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**FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT
LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978**

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update

SUBJECT:

SOURCE: Mrs. Ralph Abrahamson

COMMENTS:

Interviewer: Art Puotinen

- I: This is an interview with Mrs. Gwenlyon Abrahamson on August the first, 1973, here on her summer cottage about three miles past Greenland. It's a beautiful sunny day. We'd like to begin by asking you a little bit about your grandparents, where they were born and did they themselves come to America? First of all, where were they born?
- R: Well, my maternal grandparents were born in Sweden and my father's parents were born in Finland and they did not come to this country as my folks came here in 1872.
- I: I see. What were the names...last names of your paternal and maternal grandparents?
- R: My maternal grandparents, their name was Pelto and, of course, my father was (?).
- I: And your parents met and married already in Finland before they came over then, I gather.
- R: They were married and they came to the United States on their honeymoon.
- I: Is that right!
- R: That's right...in 1872.
- I: Did they ever indicate the reasons for coming to America?
- R: Yes, my mother had...she was an heiress to a fairly good-sized inheritance and she couldn't get it...she was only nineteen. She would have to wait until she was twenty-one years old. So, if she got married she could get her inheritance right away. That was the main reason.
- So the inheritance in part, financed the honeymoon then.
- R: That's right.
- I: Where your parents from the same (?), I guess you'd call it? Or were they from neighboring towns?
- R: No, they were very close, practically neighbors

- I: Well, they received the money to make the trip but was there any special reason why they decided to come to America?
- R: Well, I think they really wanted to come to America for a long time; but it takes...it took a lot of courage and money because I guess it took them over a month to cross the Atlantic.
- I: Did they ever tell you where they embarked from in Finland?
- R: No, I don't think that we ever discussed that. But they landed in Sarnia in Canada.
- I: I see...and from there they proceeded by boat to...?
- R: To Duluth and from there they were advised not to go to the Red River Valley where they were headed, and there they bached on the lake shore for a whole week waiting for a ship to take them to Hancock.
- I: Who advised them not to go to the Red River Valley...was it a Finnish land agent?
- R: Yes, it was some...no, not a land agent, he was one of these taking care of immigrants' tickets and so forth.
- I: Well, I gather they intended to start up a farm then in the Valley
- R: I don't know what their plans really were. They were too young to have made prior plans.
- I: Were they in...well, let's see, your mother then was nineteen and your father was how old?
- R: Twenty-four.
- I: How did they come to the Copper Country from Duluth?
- R: By boat...they came by boat from Duluth to Hancock and when they got to Hancock why they were advised to go to Calumet because there was mining here. Of course, my father didn't know anything about mining; but they left for...Hancock for Calumet and it took them a whole day... there were several couples. It was some kind of a four-seater carriage with a team and they drove very short distances...they'd have to get out and chop the trees off the road and proceed and so it took them a whole day to get to Calumet.
- I: When they finally arrived, where did they stay?
- R: Well, they were very flabergasted because there were no houses here. So the first thing that they did...it was in June, so it was fairly warm...I guess they pitched a tent or something, and they went out in the woods and chopped the trees down and made a log cabin with another couple that came with them from Finland, they were called Laymen. And they built some kind of a log house in about...I think it were centennial as it is now. And they lived there that winter and then

the following spring they went to ^{Alloway} Alloway because there was a mine there and Keweenaw County was very active, much more so than Calumet or Houghton County.

- I: How did they survive the winter? Did your dad work in the mines for the first winter?
- R: Yes, un huh...and they had it tough because they said that there was ice on the walls on the inside even during the winter when they'd get up in the morning.
- I: It sounds as though it was a good cold Copper Country winter
- R: Yes, my mother said she never cried so much in her whole life as she did that winter.
- I: Was she homesick for Finland?
- R: Yes, she was very homesick and she wasn't use to that kind of a life; but she stuck it out.
- I: Did the Leihanen's...did they remain in America?
- R: No, well they remained in America but they went to Dakota and they farmed there and they were very prosperous farmers. He used to visit us when I was a child from there.
- I: Oh, that rings a bell. I interviewed a Mr. John Mattila of South Range and I believe he spent one summer working for Mr. Leihanen and he also indicated that Leihanen was a pretty prosperous farmer in the Dakotas.
- R: Is that right?
- I: Yes, but your folks decided to stick it out here then?
- R: They stayed here and my father worked in the mine and we had a very good home eventually.
- I: What type of work did your father do in the mine? Was he a miner or a trammer...?
- R: A miner
- I: He was a miner.
- R: Un
- I: And when did the first child in the family come along?
- R: A year and a half after they were in this country; and he lived to be. I think it was about three years old...he died.
- I: What was your brother's name?

R: Aldrick

I: Now, the family name was Abrahamson. It wasn't changed from a Finnish name to Abrahamson but Abrahamson was the...

R: That's my husband's family.

I: Oh, I'm sorry, that's right, I'm confused. It was Lempinen.

R: Lempinen, yes

I: Okay, I'm sorry. And what year then were you born?

R: 1892, January 14th

I: And by that time your folks were pretty well established then.

R: Well, my father had passed away in...oh I don't just remember the date, in 1897.

I: Was it a mining accident.

R: Well, there was a fire in the mine and he and my brother among others were left down there because they had to close the drafts to put the fire out. And as a result of that, he got pneumonia after he was up from there. So, he died of pneumonia, but that was the cause.

I: I see. Did your mother receive any kind of compensation?

R: No, there was no compensation in those days. You just made it on your own.

