

The Gatherings of Cornish Cousins

The first *Gathering* took place in 1982, in Detroit. *Gatherings* have become biennial events since, attracting people of Cornish descent and those with interest in the Celtic land of Cornwall. Attendance has grown steadily, reflecting the desire of many to learn more about their roots and to reestablish ties with the land of their ancestry.

Gatherings are hosted by local associations of Cornish descendants. California, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Ontario have experienced invasions of Cornish Cousins in the past twelve years. Each area highlights its special history of Cornish settlement and works toward preservation of cultural heritage. In 2005, the 13th Gathering will welcome attendees to North Carolina.

The History of Michigan's Involvement

Those familiar with mining history will not be surprised that Michigan has hosted three *Gatherings*. Michigan's Upper Peninsula attracted many Cornish people to extract rich deposits of iron and copper. The 2nd *Gathering* highlighted that attraction in Houghton.

The 8th Gathering in 1995 exceeded all expectations for attendance. Held in Calumet, termed by some from Cornwall to be the most Cornish town of all, it attracted people from 24 American states, 4 Canadian provinces, 2 Australian states and 2 counties in England in addition to Cornwall. A man from New Jersey expressed his hope that this would not be the last *Gathering* held in Calumet. He said, "It's wonderful here. You still have most of the history. Please do it again."

The 2001 visit of the Holman-Climax Male Voice Choir added encouragement. Choir members voiced such sentiments as:

It was from here (Calumet) that the choir was most reluctant to move, developing a closeness with their hosts in a few short days.

About a visit to the Central Mine Methodist Church:

Its wooden doors pushed open, shafts of sunlight fell through dust-filled air, and for the first time in many generations it was filled with Cornish folk. To sit there and feel the spirits of all those folk of long ago was overwhelming... If there was a defining moment on the tour, this was it.

And so, planning began for the 14th Gathering of Cornish Cousins to be held in Calumet and Central Mine. Again, the common experiences of Cornish immigrants around the world will bring their descendants to examine the interaction of different cultures. Choir voices will resound in traditional songs. People from all over North America will exchange notes on genealogy, compare variations on pastie recipes, and make plans to meet again, either at another *Gathering* or in Cornwall.

Cornish-Americans, it seems, are as eager as their ancestors were to travel anywhere.