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Remembering the 51st state that wasn't

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Bruce K. Cox, owner of Agogeebic Press LLC, in front of his poster promoting his latest book: "Ted & Superior: Ted Albert and the 51st State of Superior." (Eric Hjerstedt Sharp/Daily Globe photo)

WAKEFIELD -- Historian and author Bruce K. Cox has always made local history come alive with his pen.

Cox has now stepped forward in time and is above the curve technologically, printing his own book manuscripts and photographs and has developed his own Web site for his publishing company, Agogeebic Press.

Named for Lake Gogebic, which in the 19th century was spelled Agogeebic, his publishing house at 408A Sunday Lake St. in Wakefield is as historic as the books he writes. Built in 1911, the brick building originally housed the Citizens Bank of Wakefield.

The history of the Gogebic Iron Range, once an important American industrial center in the western Upper Peninsula of Michigan and northern Wisconsin, is his field.

He began his research in the early 1980s and published his first book in 1983.

"Agogeebic Press was officially established in 2002 and moved into its present headquarters the following year," Cox said.

He is a Wakefield native and a 1974 graduate of Wakefield High School. He received an associate degree in business in 1976 from Gogebic Community College. In 2003 he graduated from Northern Michigan University with a bachelor of science degree, majoring in history and minoring in business administration.

His academic choices turned out to be a good fit for entering the local history publishing field.

His progress has been steady and prolific. Recent advances in the field of printing and binding books have enabled Cox to excel.

"This past year I have been designing full-color posters produced to advertise and promote my books," he said.

Some of his books have been produced in perfect-bound format.

Perfect-bound books -- book with a spine -- enable self-publishers to distribute and sell books to major book stores.

The author and publisher of two-dozen books, Cox expects his latest book to be off the press this spring.

Entitled "Ted & Superior: Ted Albert and The 51st State of Superior," the book is a true story of the Ironwood lawyer, who, as a legislator, attempted to make the Upper Peninsula the country's next state. The book recounts the story of Yooper separatism and the unfulfilled dream of Albert.

"I think a lot of people will enjoy learning about this man from Ironwood and his 51st State of Superior movement of the 1970s," Cox said.

Cox is already thinking ahead.

"Sometime later this year or next, I want to publish my history of the mining days, focusing on the labor movement at the mines, in hardcover," he said. "This will be my first hardcover book."

He plans to rewrite some of his older books and publish them in perfect-bound format.

Cox sees the past decade as the time he got more involved in technology and made the most progress with his publishing company. The computer age has enabled writers to move into the publishing world in ways that were not possible before the late 20th century.

"I have personally made a lot of improvements in my business over the past ten years," he said. "First, by buying a computer, and learning to use it in my sales and writing/publishing. Then by going back to college to earn a bachelor's degree with major in history."

After that, he bought the downtown building and invested \$3,000 in a digital printer.

He has started applying for International Standard Book Numbers for his books. This will enable him to sell books all over the world.

"Another project I have been working on for many years is a book about the old Indian paths and mining trails that came into the Gogebic Range in the 19th century and earlier times. It will be published as a spiral bound book, and will appeal to people who like to get out and hike and explore."

Combine these improvements with the number and quality of books Cox has written and he has certainly made his mark in the publishing field.

"I am hoping for very little deviation from my march to bigger and better things," Cox said.

"My total lifetime book production will hit 4,000 sometime in the coming year or so. This is a modest number, but still an economic and educational contribution that would not exist without my personal efforts and investments of time and money."

Since he began publishing, Cox has donated at least one of each of the books to the Ironwood Carnegie Library, where he does the bulk of his research.