



Finnish
American
Historical
Archive
and Museum

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

(Funded in part by the National Endowment For The Humanities)

F.F.S.C.G.L.M.R. DIGITIZATION PROJECT 2010-2011

*(Funded in part by the Keweenaw National Historic Park Advisory
Commission / U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service)*

CONDITIONS FOR USE OF .PDF TRANSCRIPT:

Finlandia University, formerly Suomi College, holds the exclusive copyright to the entirety of its Finnish Folklore and Social Change in the Great Lakes Mining Region Oral History Collection, including this .pdf transcript which is being presented online for research and academic purposes. Any utilization that does not fall under the United States standard of Fair Use (see U.S. Copyright Office or Library of Congress), including unauthorized re-publication, is a violation of Federal Law. For any other use, express written consent must be obtained from the Finnish American Historical Archive: archives@finlandia.edu.

PREFERRED FORMAT FOR CITATION / CREDIT:

"Maki, John", Finnish Folklore and Social Change in the Great Lakes Mining Region Oral History Collection, Finlandia University, Finnish American Historical Archive and Museum.

Note: Should the Finnish American Archive be a resource for publication, please send a copy of the publication to the Archive:

Finnish American Historical Archive and Museum
Finlandia University
601 Quincy St.
Hancock, Michigan 49930 USA
906-487-7347 - fax: 906-487-7557

Interview with WARREN BELL
by Paul Jalkanen 7/27/72

Paul: ----- where you came from and what your father did before and about what year you came here.

Warren: Well, my father was born in Chicago, Illinois, and I was born in Chicago, Illinois, about 35 years later and I have lived in Chicago until I came up to Hancock, Michigan, to live in the year

Paul: '87, did you say?

Warren: '87.

Paul: 1887. No, 1907

Warren: I was born in '82, when I was 18 years old, then we came up after my father died, to Hancock because mother had maiden or old girlhood friends here.

Paul: And she knew some people so you could come up here then.

Warren: Her father, Captain Mott, was living down here near the Bootjack point and keeping care of the light there for navigation between the east end of Portage Lake Channel here.

Paul: Well, you came here in '97, you were still going to high school then

Warren: Yes

Paul: So then you finished high school here in Hancock

Warren: And graduated in Hancock High School, 1900

Paul: 1900! 72 years ago!

Warren: I was about the 5th or 6th member in the class; there were 12 in the class, and I was number 5 or number 6

Paul: You were half-way down, then

Warren: Half-way! Just exactly, middle man.

Paul: Middle man! How did you come up here, by train in '97?

Warren: By the train, that's the only way to get up here then.

Paul: Was it just an overnight trip or something to come up? And you and your two sisters and your mother came up here?

Warren: That's exactly right!

Paul: What was your life like/when you came up here in 1900 or had you ever been up here before that time, or '97, what did you think of the winter when you came up here in the first couple of years?

Warren; I loved 'em!

Paul: Did you?

Warren: Ya, 'cause I was healthy and husky and not a big fellow, but I was good what there was of me and I enjoyed the winters very much, snowshoed, skated and rolled around in the snow, made snowmen and all that sort of thing so that I enjoyed our winters at Lake Superior very much indeed. And the snow was almost always pure and white and clean. No smoke.

Paul: That's, right. No smoke and no junk in it or anything! Did you have a pretty good life when you came up here when you first came, or was it pretty tough?

Warren: Yes. We had kind friends that had been friends of my mother's in her girlhood when she was helping her father as a lighthouse keeper and these friends urged us to leave Chicago where my father opened up a grocery store there in her earlier years and he died and she was a widow with 3 different kids to provide for, these friends would plead that come up to Hancock, back to Hancock, and we'll look after you, A. G. B. Lord and A. J. Lord his son, why they were very friendly and oh, even the superintendent of the Quincy and Torch Lake Railroads, up on the Quincy Mining Company, and some they offered was one of the engineers on the two engines that were running.

Paul: Oh, I see, so you knew someone here then when you came up.

Warren: We had visited for 2 short periods the year before so we came back here with our household goods, when they said, please come up here and stay with us and we'll take care of you, we'll help you, and they did. The Gleich boys, Mrs. Gleich and sons would come down to the harbor to Bell's Bazaar at the store, when the goods came in and help us unpack them and all that sort of thing and it was very helpful

Paul: Did your mother ever re-marry?