I: Oh my. Well, your folks didn't live ⁱⁿ a company house, did they?

R: No, we lived right in the village of Calumet or Red Jacket, at that time; and then later the company built some homes in Tamarack and my oldest brother was working for the mining company, so on his account we had a company house for oh maybe two or three years. Yes, it was three years and then my mother remarried.

I: Before we talk about the new marriage and new household, I'd like to ask a few questions about your father yet. Was he very active in the...what was it called...the Bethlehem Congregation?

R: Yes, very much so. They were charter members...my folks ^{alloway} were charter members of the Bethlehem Church; and they lived in Alloway when they started it and they used to travel...they had a horse and cutter and buggy in the summer and they used to travel to Calumet. They'd have bazaars and work very hard to get a church in the first place. And they were very active all the time in the Bethlehem Church.

Your father's name sounds so familiar...it seems to me that he was one of the original laymen at the organizing convention at a Suomi Synod.

R: Yes, he was one of the...

I: Founders really.

R: Yes, that's right.

I: Did he...as I recall when Bethlehem formally approved joining the Synod, there was a rather stormy meeting at the church in Calumet with Pastor Eliohaho. ~~Elotimo~~

R: Yes

Elotimo

I: Was your father in attendance that evening?

R: Yes, he was there; but I don't remember the details. I just know that it was a quite a meeting and of course there was a division right then.

I: Which later lead to the National Church.

R:

I: Well, Calumet is such an exciting interesting town because it not only had the immergence of the two different churches, but there was also a very active Temperance Society too, wasn't there years ago?

R: Yes, my father was a very active member in that. On his casket they ...my mother had the picture taken because my youngest sister wasn't born yet...and so she thought that there should be a picture of some sort for her although we wouldn't remember it either. And on his casket there's emblems from the Temperance Lodge and from the church. They didn't have flowers, they had huge plants in the room. But the emblems were a cat that was a part of the Temperance Lodge and then a huge wreath of waxed lilies and that was made into a wreath as a remembrance and then from the church there was a sort of an easel sort of an emblem of some sort made of wheat and in the center was a purple velvet band with some inscription on it.

I: Well, those were meaningful associations with the church and Temperance Society. You yourself were baptized in the old Bethlehem Church, weren't you?

R: That's right

I: Who was the pastor then?

R: Dr. Neikhander, Sr.

I: I see, and this was one of his many stops in his circuit ministry I guess.

R: That's right. When we lived in Alloway, why he would come there from Hancock...his home was in Hancock or that's where he lived...and he'd come up with a horse, someone would bring him to Alloway, he'd have church services in Calumet and then he'd come to Alloway and have

church services at my home.

I: Is that right.

R: The log house...the first home up in Alloway was a log house and then they added on a frame part to that same house and made a real large room where they had church services and choir practice. (?) was the choir director and so then from there, my brother...my oldest brother would take Dr. Neikander to Copper Falls where he would have church services the following day.

I: My, that was quite a junket

R: Yeah, it

I: Well were you baptised then in your home?

NIKANDER

R: Yes

I: I suspect that was probably a custom for Dr. Weikander. He would preach and if there baptisms or other rites he would officiate at those as well.

R: That's right. He didn't have to make any special trips because they were...that was a hardship traveling, especially in the winter, with a horse and cutter.

I: Were all the services in the Finnish language then at that time?

R: Oh yes, they were all Finnish.

I: Did your folks ever learn to speak English?

R: My father did. My mother could get along fairly well, but I wouldn't say that she spoke English.

I: Kind of a Finglish type thing.

R: Yeah, well she could take care of her own business affairs and stuff like that.

I: Where would your mother, for example, go to buy groceries? Were there Finnish merchants in town?

R: Well, in those days they had an order-taker from the store. He'd come to your home about twice a week and you'd give him your order and he'd pass it on to the store and they delivered. You didn't have to go to the store.

I: Is that right. By horse-drawn wagon then...the delivery was made?

R: Yes

I: Do you remember the store where the orders were placed?

- R: Well, I do remember the last one was North Store in Quincy and then there was a store in Franklin, but I don't...I think it was Seegar's and they had these order-takers and you'd have your list ready.
- I: Do you have any memories of early family times with your father and mother? What did they family do for recreation and good times?
- R: Well we...it was mostly church doings like when they had choir practice and stuff and whatever was happening in the church...programs and such. This was...of course, you're referring to the later years?
- I: No, I mean when your father...not the stepfather...but with your father.
- R: Yes, well that was the way that they would...and then we had a horse and a buggy in the summer and a cutter in the winter; and they'd take us out the family and went snow sliding and stuff like that. There really wasn't very much to do when we were just young children.
- I: Was...going back to your father's work, did he work long hours and many days of the week?
- R: Oh yes! Six days a week and I think they worked until six o'clock ...I believe it was from six to six...twelve hours a day.
- I: And I suppose at a very modest salary too.
- R: Well yes, but they had contracts so if you were pretty good well you were getting well off. And then, Alloway Mine had closed down and they gave it out on tribute and my father and several other men they mined for themselves and that was very profitable.
- I'm sorry...I don't understand. How did they mine for themselves?
- R: Well they...this tribute I just can't explain it, but they were given full run of the mine and then the mining company would buy whatever they made there. If they brought up a log of copper, they made more.
- I: Now, these were days before the really large corporations came into being. The mining companies were fairly small and independent, weren't they?
- R: Yes...well they were a part of larger organizations, but the main offices were in Boston and New York...so they would just visit occasionally. Of course, they had to have captains and leaders here too.
- I: In the original neighborhood in which you grew up, were the people predominantly of Finnish background?
- R: They were...well practically all were Finnish...even after I was older well we lived in Centennial Heights in Calumet so it was nearly all Finnish people there.
- I: How did the Finns get along? Did they stick pretty much to themselves

or did they relate much with the other nationalities?

