

## **Michigan Every Day** **By Patrick Sullivan and Carole Eberly**

*Oct. 13, 1845*

*Douglass Houghton drowns in Lake Superior*

Here is perhaps no one who did so much to discover the wealth of Michigan for so little in return. Douglass Houghton was the first to hold the title of state geologist of Michigan and he took his job seriously.

He traveled the Upper Peninsula where he painstakingly surveyed its mineral riches. Houghton was paid a meager salary while other men made fortunes from what he learned about the copper and iron in the wilderness.

He received no wealth from the copper mining district of the Keweenaw, which grew upon his painstaking scientific work and eventually paid out \$332,000,000 in dividends to mine company shareholders. Perhaps if Houghton had lived longer than 36 years, he would have seen a profit from his endeavors.

Houghton was born in Troy, New York in 1809, studied medicine and settled in Detroit to practice medicine and dentistry. Houghton was a member of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft's expedition to the Upper Peninsula, there he established a reputation as a great scientist after he published reports about copper deposits and botany. On Oct. 13, 1845, as Houghton was preparing to leave the Keweenaw region for the lower peninsula after a summer of work, he set out in a small boat to join to a geological surveying party about 10 miles away. As he and four rowers left Eagle River late in the day, a large storm swept in just as their destination was in view.

An enormous wave capsized the boat and all of the men fell into the water. One of them attempted to save Houghton, but he insisted that he could make it to shore without any aid and told his men to save themselves. All but Houghton and one other man made it to shore alive. Houghton's body remained in the icy water until the following spring. There is a monument to Houghton in Eagle River and the largest city in the copper district is named after him.