

Jasper Knob



This 5' x 7' banded iron ore boulder is displayed on an exterior plinth at the entrance to the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in Washington D.C. It is approximately 1.74 billion years old. One side is cut and polished. The boulder came from Ishpeming, Michigan and was installed on March 16, 1985.

Competition For The Prize

"An outcrop...was a beautiful sight. On the north side of the hill it was a perpendicular bluff of about fifty feet of pure iron ore and jasper in alternate streaks, but more jasper than iron....." Philo Everett, ca. 1846

News of the "Mountain of Ore" attracted investors. Competition for the rock outcrop led to an ongoing dispute between the Cleveland Mining Company and the Marquette Iron Company. Each company sent workers to live at the site until the mining claim was secured. Cabins were built and burned, potatoes, parsnips and carrots planted and pulled. Finally after seven years, the Marquette Iron Company secured title to the knob.

With only shovels and picks, the miners eagerly attacked the prize but were unable to break the hard jasper. Later mining engineers determined that the site is a large granite knob only thinly covered with banded jasper and hematite. It was worthless for mining but valued today for panoramic views from its summit.



IOHT Graphic

How to Find Jasper Knob

Follow the stone steps through the wall and woods near the intersection of Hill and Jasper Streets. Climb the hill by following the pathway to the top. GPS of hilltop: 46° 29.208' North, 87° 39.275' West.



Leo LaFond Photo

Ishpeming from top of Jasper Knob - looking northwest
Three shafts of the Cliffs Shaft Mine are visible to the right of center in this photograph.



The bluff is composed of overlying Jasphilite, a sedimentary rock composed of silver gray specular hematite, with alternating bands of red jasper and quartz.