- R: I think they were kind of off by themselves. They had all these organizations that they were interested in and anyone who was interested in church work or the Temperance Lodge or choirs and different things like that, well they could take part and they were very happy.
- I: Let's see. I had a question, and now it slipped my mind. Well, let's go on to the time following your father's passing. That must have a very difficult time for your mother and the rest of the family.
- R: Yes that was three years and, of course, by that time my oldest brother was in his twenties and then I had two other brothers who were able to work, they worked for the mining company but not underground. They had surface jobs. And then my mother had boarders and the girls could help at home.
- I: How many boarders, roughly, could you accommodate in your home?
- R: Oh about four or five
- I: And were these predominately single old Finnish men who were working...
- R: No, we had very few Finnish people boarding with us. They were mostly Swedes.
- I: Oh, how did you communicate with them...in Swedish then?
- R: Oh no, they spoke English. They were of Swedish parentage, but they spoke English. We did have a few that were Finnish and were boarders too, but those that I remember who were the longest with us were Swedish.
- I: What was the average length of stay for a boarder working for a season in the mine or did some stay for several years?
- R: Oh yes, they'd stay as long as my mother would keep them.
- I: Do you remember any of the boarders that got really close to the family...by name?
- R: No, I don't remember too many of them. I think there was a...no, I really don't because they really never were spoken to by their first names and we really didn't have much to do with them. Our bedrooms and everything were on the other side of the house so we really didn't have much to do with them. And they ate at a separate table than we did.
- I: Well, I guess that was a fairly common practice in those days to have the boarding.
- R: Oh yes, because where would those single men live. There were no houses and no place for them...no hotels where they could afford to live.

I: Did your mother...I guess this was the question I was thinking about ...did your mother and father become naturalized citizens?

R:

I: Was that soon after they arrived then?

R: Yes, because my father was in this country only about five years when he could speak English well enough that they wanted...he was Justice of the Peace in Keweenaw County. And then they asked him to run for Sheriff, but my mother refused to go and live in Eagle River. She said she wouldn't because it was too far.

I: Did your folks subscribe to any of the Finnish papers?

R: Oh yes.

I: What did they...I guess by Finnish papers we would mean papers from Finland...did some come from Finland here?

R: no

I: But they were Finnish language papers in this country.

R: Yes, like the Suomitar and the (?) and ^{Valvoja} Volvoia...I don't remember anyother than the Suomitar...oh and then Lustenly...we had the church publication. _{Lasten Lektio}

I: Well there was a period then of about three years where you had...

R: My mother made it on her own.

I: Yes, right, I'm glad you found the words for me. And then she remarried.

R:

I: Who did she marry?

R: Jacob Wilson

I: Now, was he of Finnish deseent?

R: Yes, he was from (?); but he had left there when he was very young ...he was a sailor for a number of years so he learned to speak English very well. And he was a captain in the mine.

I: Oh, I see. Now "Wilson"...was that an Americanized name?

R: Yes, his right name was Sjoberg.

I: Did he ever explain why his name was changed?

R: Yes, because the captains in the mine didn't know how to spell his

name, so they asked what his father's name was and he told them it was William and so they called him Wilson.

I: Is that right.

K: The English captains, you know, they were made captains because they could speak the language; but they were very illiterate...most of them couldn't write their own name. They'd have these young boys who were water boys and drill boys and the captain would take a board and smoke it with...they had these wax lamps that they used and then they'd pour wax and then they'd put black soot from the lamp on the board and then they had characters like Chinese and they could read it themselves and when the water boys and the drill boys would come to the situation where they went up, well they would write everything in the book.

I: I see. Now the drill boys were fairly young too, weren't they?

R: Oh yes, I guess some of them went as young as thirteen and up. I don't think anybody younger.

I: Well, so of schoolboy age some of the drill boys were. Where did you go to school as a youngster?

R: Oh, well I went to...well, I started in kindergarten in Tamarack... that's where my mother was when she was a widow and we had that company house there and then, of course, when she married we moved to Rhode Island. My stepfather was captain there. The Quincey Mining Company opened this new mine there and he was captain there. So, we lived there...we had a lovely big home there. And I went to school in Boston Location...that was until about the fourth grade and then we moved to Quincey because Rhode Island was too far out for anything for church...that activities that we were used to; so my folks decided that we'd move back to Quincey because my stepfather could go back to his old job anytime in Quincey. So, we lived in Limerick and we went to the Quincey School and there they had eleven grades. There was three years of high school in the Quincey School.

I: Was there a different teacher for every grade?

R: Oh yes...oh yes...and like the high school part, well each subject had a separate teacher.

I: Were any of your teachers of Finnish background?

R: No

I: Mostly what...English?

R: I don't know because they came...they were mostly imported. They weren't local people. They came from the South and East...I remember Miss Deacon and Miss Curtis; but they were all...but the Superintendent was from...he lived in Quincey...Mr. Johnston.

I: Well, did the mining companies bring in these teachers then or how did they arrive?

R: No, they had a...

I: School Board?

R:

I: I see. Did most of the teachers stay for quite some time?

R: Oh yes, they liked it here.

End of Side 1

I: Were there any particular events that stick out in your mind from school like oh Christmas programs or events of this type?