Warren: Never remarried, I was the man of the house, it was 3 women on my hands and I had to be big and brave and strong and solid and sensible and all the rest of the good attributes that you might think of and I was the man of the house!

Paul: When did you set up Bell's Bazaar? That was set up later, wasn't it?

Warren: In 1890, '92 or '93 it was established. And I went to school in the meantime from 1900 which time I graduated and I went out to work.

Paul: Oh, yes, I see. You went to work then in about 1900, as soon as you graduated from high school.

Warren: Yes

Paul: Did you enjoy going to high school here in Hancock?

Warren: Oh, yes. We had some fine fellows there and they were real "boys" you know and I didn't play football myself but we had a good ball team and baseball team, I wasn't a very good athlete but we had a very record in the '90's.

Paul: What kind of a boy were you? What kind of pranks did you pull, or did you pull any kind of pranks at all when you were here in Hancock High School?

Warren: Well,

Paul: What kind of things did boys do in 1900 or 1899? You just had to work hard I suppose at the store and that.

Warren: Yes, I was the runner-around at the store, the manager, under worker, back up my mother and the 2 girls were the "turkey in the store" in the whole Bell's outfit.

Paul: I see then after you finished school then every day you must have had to go to the store and work then I suppose.

Warren: Earlier. I was errand boy, delivered packages to the ladies that couldn't carry them home themselves why I was the delivery-man boy.

So you had to walk in the snow and it didn't make any difference.

Warren: Oh, yes, so that it was very interesting.

What about the students at that time? Did they get along pretty well, the different background students, you know, the Finnish students, the Irish,

Warren: Ya, there was ~~some~~ talking about the Irish but not much, they were all "Gene this", "Eugene this for Franklin Mine" in my class there and we had some very fine boys there so that everything worked along excellently.

Paul: Was your mother pretty strict with you?

Warren: Mother was gentle. And kindly, loving, and tender and I was big boy in the house and the coming man, I had to be a good boy. Keep clean, no drinking, no running around, no shenanigans but still I had all the fun, enjoyed and went to Congregational church and was a good member of the Sunday School there and so my boyhood was very pleasant here, in fact, so pleasant that I have not had tears since we came here.

Paul: So you really think the Copper Country is a good place then

Warren: ya, I'm proud of it; everywhere I go I preach "good ol' Copper Country"

Paul: What about then, your first jobs that you had when you were 18-19 years old, when you finished high school in 1900? What did you do then?

Warren: Well, my first job I was working for the Western Express Company in the express office and I was there for about 3-4 years and then from there, one of my school mates was Eugene Lynch and he was assistant clerk of Quincy Mine office. He came in one day and said "Warren, aren't you tired of this switch job, we need a man, young fellow, up at the mine office", so he said, "can you come?" and I said, "I'll be glad to", so I was then working in the Quincy Mine office there as "hired and firing man" in charge of all men coming in there. Quincy Mine was running about twelve-hundred men underground then

Paul: That's about 1905, 1904 now?

Warren: About there. About 1095 we had about 1200 men working underground and then the machine shop, the blacksmith shop, the carpenter shop, the shops there on surface and they all funneled through me for clearance. The foreman of the job, or the particular shaft or so on, would hire a man but he'd send him through the office to get his number; every man had to have his own number and he was sent to me in the mine office to check, to see that no "skalywags" were hired, been fired by status four mining shaft, and captain of one shaft would fire a fellow, why, I was the man to see that he didn't get a job again in number two shaft or number four shaft or

Paul: So you kept track of all those people then.

Warren: That's right I had their cards, their records and if he was a "skalywag" up in number 8 shaft, why he didn't get a job in

Paul: number two or number one. What was the job like before we talk about the mine, what was the job like at Western Express? What did you do for them?

Warren: I was the clerk there in the Western Express, I didn't go out on the rig to deliver anything, I was the clerk and then agent. The agent and the clerk and the inside and then the driver and a nice old bay mare that we had delivered the express to the merchants.

Paul: How much money did you make for that first job at Western Express, can you remember at all?

Warren: I think it was \$35 a month.

Paul: \$35 a month. Did you get a big raise then when you went to Quincy? Was it a much better job then?

Warren: Ya, I got somewhere around \$100 when I got over there

Paul: That was a good job. Here you are 23 years old and you go up there and you become a clerk up there. That must have been very nice. How about telling some more about your job and what it was like with the mining company, you worked there for how many years then? From 1905 to about to 1920?

