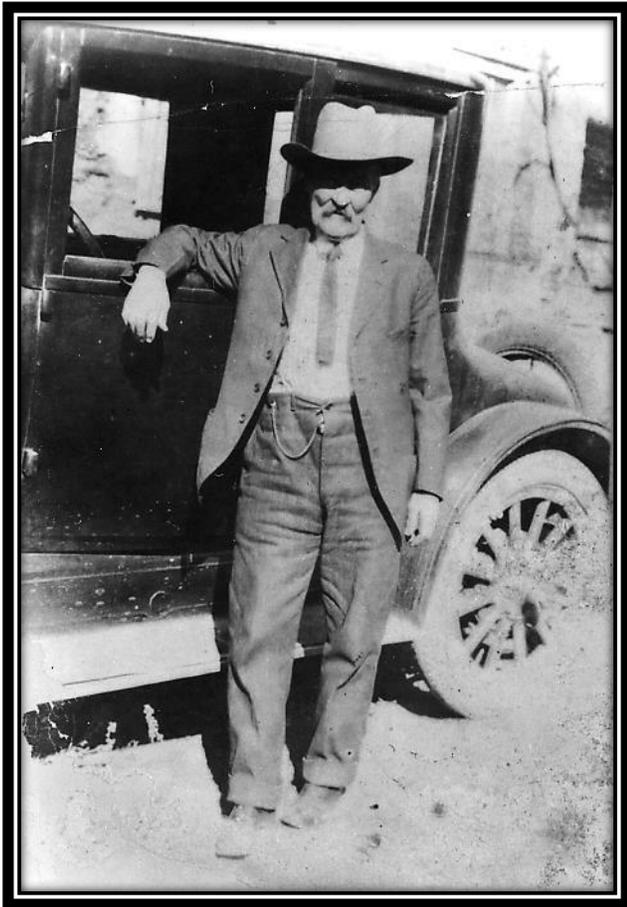


MENOMINEE RANGE MEMORIES 7: JAMES AND WILLIAM DICKIE'S TRADING POSTS IN BREITUNG TOWNSHIP

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James S. Dickie
[Menominee Range Historical Museum]

James S. and William Dickie, among Dickinson County's earliest pioneers, established two trading posts in Breitung Township, then a part of Menominee County. One trading post was located about a mile and a half northwest of Quinnesec and the other was located off the northwestern part of the western shore of Lake Antoine.

Their surname is found spelled Dickie or Dickey in various documents and contemporary newspaper accounts and journals.

Although contemporary accounts show the Dickies trading with the Indians and providing basic supplies to early explorers by 1871, the lands occupied by their trading

posts were not recorded until 1878. Almost all contemporary accounts mention stopping at Dickie's on the old State Road until about 1880, when the Dickie brothers pursued other occupations.

James Dickey was listed as living in Marinette Township, Oconto County, Wisconsin, in the 1875 Wisconsin State Census.

Dickinson County Court House records show a warranty deed was issued to William Dickie on June 27, 1878, and recorded at the Menominee County Court House on December 22, 1879 for the NE $\frac{1}{4}$, the NW $\frac{1}{4}$, the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ and the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 33, Town 40 North of Range 30 West for the sum of \$1,000.

A deed dated November 11, 1878 shows James S. Dickie held the W $\frac{1}{2}$ of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 19, Town 40 North of Range 30 West and the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 19, Town 40 North of Range 30 West. The SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 19 is located off the northwestern portion of the western part of Lake Antoine.

In his book *Be-Wa-Bic Country: The Story of the Menominee in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan*, Iron County author Herbert F. Larson, Sr., mentioned Donald C. MacKinnon's stop at Dickie's trading post at Lake Antoine.

MacKinnon, the founder of Iron River, came to Marquette from Toronto, Canada, in 1865, working as a carpenter. In 1877 he began exploring in what became Iron County.

Larson's account of MacKinnon's trip from Quinnesec to the Nanaimo Mine gives an indication of what backwoods travel was like in 1877, as he returned after recording his land at the land office in Marquette.

A wagon loaded with equipment and supplies which weighed about 1,000 pounds was all a good team of horses could handle over the rough trail.

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The teamster sat on a high seat which was fastened on the end of two long limber poles of elm which were securely anchored on each side of the wagon box, near the rear, on the outside of the wagon box. This gave plenty of spring. The driver, in order to stay in his seat, was fastened in by means of a safety belt. The men did not ride but walked behind the wagon.