R: Oh yes. I loved programs and we had a society...the...it was...I remember the pledge: I will try to be kind to all living creatures and try to protect them from evil usage. That was the pledge. It was the...I don't remember the name. Well anyway, every month that organization would have a program. We'd have recitations and then the parents would come there and visit and anyone that was interested could come to these assemblies and listen to the programs.

I: It sounds kind of like it was conservation oriented, with the "kind to all living creatures". It was primarily a youth organization.

R: Yes, it was just for the school...the high school section.

I: What was the term...when did you go? From September to June?

R: Yes, ten months of school and ten weeks of vacation.

I: When did you go to Confirmation School then? Was that in Boston Location?

R: No, no...in the Hancock Church.

I: Oh, I see.

R: Rev. Back was the minister then. I went to night school because I was going to high school then and I couldn't take three weeks off from school at that time and the confirmation was always in the spring, so mostly Confirmation Sunday was mostly like sometime in April.

I: Confirmation...the day of Confirmation was a big event in the Finnish community.

R: Oh, definitely...and the churches had children then. When I look at these pictures now of Confirmation Classes...there was ninety some when I was confirmed in the class.

- I: Do you have any recollections of the day, what kind of festivities the congregation and your family prepared?
- R: Oh you mean the family just as a group?
- I: Well, it seems to me there were almost like two phases to the event. There was what took part in the church and then the home celebration too.
- R: Oh yes...well we really didn't have any home celebration because it was something that was considered a very serious thing and no (?) *work* on that day. It was very serious. We were supposed to revere and remember as such. So, we didn't have anything after that.
- I: Was Pastor Bäck a native American or did he come from Finland?
- R: Oh, he was a minister from Finland. He was ordained there. He was Bäck...and he was a very highly educated person.
- I: Was he a family man?
- R: No he lived in the parsonage and he had a housekeeper.
- I: I see.
- R: ...because those who went to night school, they had to go to the parsonage and there weren't too many of us, maybe ten.
- I: Were the church people very active in the Temperance Societies or were these primarily two different groups?
- R: I think they were two different groups entirely as far as I remember because when I belonged to the (?) Temperance Lodge, why it wasn't church at all. It was very enlightening. We used to have programs there and we'd learn Finnish songs and after the meeting, why we could have games in the hall...not in the church, of course, but we had a hall in Centennial Heights and that was a parish hall.
- I: You joined the Temperance Society then after you graduated from high school?
- R: Oh yes.
- I: Was that a stipulation that you be what...sixteen or eighteen before you could join?
- R: I don't remember, but I think it was something like that because I was...I think I was about eighteen or nineteen.
- I: Did they ever have any plays?
- R: Yes, we had plays.
- I: Were you ever in one of them?

- R: Oh yes
- I: What were...what kinds of stories were depicted in the plays? Were they...?
- R: Well, if it was at Christmas time, it would be a Christmas play. And if it was (?), well it would be something that would be dedicated to that day.
- I: Where did you get the plays? Were they sort of drawn up by people in the Society or did you get plays from outside someplace to perform?
- R: Well, we got them from outside; but we cut some off and make little changes. But they were from somewhere outside, probably from the book concern. You know, when you're at that age you're not too interested where they come from.
- I: Sure...well did you graduate from high school in Hancock then?
- R: No I didn't graduate. That's when I went to Finland.
- I: What year was that...that you went to Finland? Well, you said 1915 was it?
- R: Yes, I said that; but I think it was earlier.
- I: Was it before the strike?
- R:
- I: I see, so you were in Finland then while the strike was going on here.
- R: No, it hadn't even started yet. That was in 1913 when the strike it was before then, I think it could have been 1910.
- I: Well, can you explain why then your stepfather took the family to Finland?
- R: He didn't take the family. My mother and I went. He was there...he had been there for...he was there for two years and then he had a trip home and he intended to stay home because that was all he promised to go there for two years, well they (these were all Americans who were running the mine or who were the biggest stockholders)...
- I: And the name of the company was...
- R: The Finnish-American Mining Company
- I: And who organized the company?
- R: Well, the President was Mr. Daniels, he lived in Calumet and then there was Jacob Saari, he was from ^{Gulliva} ~~Gulliva~~...he was Secretary; and
Kalera

I don't remember the other...well then my stepfather was going to come home so they got in touch with my mother asking her to go there for...that why we were there for four months...and they talked her into going to keep him there another year. He stayed there for two more years and then he made a trip home and stayed one more year. All in all he stayed five years.

- I: My, that must have been difficult to be separated from the family. How did the operation there pan out? Was it a going proposition?
- R: It was a real nice beginning, but I guess it...I don't know, I guess it petered out or...it did after he left there sometime.
- I: And where in Finland was the mining operation
- R: In (?)...it isn't too far from Helsinki. When we went there we went in Helsinki and we stayed there in a hotel and then we were taken by motor boat to (?).
- I: About how many men were employed in the operation, roughly? Couple hundred?
- R: Oh no, maybe about...close to a hundred.
- I: Was he the only American there...were there other Finnish-Americans employed there?
- R: Yes, there was one. He had been a blacksmith when my stepfather had been in Rhode Island...he was a blacksmith. So, my stepfather asked him if he wouldn't like to go there and he was there, he was the blacksmith. And other than that, I don't think there were any others from America there.
- I: So all the rest of the workers then were Finnish.
- R: Yes
- I: Do you have any recollections of your visit there? Any events that kind of stand out that you and your mother and the rest of your family experienced?
- R: Oh yes. Well, the whole house, in the first place, we expected to go into some kind of...well...like mining people here live in, and this. it was a former estate of some kind, it was fabulous and all of the furnishings. My stepfather had half of the house...there was a huge wide hall and then the people who took care of him and made his meals and did his laundry and took care of his end of the house, he had a lovely dining room and a huge bedroom or living room and the furniture was all imported from Germany. I had never seen furniture like that.
- I: So the accommodations were really good then.