Warren: In the '20's, something like that. It was 1923, I think it was, I worked there and that job in the express office was meeting people and taking their packages and starting them, register them, and start them on the way and they exchanged trains, the messenger on the train was given the charge of delivering them elsewhere. So about 4 years of that made it acquainted with the territory all over the United States, the towns and the villages and cities, then you see my father had been running a grocery store, a little one-man grocery store there in Chicago, 4-5 years after I was born but about that time, why, he faded away the poor little man, now the grocery store there we had in Chicago we had to sell out, and these kindly Hancock friends said, "come up back, we keep up to take care of Grandfather Mott here for several times but she was married then, come up to us with your children and we'll help you out and they did and the Lord ~~and~~ and the Lords and some other families that were her friends.

Paul: What was the mines like in 1910, 1913, when the strike began then?

Warren: Well, that was bad times. It was--they had active leadership there in the strikers and they made it miserable for the company up there and they paraded down every day, they got the whole hill aroused and agitated and every day they formed a procession of all the men of Quincy Hill mine, they'd parade down the road to Elbowtown up here, then down through the main street of Quincy to the east end of Hancock every morning for several months during that summer.

Paul: The strike lasted quite a long time then, 1913 into 1914.

Warren: Yes, '13 to '14. That's right.

Paul: What were you doing during this time? You were the man

Warren: I was in the express office --no, no, I was up on the hill.

Paul: You were hired and fired at that time. Did you hire anybody? Did they hire anybody to come in and work?

Warren: No. They had to be screened. Nothing much in the way of hiring because the mine was actually not working.

It got closed down because of the strikers then.
The company didn't try to bring in other men? Who wouldn't be striking?

Warren: Yes, there were what were called strike breakers, were shipped in several carloads and when the mines really got going again, it was--they had screened out a lot of the old men and they wouldn't give them their jobs back again because they did not behave themselves well in the company and they showed the wrong attitude so the company would send the man out to New York state or maybe to Chicago and have a labor man, labor dealer, would hire men elsewhere and ship a carload of 25 to 35 men to work. Ship them from Chicago or New York to the Quincy Mine here.

What did you do when the men were striking? Did you

Warren: I was in the office there and keeping the routine going and Eugene Mintzele was the office clerk and X. J. McLean was the company clerk, Gene Mitz was office clerk and I was his assistant.

How did you know which men to fire? When the strike got broken, how did you know which men to hire?

Warren: I had been living in Hancock for 15-20 years there and I knew, living there on Quincy street, I knew most of the people, shopping, so that I knew their characteristics pretty well and I would know almost personally that they came from up around the hill, or Ripley or within distance or driving distance to the mine, why I had some idea of how they were held or how they were regarded in their particular territory. And if they had a fighting record or if they were scrappers or if they were ugly or if they were so on, why, we didn't want them. We want peace, and quiet and efficient, good, solid working men, to come into the mine and work those drills and push those ~~tram~~ cars so it was my duty to see that a good quality of men were put to work and the bad actors, why, sorry but those jobs aren't open.

How did you know which men were real agitators in the 1913 strike? How did you know when not to let them back?

Warren: Oh, they paraded in the open so you knew who is actively in the membership.

Paul: Then who decided that they wouldn't be taken back? You and some others?

Warren: I pretty much did that, Mr. Lawton was the superintendent of the mines, Mr. McLean was the chief clerk of the mine, and I was one of the underclerks.

Paul: So what you did, during the strike, when it was going on, you

Warren: I was supposed to keep an eagle eye, card record on every man, and if he had a bad mark on his record, I was supposed to know that and make him show his intentions and his expectations known, where he was still a bad egg or not.

Paul: So if people were down here agitating or marching, through town and they were the leaders, then you would put that on their card and you'd find out about that, then when it opened up again, when Quincy opened up again in 1914, they didn't get jobs, did they? Or did they get jobs?

Warren: Yes, most of them got their jobs back again but their were a dozen or so that were bad eggs

Paul: Can you remember some of the leaders? Names?

Warren: No, I can't remember names anymore.

Paul: Can't remember any of those anymore. What were they striking about as far as you can

understand. Why were they agitating?