The road from Quinnesec to Florence was fairly good, passing through a dense pine forest. At Section 30 (later Iron Mountain) there were only a few scattered cabins. Test-pitting was in operation where the Chapin Mine was later discovered.

The horses were watered and fed and the men had lunch and smoked when they reached Dickie's trading post at Lake Antoine.

The men crossed the Menominee River over the new bridge at Twin Falls where Tom King and Jerome Dakota had previously operated their ferry service.

Located on a hill overlooking the river valley was a fairly large log building operated by Paul Miller and his wife as an inn for travelers which included several separate bedrooms. Over its main entrance was a cedar shake on which was painted in large letters: "Montreal Badwater House." Everything was neat and tidy, and the rustic hostelry had the reputation of serving a fine table. A barn stood nearby for the horses and a large well-kept garden furnished the vegetables.

Reaching Florence late in the afternoon, the men made their first night's stop at Joel Waters' boarding house.

Following the supply road to Stephenson's Camp, later known as Washburn's Camp, on the Michigan side of the Brulé River the next day, the men took the Chicagon Lake Indian trail, entering a great plain covered by a giant pine forest which extended almost to Chicagon Lake.

Leaving the pine forest, they encountered a tract of hardwood which extended all the way to the Iron River. At Chicagon Lake, they spent the second night at the Indian village, as guests of Mr. and Mrs. Tom King, who had moved up from Badwater, operating a half-way house with accommodations for eight men and four horses.

Larson also noted that early in the summer of 1877 William Holmes started for the north from Menominee with a party including his son, William A. Holmes, David and Charley Kakatosh, Menominee Indians – who besides being skilled canoemen were also top-notch timber cruisers – and two additional Menominee Indian canoemen.

Taking the train at Menominee, the party went as far as Powers, where a work train took them to Vulcan, which was then the end of the line.

There one of the Kirby-Carpenter Company's lumber teams met them and transported their supplies over the supply road to Dickie's trading post at Lake Antoine, where the party spent the night.

The road passed through a dense pine forest from Vulcan to the Badwater Indian village on the Menominee River. When the party passed through Section 30, where Iron Mountain was later located, the only inhabitants were a few Indians encamped near where the St. Paul depot later stood (100 block of East B Street). Kakatosh said these were Badwater Indians.

Reaching the trading post, the party saw a large, comfortable, well-built log building situated in the middle of a clearing bordering on a lake and surrounded by a dense pine forest.

Coming up from Marinette, Wisconsin, Dickie had homesteaded his one hundred and sixty acres, the SE ¼ of Section 19, T40-R30 in 1871. Over the entrance of the

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log building was a weather beaten sign which read: You Are Welcome – Dickie's Trading Post.

"This building served as Dickie's home, general store, tavern and inn, where travelers could spend the night, be served meals, and even be outfitted for a trip into the wilderness if their wants were not too great.

"At first, Dickie had to haul all his supplies from Marinette, Wisconsin, which was a ten-day round trip, but when the railroad reached Quinnesec, Michigan, that town became the trading center of the area. A large building stood in back of the inn. It served as a stable and barn.

"Alongside of it was a well-kept garden which supplied Dickie's table with fresh vegetables. He also raised enough potatoes to supply his yearly wants. The Indians of that area brought in their furs, skins, fish and venison in exchange for salt pork, tobacco, blankets, clothing, traps, guns and ammunition, and such fancy articles as beads and shawls, etc.

"The first years of the Trading Post were lonesome years for the panic of 1873 hit the surrounding area hard. When the nation recovered and with the discovery of iron ore by the Breen Brothers [Thomas and Bartley Breen] to the South, prospectors and timber cruisers flocked into the area and business became so good that Dickie's brother Jim [James S. Dickie] joined him to run the establishment. When they heard that the railroad was going to push on to Florence, Wisconsin, they knew their days were numbered.

"As the team and men came into Dickie's clearing, they were spied by a barking dog who ran to meet them. They also heard the ring of a blacksmith's hammer. Hearing the dog's bark, a man stepped out of a building which served as the blacksmith's shop. He peered down the

road to see what was coming. When he saw that the team was going to stop, he walked forward and with outstretched hands greeted Mr. Holmes, who had gotten off the wagon.

