

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Soudan Iron Mine  
AND/OR COMMON Tower-Soudan State Park

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER Tower-Soudan State Park  
CITY, TOWN Soudan  
STATE Minnesota  
CODE 27  
VICINITY OF  VICINITY OF  
COUNTY St. Louis  
CODE 137  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 008 (eighth)  
NOT FOR PUBLICATION

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Mr. John Herhusky, Manager 2, Department of Natural Resources  
STREET & NUMBER Tower-Soudan State Park  
CITY, TOWN Soudan  
STATE Minnesota  
VICINITY OF Minnesota  
55782

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. St. Louis County Courthouse  
STREET & NUMBER  
CITY, TOWN Duluth  
STATE Minnesota

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Historic Sites Survey  
DATE 1966  
 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Historic Sites Survey  
CITY, TOWN Washington  
STATE D.C.

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Soudan Iron Mine extends to a depth of 2,500 feet, with drifts or tunnels running three-fourths of a mile to the east and west of the main shaft. A number of original structures remain intact from the mining period these include: the engine house. Its 3000 feet of cable weighs 3 1/2 tons and, hoisting with a 600 horsepower motor and 39 foot cable drum, can lift ore and rock at 1000 feet per minute. A 500 horsepower air compressor, the transformers, D.C. generators and boilers are also located here; pumping stations. One is maintained on the 12th, 22nd, and 27th levels. These pump water out of the mines at the rate of 350 gallons per minute; a crusher house. A single crusher worked here from 1892 until 1924, when a second was installed. Each reduced ore, the hardest in this country, to pieces seven inches in size; the drill shop, where used drill bits were restored to workable condition. A diamond bit would work an average of 30 feet of ore daily at 2400 r.p.m.'s and had to be sharpened by sandblasting; the dry house, which contained 200 lockers, showers and sinks. It is in temporary use as a visitor center until a more permanent structure can be built. The 1,000 acre Tower-Soudan State Park contains the overgrown open pits from the 1884-1890' 1890's period of mining. Also standing are the No. 8 shaft, where underground tours begin, the Alaska shaft (abandoned), and the smokestack from an abandoned brick air compressor north of the mine at Stud's Bay. A parking lot and small picnic area have been developed southwest of the mining center. The railroad which ran up to the crusher building is gone.

#### Addendum:

All of the equipment and structures indicated in the photographs are from the twentieth century mining period, The dates are as follows:

Engine house-1901  
Air compressor- 1925  
Crusher house- 1904  
Drill shop- 1917  
Dryhouse- 1925  
Machine shop-1925

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1884

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Soudan Iron Mine is the oldest and deepest in Minnesota. Its opening in 1884 marked the beginning of the exploitation of one of the richest iron ore deposits in the world and the emergence of Minnesota as the leading iron-ore producing state in America.

The existence of iron ore deposits in Minnesota was reported as early as 1850. But their development occurred only when Charlemagne Tower, a wealthy Pennsylvania industrialist, became interested in the Vermilion Range. After sending Prof. Albert H. Chester to report on both the Mesabi and the Vermilion Ranges, Tower purchased more than 20,000 acres of land in the Vermilion Range in 1880. In 1882 he incorporated the Minnesota Iron Company and a year later gained control of the Duluth and Iron Range Railroad, which he completed in 1884. Tower thus linked his projected mine fields with his own private line to Two Harbors on Lake Superior.

The first iron ore mined in Minnesota was shipped from the Breitung pit of the Soudan mine on July 31, 1884. At its peak production in 1892 the Soudan mine shipped more than 568,000 long tons of high-grade iron ore and employed 1,800 men. Accidents were frequent; a third-generation retired miner at Soudan recalled his grandfather saying that "in the open pit days the wagon went by every day with the bodies." Open pit mining ceased in the 1890's. Silicosis, the iron miner's equivalent of black lung, was contracted by many if not most miners. It was only in 1937 that the CIO first organized some Soudan workers into a labor union.

Active from 1884 until 1962, the mine and 1,000 acres of land were given to the State of Minnesota by U.S. Steel in 1963. The mine is now part of the Tower-Soudan State Park near Tower-Soudan, Minnesota.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Snell, Charles W., "Soudan Iron Mine," Historic Sites Survey report, 1966.  
 Tower Chamber of Commerce, "Soudan Mine History," informational outline.  
 Bob Burke, Ed. "Iron Ore and Men" , Jubilee REoprt.

Jean A Brookins, Minnesota's Historic Sites, St. Paul 1963

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 301

UTM REFERENCES

A	15	5581710	5297340	B	15	5581810	5296200
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	15	5562610	5295810	D	15	5562610	5296650
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Soudan Iron Mine is located entirely within the Tower-Soudan State Park. The park is entirely State-owned and extends north of the actual mining area to Lake Vermilion and Stuntz Bay, providing an historic and unobtrusive setting for the mining area proper. The landmark boundaries include only a portion of the state park. See Continuation sheet.

## LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Stephen Lissandrello, Historian, Landmarks Review Project

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

1/3/76

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street, NW.

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C. 20240

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE     

LOCAL     

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 99-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

Landmark Designated: March 13, 1986  
 Boundary Certified: Emerging  
 Marked: 7/16/76

## FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DATE

*[Signature]*

2/19/76

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

Beginning at the point where the 1500' contour line crosses the state park boundary line, follow the said contour line northeasterly approximately 7000', to a point, thence east to the east section line of Section 27, thence south along said section line for 1250', more or less, to a point, thence west 3375' to a point, thence southwest 3000', more or less, to a point, thence west 750', more or less to the state park boundaryline, thence north along the state park boundaryline to the point of origin.