Warren: Well, I don't know as I can--the Quincy owned most all of the houses on Quincy Hill and they had their men living in company houses and some of those company houses weren't any too good. Needed repairs, sometimes the company would say yes and sometime they'd say, we can't do anything about it just now, we're in a hard pinch and we're not doing any repair work, repair among our households so it was--I, was what they call, vulgarly speaking, hire and fire clerk. Every captain--^{there's} 4 shafts each has a captain and then the shops, there's 3 or 4 superintendents of the shops and 7 or 8 or 10 heads of the departments you might say, altogether, and it was my duty that if a bad egg showed up in one firm in one of the departments, if he was nasty or vicious or didn't break up the machinery or something like that, I was to say the next time that foreman hired that man, mm mmm, don't, he's not of good character. He's a mischief maker.

Paul: Can you remember what kind of things the men were saying about the company? Was it just because of the housing situation in Quincy, or was it because of pay, they wanted more money, or

Warren: Quincy was general reputed to be a very tight company. They weren't liberal. They had men from the East who were running that but our people were mostly Michigan people and they ruled it tight.

Paul: And so the men wanted more money, too.

Warren: That's right.

Paul: Was there any bad fighting during the 1913 strike, when the strikebreakers and the strikers got together, did they have some fights?

Warren: Well, there were one or two rounds there because would parade until 10 o'clock in the morning, form a parade on top of Quincy Hill there, to parading down there, reach here 11 o'clock or so and go on to about noon time and sometimes they were drinking or something and they were obnoxious

Paul: Were they drinking too?

Warren: No, they were pretty dry; I'm a dry myself and I won't circulate among saloons much and I think most of those men were orderly and they were good men for homes. They were fathers and brothers, older brothers of families that their fathers were good church members. There's a church on Quincy Hill and most English people and course there's the Finnish contingent came in and we had 2 or 3 other smaller groups of nationalities come in there, some Italians, some Bohemians

Paul: Germans at all?

Warren: No, not many.

Paul: What do you remember about the different men, were they all pretty good workers, were the Finns pretty good workers? Or were they some agitators, too?

Warren: Well, there's some agitators.

Paul: From up Quincy Hill.

That's right.

Warren:// Can you remember some of the names of those men at all?

Paul:///

Warren: Oh, I haven't handled those files for a long while. But there were a couple outsiders that came here

Came from out of this town, you mean?

Warren: Ya, from outside of town. They came and agitated the fellows here and told them they were foolish to work so hard for so little money.

Paul: Where did they come from?

Warren: From Montana

Paul: From the mines out there?

Warren: Uh huh, some were from Pennsylvania mines. We were sort of a central location between the 2 areas; this is long established, back in the 1800's, '40's, '50's.

Paul: Was there a lot of bitterness left over after the strike? Hate? Company sort of angry at the men, the men still angry at the company?

Warren: Well, it left a scar on the minds and the lives of most everybody that associated with it because it lasted 8 months, or 9 months or 10 months or something like that, quite a while, winter and conditions were bad, without any money coming in and all that so

Finally the strikers gave in, didn't they, to the company?

Warren: Yes. The company offered to start up the mines and there was enough loyal employees that came that could do it, and they got started, there was ragged edges of course but the mine got started nicely and smoothly and gotten the stride eventually.

You worked there during that 8 or 9 months that they were off, though. You didn't get laid off or anything, did you?

Warren: No. They kept me on, the office kept going.

Paul: Throughout that time there was 3 or 4 of you working in that office

Warren: Superintendent and the clerk and the assistant clerk and the assistant-assistant clerk and

Paul: You had someone below you, too, then, hey?

Warren: No, I was the youngest one; I was the newest recruit

Paul: You had the youngest job there then

Warren: That's right.

Paul: What were the mines like then right after this time, in 19--well, the mines started up again in 1914, and you're still working there as a clerk, assistant clerk, and then you have the World War I comes in 1917, comes for America, do you remember the war and what it did to the mines?

Warren: Well, no, that's kind of cloudy in my mind; we didn't actively participate in any activing during 1917, at least that I was associated with, and then I think in 1923 that's when I was hired by the Houghton County Department of Social Welfare and Board of Supervisors.

Paul: For that relief

Warren: For the relief job

Paul: Why did you quit your job for Quincy? and go and work for relief?

Warren: Well, it was a better job, I got \$200 a month then

Paul: There was a little depression after World War I, wasn't there, in 1921?