"The next morning, bright and early, the party, accompanied by Tom King, bid Dickie good-bye and left for the Badwater Indian village situated on the banks of the Menominee River on Lot 4, Section 30, T41N-R30W.

"Two miles below the village they passed a new iron bridge which was being constructed across the river to supplant the ferry service. The ferry no longer could handle the traffic and Paul Minkler's [sic – Paul Miller's] Montreal Badwater House, a resting place greatly appreciated by the traveling public. When they arrived at the Indian village, their supplies and camping equipment were loaded into two birch bark canoes which were purchased from Tom King for fifteen dollars each."

In the November 3, 1877 edition of *The Mining Journal*, an explorer identified simply as "P.D." submitted an article entitled "A Trip to the Menominee Range" in which he mentioned the Dickie brothers' trading post.

"Having just returned from a trip to the Menominee iron range, I herewith enclose you a brief outline of my experience in that important, but yet undeveloped region. Arriving at Forty-Two, or 'Powers,' as it is now called, I found everything in a flourishing condition. The place is laid out for a town, but the only buildings there as yet are a post-office and several boarding houses. The boarding houses are all full to overflowing.

"Leaving there next morning, I arrived at the Quinnesec [*Mine*] during a heavy rain. At this place four buildings are going up, and are so much needed that they are being filled with merchandise while yet in an unfinished state. While here I called on

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John McKenna, of course, who is running a drug store at this place. John seems to be doing well, and is glad to see a Lake Superior man at any time.

"I then went over to Dickey Brothers' place, which is a mile and a half distant. The Dickey Brothers have kept an Indian trading post at this place for the last six years, and while there I examined some most magnificent furs procured from Indians and trappers."

From here visits were made to Badwater, Miller's Ferry and the Commonwealth Mine.

In April, 1879, William Dickie was elected commissioner of highways for Breitung Township.

George Frederick Seibert, pioneer Iron Mountain druggist, recorded his stop at Dickie's Trading Post in his journal during a trip up the Menominee River in 1879.

"Sunday Morning, May 6, 1879: Arrived at Dickey's at 6:30 [p.m.] and was not favorably impressed by the outside appearance, but found myself mistaken in my estimate of the place. We got a splendid supper and found a very pleasant woman in Mrs. Dickey...Had a smoke and was standing in the store...when two Redmen came in and commenced talking with the Dickeys. The only thing I understood was "kee win" (no friend). The Dickeys being traders and buyers of furs spoke the Indian dialect fluently, and kept up a conversation for over half an hour with them. The Indians took some crackers and drank some – gin, I think it was, and then made as they would go, but they hung around for a long time even after we went to bed. The Dickeys, I think, are very nice people, but I don't think they would scruple at anything to make money. The selling of liquor to Indians is punished severely, but they did it. They have furs of all kinds in their store, fisher, otter, beaver, lynx, mink,

fox, etc. They keep overalls, cigars, tobacco, pipes, whisky, prints, and groceries. Store is small, but large enough to do all their trading with the Reds."

A brief item in the July 12, 1879 edition of Escanaba's *The Iron Port* read as follows: "Last Sunday while William Leahey was jumping out of a wagon at Dickie's camp, four miles from Quinnesec, he had the misfortune to break a bone of his leg and dislocate the ankle joint. Dr. North was summoned and soon he had him in good shape again."

Dickey & McDonald were also listed as wagonmakers in Quinnesec in the *Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory* for 1879, published by R.L. Polk & Company. This was probably William Dickey.

James S. Dickie was listed as living in Breitung Township, Menominee County, Michigan, in the 1880 U.S. Census. At that time he was a mining boss, who was born in Canada in 1846. His wife, Alice, born in Canada in 1850, was residing with him, as were six laborers who boarded with the Dickies: Mitchell Morin, 44; Thomas Currie, 22; John McLean, 24; August Lund, 29; Htos. Murray, 28; and James O'Mally, 19.

Also listed in the 1880 U.S. Census as living in Breitung Township, Menominee County, Michigan, was William Dickie, operating a livery stable, who was born in Canada in 1840. His wife, Mary, born in Canada in 1852, was residing with him, as were their two children, James E., 8, born in Wisconsin in 1872, and Mary E., 6, born in Wisconsin in 1874.

An interesting article about James Dickey, a resident of Norway, appeared in the February 19, 1881 edition of *The Florence Mining News*, providing more background information:

"Mr. James Dickey, of Norway, one of the resolute pioneers of this section of the country, happened in to see us on Saturday

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last. Mr. Dickey is one of the oldest settlers and explorers in this region.