- R: Oh yes, very nice. And we stayed there about three weeks and then we went to northern Finland to visit my mother's birth place and her home was still there but it had been divided into five sections because there were five girls and each one sold out and the home that she lived in and was born and raised in, was divided into three sections. There were three families and then across the yard, well I guess it was some kind of a grainery or something had been rented to two families.
- I: Were all of her sisters remaining behind in Finland then?
- R: No, they all came to this country.
- I: They did?
- R: Un huh and that's why they sold their shares. And my grandfather and I don't know...well anyway, they had a brewery there on the estate and the huge brick building it was still there and all these vats were all corroded...they were still there when we were there. That was something that I hadn't expected to see; and my mother's God father was still living, we went there. And we had a very enjoyable and informative visit there. My father's sister lived there and she still lived there and that's where we stayed, with her. And she and her husband and her daughters, two of them, had come to this country and one of them was married to a sea captain and she lived in...I think it was in (?)
- I: Well, you returned then about what year then? Before World War I or after?
- R: Oh, we were there just four months.
- I: That's right, so you were here then by the time World War I broke out.
- Oh yes, un huh.
- I: And Father had returned as well...or stepfather?
- R: No, he still got left there for a year...that's why we went there... or my mother went there. And of course she thought that I was the logical one to go with her.
- I: Now, had you graduated...oh that's right, when you returned did you continue your schooling then?
- R: No, I didn't. Well see, then we moved to Calumet and it was all new and I really didn't. I went to work.
- I: Is that right? Where did you work?
- R: Well, my first job was in Ahmeek at the Glass Brothers, they had four stores, they had one in Ahmeek. That building is still there...the

biggest one in Ahmeek I guess. And then we had a store in Hancock and one in South Range and I wrked there for about two and a half years.

I: Did you clerk or secretary

R: No, I was bookkeeper and then...I started out as a bookkeeper and they had several sons that took care of the other stores, but the Ahmeek store was the head one and then in Hancock the oldest son Mandall Glass, was running the store there, and he was sort of an overseer over all the stores. So, he came to Ahmeek quite frequently so he asked me to start picking out what we would order for the store And eventually I became almost a buyer especially in the women's division then. But I still kept on with the bookkeeping; but it was too far from my home and I had to board there and so I was asked to come and work in Calumet in the Boston Store, it was strictly women's clothing; so I worked there for oh I think about two years and then I had a better offer.

I: Was the Boston Store kind of a fashionable store...or a store for fashionable ladies?

I: Did many of the mining company managers' wives come there?

Yes, in everything was real clean

First rate!

R: Yes, according to that time especially

Where did the merchandise come from? Did it come from as far away as some of th major cities in the East?

R: Oh, New York and Chicago. See, they had traveling salesmen come here...there were sample rooms, several sample rooms in Calumet and the buyers would go there; so I was a buyer and then later at Rosenbalms store, they had two stores and Kilpela's store there in the women's department and across the street they had furniture and men's wear. Well, I was the buyer.

I: I see, so you really dealt in the world of fashion then.

Yes...and of course I had some really beautiful clothes as a gift. shoes I never dreamt of having

I: Do you recall any very prominent people that shopped in those stores

Oh yes...anyone who...oh, you mean from away from here?

I: No, but it mean locally.

- R: Locally, yes...but I've forgotten their names. It's such a long time ago. Oh...Dr...oh what was his name, she used to come in there and she was very nice...they had to come because where else could they buy their clothes.
- I: I guess that the thing that I'm trying to get at here is that in many respects the stores and the town and the whole life style was very comparable to some of the larger cities then. You could have some of the finest things here.
- R: Oh yes, and there was a salesman from Riter Brothers, New York, we used to buy our woman's coats and some dresses too; and he tried to get me to go to New York and he even had a job for me. I had very nice hair when I was young and he said all you have to do is model; but going to New York from here...that was out of this world. And no, I didn't go. And he really didn't want me to stay in this town. There was a Paris Fashions in Marquette, and they wrote me a letter that a friend of mine had recommended me and they would pay my weekend trip there if I would come for an interview; but I didn't go. I thought, well what's the use of going over there, I had my home here and my church affiliations here.
- I: Your pastor at that time then, was that ^{Rautanen} Broutinen?
- R: Yes, Rev. Broutinen was pastor then for awhile and then we had several pastors after him. RAUTANEN
- I: If memory serves me right, I think Broutinen came in 1907...around that time.
- R: Yes, and he left here in 1920. My sister was married to him.
- I: Was that right
- R:
- I: Is Mrs. Broutinen still living?
- R: Yes she lives in Warren, Ohio.
- I: My goodness, we should interview her sometime after this...I have a great deal of admiration for her husband. Does she ever come up here?
- R: Oh yes, she was here last summer for two weeks and stayed at the cottage with me.
- I: Is that right...I missed her. Well, that's very interesting. He struck me, from what I've been able to read about some of the things he himself has written, he's a very intelligent man and interested in all kinds of concerns.
- R: Yes, he was very considerate of...see, he was here during the strike and of course it was a two-sided...it was a tough time, so he helped

to organize the citizens alliance and people who did not want to be involved in the strike. They had soldiers here and strike-breakers and it was really something.