Warren: Just sagged at times but after the strike was over, why, it was generally upward and forward, regularly, state of affairs.

Paul: Did the hard times in 1913 strike and 1921-22 just before you finished up Quincy, did a lot of people leave here?

Warren: Oh, yes

Paul: Did they? And go back to Europe?

Warren: No, nobody went back to Europe as I recall.

Paul: I just wondered because some of the Finnish people went back to Finland

Warren: No, I don't think so. If they went to any part of America, principally to Montana, and western countries but didn't go back to Europe

Paul: Not that you remember anyway.

Warren: The English were very loyal to England of course and Cousin Jacks as they were called, used to be very fond and proud of England and their coming from England and so they didn't have any comment or criticism.

Paul: What kind of nationality is Warren Bell?

Warren: Warren Bell? Well, my grandfather was born in Maine, my mother was born in Massachusetts and I'm a Yankee.

Paul: You're a Yankee? You're an American!

Warren: They were born in the East coast, of Yankeeland. Dr. Bell was born in Maine and my mother was born, Captain Mott was born in New York, lived in New York state until he started sailing in Superior country. Had a little 40-acre farm in Bootjack point down there, and that was home, he didn't do very much farming on it because he had a job as lighthouse keeper, that took him every day of the summers and falls.

end of tape)

Paul: -----in every state of the union?

Warren: Um hm, and I've traveled in every corner.

Paul: How did you travel all those states, then, when did you do all that?

Warren: Well, I was working for the express company at one time and used to go wherever they'd give me a pass.

Paul: When you were younger, in the early days, or 1900.

Warren: So I've been up to Maine and I've been down to Florida and southeast and I've been to Mexico, crossed the border from California and I've been up to Canada across from Seattle there so that the 4 corners and pretty much all in between I've had criss cross/ ^{because} I get passenger transportation pass, when I was working for the express company and since then, I've paid fare, gone on excursions so I've seen the whole

United States pretty thoroughly

Paul: So the Copper Country is one of the better areas, though?

Warren: Always came back to Lake Superior and Copper Country

Paul: Why do people stay here? Why do they get to love this country?

Warren: Wonderful climate, cool in the summer, not too snowy in the wintertime, not too cold, put on some good German socks and some boots and/or shoes and they're alright. Wrap up a little bit extra. Can't beat that good clean snow that we have here.

Paul: What did you do in 1920 then for the relief office? When you started to work for them or Houghton County? What was it called at that time? Public Relief Commission?

Warren: Public Relief Commission was established by the Board of Supervisors about 1900. And John E. Erickson who was superintendent of the Houghton schools was appointed to head the relief commission, welfare commission. And he had 2 clerks and 2 drivers under him, not drivers but investigators under him, so there's a force of about 5 or 6 in the office there and the office was on the top floor of Superior National Bank in 1900 and when I was over there in (1905) why that's where I went and I took over John Erickson's job because he was returning to the superintendency of the Houghton Public Schools.

Paul: You went there in 1923? After you finished working for Quincy Mining then?

Warren: Ya, that's right and I worked, that was my last job there in the welfare department

Paul: Working for welfare, WPA, and all that.

Warren: That's right.

Paul: You worked there in the '20's and '30's then?

Warren: That's right.

Paul: What kind of job was it? What did you do? You ran the business then?

Warren: Well, they had the office in the top floor of the Superior National Bank building over here then and I had this office and branch office at Calumet. A girl that was a stenographer and a good personality and she handled the, the 2 of them handled the applicants for aid in the Calumet area. And I would go up there once a week to listen on the cases that they had taken in or considered and gave the final answer on what to do, whether to say OK we'll help you, give you aid, or we won't be able to do anything for awhile yet for you. Come again in a month or so, when conditions are a little different than what they are now.

Paul: Did you try to find people jobs? Or just hand out money, or what did you do?

Warren: The finding of jobs was up to the individual. We were always to say a good word for them, where we knew that they were fine, we recommend them to different employers when they came to a showdown because we were helpful as we could be then to get off of welfare and relief. Meantime we would give them small orders for food or groceries or coal or wood or whatever necessary for their comfort and on the basis that they would get a job just as soon as a job could be found.

So you gave a little bit of food, and a little bit of money. How much money did you give to someone, say a family? A man was out of work in Calumet and he wasn't working in the 1920's, was bad times, and he had a couple of children, how much money would you generally give that man?