"Before the unbroken forest ever heard the yell of the locomotive, or hardly saw the tracks a wagon made, he had penetrated and wandered over this solitary wilderness, from the mouth of the Menominee to the head waters of the Brule – often carrying a pack which would have tired a much stronger man – through tangled cedar swamps across sand plains and over rough and rocky hills. Many a noon he was taking his mid-day lunch, without even removing his snowshoes, and at night when tired and exhausted has lain down in his trusty mackinaw blankets, on the snow, with nothing to intervene between him and the starry heavens above.

"He has passed through many exciting scenes of pioneer life, – one especially, – when a pack of starving wolves kept him awake all night. They approached so far, that at times it seemed as though he could almost have hit some of them with a long pole, and they varied this amusement roaming up very close to the camp and giving short barks, with making a chorus of howls, that made the old woods ring and the sensitive twigs stand on end. In the morning he and his companions counted the remains of four deer killed during the night by these ferocious brutes.

"Mr. Dickey is still a young man and has many years of usefulness before him. He is now interested in exploring the S ½ of the SW ¼ of section 24, 40-17 for iron, with an abundant show of success."

Under "Range Items" in the May 14, 1881 edition of Escanaba's *The Iron Port*, an item taken from Norway's *The Iron Chronicle* of May 7 noted: "Felch will run a tri-weekly stage from Norway to Felch Mountain, leaving on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, at 9:45 a.m."

The following week *The Iron Port*, quoting from *The Iron Chronicle* of May 14, announced: "Dickie runs a line of stages to Felch Mountain."

Since the item originated in Norway's newspaper, it must be James S. Dickie.

In the *History of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan*, published in 1883, the following biographical sketch appeared:

"WILLIAM DICKIE, livery and feed stable, was born in New Brunswick in 1840; came to the United States in 1865; located at Saginaw for two years, in the lumber business; then went to Marinette four years; then to Section 33, buying fur from Indians for nine years, and came to Norway in 1880; here [*Norway*] he has a livery stable and blacksmith shop; at Iron Mountain, Mich., owns 160 acres on Section 33."

The Florence Mining News, in its September 1, 1883 edition, reported a fire at Norway on Wednesday, August 29, which destroyed William Dickie's livery stable.

"On Wednesday morning at about 2 o'clock a fire broke out at John O'Callaghan's Opera House, at the foot of Main Street, which had just been fitted up, and opened as a roller skating rink. The blaze spread unimpeded to adjoining buildings and consumed in short order William Dickie's livery, Lieberthal's clothing store, and the old Nicholson drug store, which contained some stock. The loss is estimated at \$25,000, with small insurance. The origin of the fire is shrouded in mystery."

In the 1884 Michigan State Census, James Dickie, 39, born in New Brunswick, Canada, was listed as living in Menominee County with his wife Alice, 36, born in New Brunswick, and their daughter Mary, 7, born in Michigan.

In the April 18, 1885 edition of Norway's *The Current*, it was reported that "James S.

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Dickie has disposed of his livery stable here to Dan Shannon, of Iron Mountain, who is now in possession."

Less than a year later, *The Current* announced in its January 2, 1886 issue that "James Dickie has opened a saloon at the old stand of Hubbard & Hartman on the Curry location."

Under the column "Norway Nuggets" in its January 29, 1887 edition, *The Florence Mining News* reported: "James S. Dickie and others are exploring on the southwest quarter of the northwest quarter of section 13, 39-29. The showing so far looks decidedly encouraging."

By April 18, 1889, James Dickie was residing in Iron River, according to Iron Mountain's *The Menominee Range*.

In the 1894 Michigan State Census for Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, James S. Dickie was listed.

In the June 4, 1896 edition of the *Iron Mountain Press* in the column "Mining News Notes" the following was reported: Capt. James Dickey went to Marquette yesterday morning for the purpose of securing the Keweenaw association's diamond drill. It is the intention to resume exploratory work on the Bond lands in Iron county.

A month and a half later in "Mining News Notes" the July 23, 1896 edition of the *Iron Mountain Press* reported: "Capt. James Dickey is expecting Mr. Bond, the Toledo capitalist, here next week, when arrangements will probably be made to resume exploratory work on that gentleman's lands in Iron county."