- I: And there was also the hall disaster. I've read accounts where I think he had to officiate at the burial for some of the people who were caught in the disaster.
- R: Yes, there...I don't remember how many caskets there were in the church at one time.
- I: You, yourself, were not here at that time though
- R: Oh yes
- I: Oh, you were?
- R: Oh yes I was here.
- I: Were you working in the store at that time then?
- R:
- I: I guess that was quite a problem for a lot of people on the strike and also the store owners...there was no question of credit.
- R:
- I: Were you working for the Glass people at that time?
- R: Oh no, I was working in Calumet then at Rosenbalm's, and there was no problem there because it was strictly clothes.
- I: That was a time when a lot of the Finns moved out of the area too.
- R: Yes, in 1920 they began to go to Detroit and, of course...see when Rev. Broutinen left here, the Bethlehem Church had about twelve hundred members and then, of course, with that leaving for Detroit. some left first and then they found out that Ford was paying five dollars a day, well that was big money. So, they moved there.
- I: Well, going back to your career here, when you were working for Rosenbalm's you were single at the time?
- R: yes
- I: When did you marry?
- R: In 1918, I worked for Rosenbalm's until then.
- I: And Mr. brahamson, was he a native of Calumet?
- R: He was from Alloway. He worked for the Mohawk & Mining Company.

He was a Civil Engineer.

I: Did he go to Tech...or as it was called Michigan College then?

R: Yes, he took correspondence courses and then he went there. It was a two-year course.

I: Do you recall when he was graduated?

R: I don't...I didn't know him then.

I: So he had already completed his schooling by the time you were going together and...

R: Oh yes

I: After you married did you continue working?

R: No

I: I see, you became a housewife.

R: Yes, oh I'd go once in awhile and help out, but not steady work.

I: Was your husband directly involved in the mining operations and in the region?

R: Yes

I: What position?

R: He was an engineer for the Mohawk and Wolverine Mining Company for... I really don't know...a number of years. And then when they opened Seneca Mining Company, they asked him to come there as Superintendent. So he was there and Mr. Hartman was the General Manager and he was Superintendent.

SENECA

I: You mentioned that when your parents came in 1872 it was kind of a tough time for your mother. It seems to me that it was about 1920 or '21 that it was a hard time in the Copper Country. The mines shut down, didn't they, for a year there?

R: A lot of mines, but Mohawk and Wolverine didn't shut down.

I: So they were going strong.

R: Yes

I: That was very fortunate for you then.

R: Yes

I: Where did you make your new home then...where did you live?

R: We lived in Laurium first for a year, but my husband was...as a side job he was Keweenaw County Road Commission Engineer, so we had to live in Keweenaw County until his term was over. They couldn't have

made us, but he was like that, wanted to do. So, we lived in Ahmeek for close to two years and then we moved back into our own home in Laurium. We already had it, but we just rented there in Ahmeek.

You mentioned your husband being a road commissioner, what were the conditions of the roads in those days? Were they paved or were there cars at that time?

R: The first piece of pavement in the Copper Country was made between Alloway and Ahmeek. That was a test to see if they could have concrete roads here on account of the frost and snow, etc., and that's still there, that road.

I: Is that right

R: Yes, un huh, but otherwise they were just dirt roads and oh there were some that were tarred.

I: Did you have a family car when you were married?

R:

I: Do you still recall it...what kind or make it was?

R: Empire

I: Is that right?

R: Yes...and we went on our honeymoon with the car...we went to Detroit by way of Chicago. Oh, and no roads...and no maps. We had...they had books called "A Cook's Tour" and you had to have two books...they were good-sized books to find your way and sometimes you wondered if you were really on the road or in the wilderness.

I: So that was exciting for you to be in Chicago

R: Yes and we stopped several places in Chicago and then we went to Detroit and we stayed there at the Cadillac Hotel; and we came back by boat to Houghton...put the car on the boat.

I: How many children have you had?

R: Two, a daughter and a son.

I: And where are they now?

R: Well, my daughter lives...she's the older one...she lives in Oak Park, Michigan...that's a suburb of Detroit. She has two sons and she taught for five years before she was married in Lincoln High School in Detroit. And her husband is a metallurgical engineer. He graduated from Michigan Tech. He works for Vickers. He's the head of the department in research. And she has two sons, they graduated from college and one works for Black & Decker and the other for General Electric.

I: Un hum, and your son?

R: My son is in Lansing...graduated from Michigan Tech. He works for the State Highway Department. He is...I don't remember the name of the department that he's the head of.

I: I see. Michigan Tech has had a strong tradition in your family.

R: Yes. He has no children...they're here now, but they went to Jacobsville today

Tape No. 2

I: Well, we'd like to add a little more recollection about the church life, the Bethlehem Church, and were there some specific things you'd like to mention?

R: Yes, in the old Bethlehem Church which was on US 41, why we had several organizations and, of course, the pastors were changed; but we had excellent choirs there and we had some of the finest male singers that you could expect to hear...well even in a bigger location than this. Like Judge Jack (?), he was a wonderful bass singer and we used to have as a money raiser once a year we'd have a concert. It was called the Old Men's Concert and in Finnish...it was (?). And that celebration alone would bring in from eight hundred to a thousand dollars...just that one evening. That church was so packed each time and we had pulled them from as far as Ishpeming and Marquette. Pianists and singers...it was really a formal affair. All the performers were clothed in formal attire...the men in tuxedos and the women with party dresses and this was really something everybody looked forward to.

