

# BIG LOUIE DESERVES A MONUMENT AS TALL AS HE WAS!

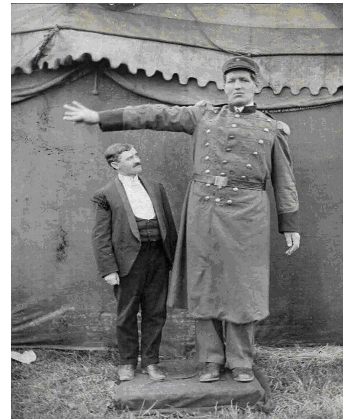
*Mike Gemignani, Franklin Location, Dana Richter, Salo Road, Hancock, MI*

On September 16, 2013 Big Louie Moilanen, the Copper Country Giant, will be gone for 100 years. He is finally getting a monument as tall as he was!

All Big Louie has now is a small granite stone at his grave site in the Hancock Lakeside Cemetery. The stone bears his name, his height and his weight – not even his birth date or the date of his passing are on the stone. He had a short life and died a poor man – he was buried by the county. Very sad. He deserves a fitting memorial to honor him.

A group of local citizens, the city of Hancock, the Houghton County Historical Society and the Finnish American Heritage Center have started a project to erect a monument in Hancock, his home town.

Big Louie (birth name Lauri) was born in Puolanka, Finland on January 5, 1886. Some accounts say he was born in 1885; other accounts say his birth date is unknown; but the correct date is on his death certificate in the Houghton Co. courthouse. He came to America with his parents when he was just four years old. His father was also named Lauri and his mother was Anna Kaisa Pyykkönen (sometimes written in error as Rykkanen).



Big Louie grew up in the Salo farming area about four miles north of Hancock. The house he grew up in is still standing, but broken down. By the time he was nine he was as big as a full-grown man. By the time he was 18 he was over eight feet tall. He worked as a farmer, a miner, a saloon keeper, and a justice of the peace of Hancock.

He built a granary on the farm in Salo tall enough so he wouldn't hit his head. It was moved to the grounds of the Houghton County Historical Society in Lake Linden in 2002 with the help of long time resident and local historian, Mike Gemignani of Franklin.

People the world over know about Big Louie. You can Google him on the internet. His 8 feet 3 inch stature got him a place in the records of world's tall men. This is the height that is on his gravestone, although his height is written anywhere from 7' 9" to 8' 5". At the time of his death he was measured at 8' 1" by the funeral home director. That is the only official measurement of the man. Never-the-less, his gravestone says 8 feet 3 inches, so that's what will be on his monument.

In Finland Big Louie is a folk hero. There is a monument to the Moilanen family in Puolanka, the town of his birth. Other giants also came from this area. He traveled two years with the circus, although he did not like the attention and, true to his roots, he returned to the Copper Country after his father died.

Life gave Big Louie a fate that would make him famous but also hand him an early death. He was just 27 years 8 months and 11 days old when he left this world. Some historical accounts say he died at 28, but this is because his birth year was in error. He died of meningitis of the brain, possibly brought on by a weakened immune system due to his size. He was not in good health in his later years.

The year 2013 is a momentous year for the Copper Country. Finn Fest America will be here June 19-23, and the city of Hancock will celebrate its 150 year sesquicentennial. In addition, the annual meeting of the Michigan Historical Society will be held here. To celebrate all these events, the director of the Finnish American Heritage Society has received approval from Finlandia University to place a monument to Big Louie Moilanen near the Finnish Heritage Center near downtown Hancock.

Ideally, the monument should be in place by the spring of 2013. Several events are planned: an unveiling when the monument is erected, a dedication during Finn Fest, and a memorial service marking the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passing of Big Louie in September.

The monument planned will be a massive black granite stone as tall as Big Louie with text engraved in gold in the Finnish style that respectfully memorializes Big Louie. The monument will be visited by many people. Big Louie's footprints may be set in a concrete pad below the monument -- shoe size 19! People will stand in the footprints and have their picture taken next to the monument. They will say, "This monument to Big Louie is as tall as he was. Look how small I am compared to him!"

**TO THE MEMORY  
OF BIG LOUIE MOILANEN  
THE COPPER COUNTRY GIANT OF SALO  
THIS GRANITE MONUMENT IS AS TALL AS HE WAS  
BORN JANUARY 5, 1886 IN FINLAND  
DIED SEPTEMBER 16, 1913 IN HANCOCK, MICHIGAN  
AGE 27 yrs 8 mo 11 days  
8 FEET 3 INCHES TALL, 560 POUNDS  
A KIND AND GENTLE GIANT**

### ***DONATIONS NEEDED NOW!***

There is strong community support for the project. Materials and labor will be donated by local businesses and individuals. The Hancock City Council passed a resolution endorsing the project. The Hancock Township Board unanimously voted in favor of this resolution: *"A resolution supporting the establishment of a memorial honoring Hancock Township native, Big Louie Moilanen, and to promote the project among its residents."*

The black granite stone will cost \$6,700. Approx \$1000 will be needed for setting the monument. Over \$5000 has been donated so far (Jan. 1, 2013). Your support is needed! **Please help!** It is time this world renown Finnlander is duly recognized in the town where he lived. **Thank you!**

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#### **DONATION FORM – BIG LOUIE MOILANEN MONUMENT PROJECT**

Enclosed is my check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (make check to ***Big Louie Monument Project***)

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Tel # or email \_\_\_\_\_

Send donations to:

**Big Louie Monument Project  
Houghton County Historical Society  
PO Box 127  
Lake Linden, MI 49945**

*For more information call Mike Gemignani 482-1851 or Dana Richter 482-3361*