Warren: In those days, in 1910, 1920's, the money scale was quite a bit lower

Oh yes

Warren: than it is the present day. Those days there were a different tribe of people asking for aid and a million dollars was (whistle); nowadays, a hundred million dollars is nice. Vast difference in the ideas of people, propriety of things and the proper evaluation of things, 50 years ago than today.

Paul: Were there a lot of people on relief, like in Houghton County?

Warren: Well, we had about 2-3000 people in Houghton and Hancock and the Calumet area.

Paul: That was during the depression days, 1930's,

Warren: because everything was flat, there was no mines working, nobody was working, although surface jobs were farmers or people that had odd jobs.

That's about it, then.

Warren: The mine was really the backbone of the Copper Country area

And everybody came to you for some kind of aid.

Warren: That's right.

Paul: WPA. Did you help start work with WPA?

Warren: No, that was a different branch. Those people who worked got together and they organized the WPA division and it was a branch of the whole county welfare effort. But I had no connection with it.

Paul: All you did is take care of the relief part of it, or the welfare part of it. When things got better at the end of the '30's, 1939-40, just before World War II started,

Warren: Yes, they were accustomed

Paul: The mines opened up

X Warren: our county was very proud back in the 1800's, '80's and '90's and so on, pretty independent, didn't want any county money, any public money, they was going to make their living by themselves, as much as they could, after that World War II, they were not quite so independent. Relief was no longer helping the poor on, independents didn't want anybody to help, no, I'll make a living or I'll die. Something like that was the attitude. So the handouts for help was given more freely to, accepted aid, asked for aid than used to be.

Paul: Now they just come asking all the time.

Warren: That's right.

Paul: And you quit in the 1940's then. When you retired then.

Warren: Ya.

Paul: And you've been retired since that time?

Warren: Ya.

Paul: You haven't done any odd jobs or anything, working?

Warren: No.

Paul: Just kind of lived a life of leisure.

Warren: That's right.

Paul: How do you look back on life, as kind of a good life?

Warren: Oh, yes, yes; I'm happy. I'm optimistic, I'm always--I don't wear a long face or my chin down on my chest, I'm feeling good physically and mentally and morally and socially and I'm not a whiz but I can do a fair day's work at most anything and physically able to do things quite well yet.

Were you involved in politics in the Copper Country?

Warren: No

Paul: No politics at all?

Warren: No politics. 2 or 3 men early in my life said, Warren, you're no politician. You'll never get a job as one, I said, no, and I don't care for political jobs and I don't look for one and I don't want one. So I don't think I've had any public office at all.

Did you ever--when was the first time you voted for United States president?
Do you remember?

Warren: I can't remember just when it was. Must have been 1908 or '12

Paul For Teddy Roosevelt or Woodrow Wilson?

Warren: Roosevelt period.

Paul: Did the mining company have a lot of control over how people voted?

Warren: No, they didn't; they had voting booths in different, 3 or 4 different shaft houses and mine office was one of the voting places, and that's where we were and you know the sandstone building of the Quincy Mine office, they come in the back door there and the commissioners working on the board there, 2 of them, and they registered and cast their vote there.

Paul: There were some people who claimed that they lost their jobs if they voted for a Democrat, instead of voting Republican because the mine captain

Warren: I don't know, they weren't looked upon--didn't say 3 cheers for you, the democrats, but it was pretty clean and maybe I'm a little innocent bystander so I like to think the best of aman as long as I can. I don't know if I'd made a good sheriff or good policeman because I wouldn't be able to detect sin or weapons at a glance.

Paul: Did the companies run the town up there? They owned the buildings up in Quincy, all the houses, you said.

Warren: Oh yes, Mr. McLaughlin and Mr. McLean were 2 fine gentlemen and that's the most of the time I spent with those under their supervision. No I think that they were fair

Paul The mining companies had a lot of power in Hancock and Houghton, even though.

Warren: Ya, they really ran those places up there, the mining company ran 'em but they

didn't say you must vote this way, you must do that, but the moral persuasion

Paul: was there, though. How did the people look upon the local sheriff and the local authorities? Did they like the sheriff? Or did they get along with him?

Warren: Yeh, the sheriff was our man to fall back on if any bad actors came around here, call the sheriff and notify the sheriff, that a bad egg is looking for trouble, and we don't want any trouble around the mine here. So look after them, see what you can do with 'em. Army of 'em, get 'em to forget this, plans.