I: Do you have any idea when that was initiated, that particular tradition?

R: That was...oh I think it was from soon after that old church was built. They had it in a different form first...they used to have a group festival at the Armory and for two days they'd have meals and things like that. (???). He transformed it into this new way of having this program, the offering. All the business people used to place an offering for that, so it was really something; but I think everybody enjoyed it. Everybody in the local enjoyed it. Wasn't just for the Bethlehem Church.

I: And it was not only just for the Finnish people in the community, but the entire community, is that right?

R: Yes, the entire community because the programs were really almost professional.

I: Do you remember anyother outstanding musicians in the congregation besides Judge Jackala?

R: Oh yes, there was Winnifred Walton, she was Mrs. Olson later. She was a very fine pianist. She was a member of the church and she played

there quite frequently, you know, on special occasions, not just ordinary. We had singers, but I can't recall who they were. It's such a long time ago. And then the Sunday School was really big those days. We had a Sunday School at the church, one in Calumet Village at the Finnish Hall and then the Bethlehem Church had a hall in Centennial Heights, that was a Parish Hall and then in Wolverine...it wasn't the parish, but they let us use it for anything that we wanted, so they used to have Sunday School in all these different halls and there were, oh well over a thousand people in Sunday School.

I: Isn't that something. In these additional halls were there additional worship services held too?

R: Yes, in Centennial Heights, that was the Parish Hall, the preacher would come there and have a program besides the sermon once a month and the same in Wolverine there in the Finnish Hall, and the Finnish Hall of course was so close to the church. Of course we all went to church regardless, we walked...no cars. And then...did I mention the choirs, we had some very good male choirs, mixed choirs. Sophie Johnson was one of the directors of the mixed choir for quite some time and there was a Mr. Carver, he was a (?), what is that translated...?

I: cantor?

R: A cantor, and Mr. Parkin was the organist...we had an organ there that was almost handmade...a pipe organ. And Mr. Parkin could play that organ so well that you'd think he was a...I don't know where he learned to play but he was excellent. And then Mr. Windler was a very fine cantor too. He used to I believe sing for many years and then he died and a Mr. Layman took over. It was real action in church and it was totally gospel. It's was so different than the present churches.

I: When you say it was totally gospel, what do you mean by that

R: Well, you heard no other...nothing else in the church. It was religion. If the choir sang, it was religious songs. If a pianist came there she played something that was appropriate for church; and if there was a speech or a sermon, that was strictly...

I: On the bible.

R: On the bible...nothing about worldly things; of course you had to bring that in, but it was all (?) which is so different from today.

I: Was (?) a good preacher?

Yes, he was very good. He was a very well educated, I should say. When he gave a sermon you knew every word that he used...what he was talking about. He never brought this ordinary common every day life, he had some of the finest sermons that I can remember of. And then Pastor (?) had very good sermons...he was very very religious and he didn't...well, I guess he...that's when Bethlehem had these Old Men's Concerts...programs. They weren't the same then. You have to have someone who knows how to lead those things and who has the attraction that you can get

people to concerts.

I: Was Pastor (?) born in Finland or...

R: Yes, he was born in Finland

I: But was he educated here?

R: Yes, at Suomi College

I: But was he educated in Finland.

R: Yes, he was ordained in Finland and the courses now at Suomi are far superior to what they were in the beginning. I guess you'd know all about that.

I: I forget who it was last summer made mention of...was it a fire occurred in the church?

R: Yes the Bethlehem Church burned on New Year's Eve.

I: How did that take place? I didn't get the full story on it

R: Well, we had a new pipe organ installed...that old one that almost all handmade was destroyed and professional musicians used to come there to give lessons to different ones in the parish that wanted their children to learn to play the organ and Pastor (?) lived in Laurium there at that time. And the caretaker lived in the parsonage. And on Saturday evening he'd go and stoke the furnace and get it ready so that all he had to do was go and open the dampers on Sunday morning. And Mr. (?) was giving lessons there, so he was in the church after the caretaker had stoked that fire and everything and left. And I myself think like many others think that it got cold in there and some of those youngsters who were taking lessons...all you had to do was pull a chain, you know, to open the draft and they must have pulled that chain because it couldn't possibly have started otherwise. It started where the furnace is under the alter and that's where the chain was too. It really burned fast and furious.

Well, were people in the church when it started burning?

R: No...no, they'd left and (?) had already left too; and they apparently left that draft open and there was a pile of coal, you know, piled in there by the caretaker because he did that every week on Saturday so that the church would be warm on Sunday.

I: Did the church burn to the ground completely

Right down and everything that was in it.

I: Was there any insurance of any kind.

R: Yes, ten thousand dollars. And the new organ wasn't insured; it was so new that the Board of Directors hadn't gotten to that.

I: That was a sad day.

That was sad, yes.

I: What year was that do you recall?

R: That was 1930, New Year's Eve. The Annual Meeting always was held on New Year's day. That was for the following year and then that same year we had the present church built.

I: That was...did C & H donate the land then for the church?

R: No, it was waste land...yes, you could just build on there; but now, recently they sold it. I forget who they sold it to the church, but we didn't have no...there were no taxes on there or anything like that and we had a very fine Sunday School there. We had a good choir

I: Did you have a summer school?

R: Yes, we had summer school too

I: Who ran that then...the pastor or did you have students from Suomi College or...?

R: There were students sometimes and the pastor, he didn't ever teach but sort of was overseer and I worked in the Sunday School over forty years.