A month later, in the August 27, 1896 edition of the *Iron Mountain Press*, under the headline "The Yellow Metal – Promising Gold Discovery on Canal Lands in the Pine Creek Region," the following article appeared:

"Capt. James Dickie, the veteran explorer, was employed this week in locating Louis Paul and a number of other Scandinavian gold finders on five forties of Canal company lands in the Pine Creek country.

"Paul and the others have secured options on the lands, and claim to have discovered rich gold bearing rock on the property. The men are very close-mouthed about their find and decline to give any information about their find beyond the fact that they have found the yellow metal in paying quantities.

"On Tuesday last, S. Dessau, president of the Dessau Mining company, and Benjamin Levy, a capitalist from New York, visited the 'gold region,' and if satisfactory proof is given them that the find is a bona fide one they will no doubt find the necessary capital to develop the properties.

"Capt. Dickie tells The Press that eleven years ago James Elwood, Capt. Pease, Bartley Breen and himself discovered gold in that same section, but the rock carried such a small percentage of the precious metal they did not deem it worth well [*sic - worthwhile*] investigating the find at that time. He thinks this may be a continuation of the same vein, and is inclined to believe that the men have a good thing."

As evidenced by the following item in the June 21, 1900 issue of the *Iron Mountain Press*, William had moved to Montana in about 1884:

"Wm. Dickey, of Billings, Montana, formerly a resident of this city [*Iron Mountain*], arrived last night to visit his brother, James. The two brothers had a trading post in the seventies near the present site of the Quinnesec cemetery, and afterward Wm. Dickey kept a livery barn here. He left Iron Mountain sixteen years ago and now has a stock ranch in Montana."

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In the 1900 U.S. Census, William Dickey, 64, born in Canada in February, 1836, was living with his wife Mary, 57, in Laurel Canyon Creek, South Billings, Yellowstone County, Montana.

In the *Directory of the Cities of Iron Mountain and Norway and Villages of Quinnesec and Vulcan, Mich., 1902-1903*, James S. Dickey, a landlooker, boarded at the Central House, 106 East B Street, Iron Mountain.

An advertisement in September 10, 1904 issue of *The Current* noted a "mortgage sale, dated October 6, 1893, executed by Alice Dickie of Iron Mountain and William Dickie, of the city of Billings, County of Yellowstone, Montana."

In *J.W. Shannon & Co.'s Iron Mountain Directory 1905-1906*, James Dickie was listed as having a farm in the "village of Lake Antoine."

However, an item in the June 22, 1905 edition of the *Iron Mountain Press* suggests Dickie had returned to Iron County, Michigan:

"Capt. James Dickey has closed a deal with a Milwaukee concern for the Paint Mine which he discovered some weeks ago, mention of which was made in The Press. The deal was a favorable one. It is the purpose of the Milwaukee parties to develop and mine the deposits as soon as details can be arranged."

Another item, appearing in the *Iron Mountain Press* on April 12, 1906, has Dickie in New Mexico:

"Capt. James Dickey sends The Press a copy of the Silver City, New Mexico Independent containing an exhaustive write up of the mines in the vicinity of that camp. Capt. Dickey is the manager of the Copper Gorge Developing Co., which is opening several properties in the district, and Independent compliments him on the good

work he is doing. The property is referred to as an excellent one."

Less than four months later, in the August 2, 1906 issue of the *Iron Mountain Press*, readers noted:

"Capt. James S. Dickie was down last Sunday and Monday from Watersmeet where he is superintending the work of demolishing the old buildings erected years ago by the Crozer Lumber Co. The material will be shipped to this city."

Seven months later, *The Current*, in its March 2, 1907 edition, reported:

"Capt. James Dickie and C.T. McElroy, former well-known citizens of this place, have, in company with John B. Weimer, formed a new copper company to be known as the Native Copper Co. The capital stock of the company is \$1,500,000. The property of the new concern is located in Honover [*sic* – *Hanover*], Grove County, N.M. A branch office has been located in Milwaukee."

In the *Directory of Iron Mountain and Norway and Dickinson County Gazetteer for the Years 1907-1908*, W. Dickey is listed as an engineer, boarding at the Raymond Hotel at 217 East A Street, Iron Mountain.

In the Montana Death Index, the death date of William Dickey, 88, estimated birth year of 1829, was given as December 15, 1917. Even though the birthdate doesn't coincide, this is likely the William Dickey who lived here.

No further information on James S. and William Dickie has been found to date.