

Antique Village brings the past to life



Andie Balenger | Daily Press Blacksmith Rebecca Tebear keeps busy with her hammer and anvil at the Ten Mile Creek Forge, which is located within the U.P. Steam and Gas Engine Association's Antique Village. While the forge belongs to Tebear's father, master blacksmith George Potvin, the two are just one of many store-runners who sell their handmade good at the Antique Village.

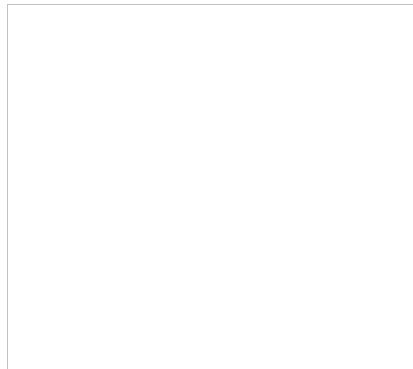
ESCANABA — Throughout the summer, the U.P. Steam and Gas Engine Association has been transporting people back in time through their Antique Village. The village, located at the U.P. State Fairgrounds in Escanaba, is a miniature town that was designed to replicate the feel of every day life for those living during the early 1900s. With live demonstrations, various shops, and historic displays, visitors get to a chance *"experience living history"* while touring the space.

"At the Antique Village, we try to bring back and keep all of the old crafts going," Joanne Dufour, member of the U.P. Steam and Gas Engine Association, said.

With a goal of preserving items of historical value, the U.P. Steam and Gas Engine Association teamed up with the U.P. State Fair in 1974 to develop the Antique Village. Considered an interactive learning experience, the village welcomes visitors to explore every nook and cranny of the nearly two acre town. With no entry fee, guests can peruse quaint shops, purchase handmade products, or observe a 1920s windmill in action.

“We strive to keep that era of history alive, to teach crafts, and to let people know where we came from,” Dufour said. “It is amazing to see some of the ingenious things that were made back in the day to benefit what they needed to have done.”

As part of its annual *“Summer in the Village”* experience, the U.P. Steam and Gas Engine Association has been opening the village to the public every Thursday, from 12 to 4:00 p.m., since Memorial Day. The village currently houses over 30 attractions for visitors to enjoy, most of which are related to the regional history that continues to define life in the U.P. For instance, a small trapper’s cabin rests within the village, equipped with information about the once popular fur industry that dominated the area.



New to the village this summer is designated crafting lessons.

“Every other week, we have been doing some kind of craft or teaching,” Dufour said. “We are more than willing to teach anything that anybody might want to learn. I have been teaching knitting. I will be teaching spinning.”

From a school house, containing antique furniture pieces donated by a local school, to a telegraph office, which holds a wide variety of communication devices, these functional displays provide a enjoyable method of hands-on learning for attendees. Outside these buildings are several unique pieces of local history, including the Murphy Diesel Engine and a saw mill that dates back to 1869.

“The sawmill is of great interest to everybody,” Dufour said. “We don’t have it running at this time because it is too much to get it up and running.”

While not every shop is open at the Thursday events, due to store-runner availability, the handmade goods, trinkets, and meals that are available vary tremendously. Visitors interested in trying their hand at baking can head to the village granary, where they can purchase baking grains, flours, and even fresh baked goods. During fair week and Labor Day weekend, lunch can be purchased at the village’s *“Cook Shack,”* with dessert to follow at the 1930s inspired *“Scoop and Float Ice Cream Shop.”*

Dufour’s shop, the *“Fiber Boutique and Candle Shop,”* offers handmade candles, knit and felt work, and a variety of alpaca yarns. As a spinner, Dufour likes to teach as much as she can. In fact, she keeps extra spinning wheels on standby for those looking to try out the craft.

Rebecca Tebear, a functional blacksmith, grew up in the Antique Village. At just eight years old, Tebear would regularly accompany her father, master blacksmith George Potvin, in his shop.

“I have been working underneath my father since I can remember,” Tebear said. “I remember I used to go and turn the crank on the forge for him and I remember telling him ‘Let’s go make the iron hot.’”

As a functional blacksmith, Tiber specializes in stove pokers, tripods, dinner bells, and custom copper pieces when working the forge. Potvin, however, is a master knife maker. With his work, Potvin makes his own Damascus steel, knife blades, and custom handles made of exotic woods or deer antlers. Most of the time, Potvin will scrimshaw unique images onto the knife handles.

According to Tebear, the Antique Village’s friendly atmosphere and educational nature keeps her coming back.

“I love blacksmithing and I am really excited to get the kids involved. I want to spark their interest,” Tebear said. “I love the people in the [U.P. Steam and Gas Engine Association]. Everybody is really friendly.”

The village has been welcoming more guests than usual this summer season. Oftentimes, families with young children can be seen strolling the dirt roads that loop throughout the town. More recently, members of the U.P. Steam and Gas Engine Association have been preparing the Antique Village and Agricultural Museum, which features a variety of historical artifacts, for Fair Week. According to Dufour, Fair Week is when the village is most buzzing with visitors.

“Members have been working diligently ... to create new things in the museum and to bring new things out,” Dufour said. “We have so many articles that have been given to us, so we are trying to change things out.”

The Antique Village’s fair hours are Monday, August 15, from 5 to 8 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. The village will continue to open every Thursday, from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m., until the U.P. Steam and Gas Engine Show on Labor Day weekend, which will conclude Summer in the Village. Visit www.upsteamandgasengine.org for more information regarding the Antique Village, Agricultural Museum, and other annual events.

“[The Antique Village] is quite unique and there is something for everybody here,” Dufour said.

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