I: What age groups did you teach? All age groups, or

R: Well, when Pastor (?) was here, that was when it was totally Finnish and the second and third generation of the Finnish people, they couldn't understand Finnish enough to build any knowledge of religion, so Rev. Koski and Mrs. Koski they were very fine organizers and I was Superintendent of the Sunday School then, and we decided that we wanted to have English...those who wanted to take Finnish, fine. But those who didn't want to take Finnish could take English. Was only about six or seven whose parents were these older Finnish people who took Finnish for a short time and we got the graded books from a book concern and graded children in Sunday School just the way they were graded in the public school. So we thought that was a very good way to grade them.

I: Well what...was this in the thirties that you initiated the language change?

R: No, that was in the forties after Pastor Koski was here, he came here in '42 and was with us for two years.

I: During World War II then.

R: Yes and oh we did so much while he was here. He had the knack for.. I guess he had worked for...what was that called in Finnish in Canada and he had that training right in him.

* End of Side

- T: (unable to understand)
- R: He was such a nice man and it was really interesting working with him
- I: Well, it was too bad he left so soon...he was here only two years?
- R: Well they insisted on him leaving. He'd get one letter after the other from this Dr. (?) and some other officials in the church and they finally got him down. So, we were sorry to see him go.
- I: How did the Synod church and the Synod church members get along with the Apostolic church people in town. Were there strong feelings between them?
- R: No, they got along very well. Usually if they had something in the Apostolic church that we liked to go to, we went there and the same was true...they sent some of their children to our Sunday School and they'd come to the programs we'd have in Sunday School. We had some real good programs, especially when Koski's were here. Mrs. Koski's sister, she was a teacher in Hibbing, Minnesota, and she had gone to Germany to organize the Girl Scouts and so she had a lot of experience and so we started to order these entire programs and we'd exchange with her to get a new one, and we had the whole Sunday School...everyone in the Sunday School...in that program. And it was just beautiful. It was a lot of work though, but it was worth it.
- I: How about the...you mentioned the different groupings of Finns, those in the church and the Temperance Society. There was a fairly active group in labor movement or Socialist's Movement too, wasn't there?
- R: There weren't very many in Calumet. They were in Hancock.
- I: Oh, most of them were in Hancock.
- That's where their hall was and there were a few, of course, here too in Calumet, but they didn't have any influence on anyone.
- I: When was their strongest period...I heard you say...when they were the most active?
- R: Oh, I think in the 1920's. You know, after that fire in Calumet, that Christmas Eve fire, well I guess they got a good foothold then blaming it on the officials of the mining company and, you know, making these accusations. I think that was about their highlight...it didn't last long.
- I: So you figure it petered out in the twenties then sometime.
- R: Yes
- I: I see. How about the KALEVA Lodge? Did that really take hold in Calumet?

- R: Yes, that was quite active at one time; but that too petered out. It didn't last too long. It was mostly people who came from Finland who belonged to this organization. After they got too old or moved away, well that left nobody to take their places. So that was the end of that.
- I: But the churches continued to (?) fairly strong.
- R: Oh yes. I think we had a very good base for our...of course, like I said, the sermons are changed and I suppose people who haven't even heard those before...(Unable to understand)...before the merger, we had a Guild and we had a (?) organization. And the Guild...well, we had a Ladies Aid with the Finnish and the Guild was English. And we had oh so many women...well, when we built that church, you know, we were thirty-thousand dollars in dept. So, it only took us ten years to pay for everything and furnish it and so on. The women were really active. People now they're not as dedicated to anything like church...they go, but I don't know, I doubt very much if they...
- I: Unable to understand)
- R: Well, Mrs. Samien was one, she was...I don't mean that she was literally...but, in all these doings like meals and Ladies Aid and stuff like that, she was the chairman. And then there was Mrs. Leinanen and...
- I: Which Mrs Samien...what was her husband's name
- R: bram...Mrs. Abram Samien.
- I: And Leinanen would be...?
Am...what was his name...
- I: This Leinanen wasn't the Leinanen that came over with your father and mother, was it?
- R: No
No relation
- R: No...this Leinanen he was very active. He was one of the organizers or the synod. I can't remember his first name.
- I: Was he involved in newspaper work too?
- R 188
- I: Yes, I...I can't remember his first name either
- R: Yes, he was one of the leaders. Of course, during my generation there were quite a few who were very active. There was Mrs. Kittel...Mrs. John Kittel. I'm trying to think of the active ones. There were a lot of women. of course, but they just went along for the ride. But,

they were very good when it came to working.

I: Would you say that there are certain characteristics to the...of the Finnish woman. I've interviewed some women who have talked about different organizations and they have said that the women were very much in leadership in the home life...with raising children and the women were very important there. What qualities did you see that were typical of the Finnish woman?

R: Well, I think they were really...they're the ones who raised the children and they saw to it that they went to school and especially to church on Sunday regardless of it they understood a word, they had to go to church and to Sunday School and in the summer to Bible School. The fathers didn't have any part in those activities because they worked so many hours that by the time...it was dark when they got home.

I: So child rearing was largely left up to the women then.

R: That's right

It's amazing in some cases...just think about your own grandparents who tried to farm and often the hard physical chores ended up with the mother milking cows and stuff like that.

R: Yes, definitely. Of course there weren't that many of those cows and things left in my life after I was old enough to know what it was all about.

I: Is there anything else that you'd like to say about the church?

R: ...stop in tape

I: Well, thank you very much a very enjoyable interview. It's been most interesting and we got some good information.

R: I'm very happy to have been able to and I hope you've benefited a little by it.

I: Thank you.