Paul: So then the sheriff would come up to the mine and take a look and see what's going on

Warren: That's right. Check things over and caution the men perhaps, so the principle was to run a completely clean and honest and fair deal as you could. Honorably do.

Was your mother still alive at this time, in the 20's or she had died already?

Warren: She died about 20 years ago. Some things I can't remember

How do you recollect people getting along. Did the different nationalities get along pretty well? In the Copper Country?

Warren: Yes, I think they harmonized very well, there wasn't very much rivalry.

Paul: was church life very important to the Copper Country?

Warren: Yes. I was clerk of the congregational church down here for about 35 years

Paul: So it was important to you.

Warren: It was. Clerk of congregation church, mining clerk assistant, so that was my chief

Paul: Was the church important to other people too? Beside yourself? Did most people think the church was a pretty good thing and important to them?

Warren: Well, I always went with men that were fine, clean, up-right, and honest, kind religious and men, I was an officer, with "them" so I didn't hang around the saloons much or anything like that and I always felt I was my mother's only support and I had to live a straight, clean, decent, honorable life; she was a wonderful lady and I'd be no shame or discredit to my mother.

What happened when people became sick? Did you always have a doctor on hand, company doctor?

Warren: We always had---Dr. Fisher and there were 3-4 doctors during the 30 years I was up there so that we always had someone, had a dispensary there with a druggist there all the time to dispense it. and the doctor would go around and visit the patients and give him the slip to the dispensary and get that medicine.

Paul: Did you have some home remedies? What kind of home remedies did your mother have, can you remember any special ones?

Warren: Well, yes, we had bottles of cough medicine, something like that that's supposed to be the best; my health was always good, my mother's health was rather delicate and she mustn't overdo, overstree or overwork or she'd "peek" out at some corner or other.

Paul: Were the midwives important in the community? To bring out children?

Warren: Not that I can recall, there's always people that used to go in to help the woman

after her confinement, would help during that time, couple of weeks or so, and then go away again.

Do you remember some of the early church people in this area and what they were like and what kind of activities the church was engaged in?

Warren: J. G. Johnson was Superintendent of the Quincy Mine schools up there and he was a very pious, quiet-spoken man with with red whiskers and J. G. Johnson was a deacon of the Congregational Church for a long while, he and MacDonald, he was a clerk up there in the supply department of Quincy Mining Company; he was a powerful man in the Congregational Church, Ed MacDonald from East Hancock. And E. L. Wright used to live down here on the lake front here, E. L. Wright an insurance man, he was a very religious, very complete superintendent of the Congregational Sunday School, wonderful fellow there; I patterned my life and liked to keep company with them and stay with them because I knew they were square-shooters and they were very fine men.

What kind of things did people do when you got days off, you didn't have to work, like 4th of July or Labor Day or some other celebration or something would take place? Did you get together with your family or sisters?

Warren: Well, I stayed around the home pretty well, and if they were celebrating, I'd go up the street and watch the celebrating but I didn't participate very much in any of the activities; I was an onlooker more than partaking.

Were you member of any organizations at all? Besides the church organizations? You said you weren't a member of any political organizations but would there be any other organizations that you were member of, Rotary or something?

Warren: Well this is now very personal. But when the Congregational Church was about in the first decade of this century back in 1910, I was in the Boy's Brigade and it made an impression on me for the rest of my life. Deacon Johnson was our religious leader and we had Albert Leigh of the Copper Journal, printer of the Copper Journal, he was a military man and he was very erect and straight in his uniform, looked like a major, and Mr. Riley was our pastor and he was our captain of our Boy's Brigade.

Paul: What did the Boy's Bridgade do? What was your

Warren: They were a group of about 30 boys from the Congregational denomination of friends that would get together and we had uniforms and we were thoroughly military, had guns, drill, in the Congregational Church basement there, two years we camped out at the canal there, just beyond the point there; there was a similiar institution in the Episcopal Church in Houghton and another in Lake Linden so that there was about 4 or 5 companies in Houghton County of the Boy's Brigade and Sunday nights we'd had our religious service there and they'd give us a sermon and talk and how to be good boys and how to conduct ourselves; I think that's one of the powerful influences of my life-E. L. Wright and J. G. Johnson - address them and made sure -- Ley was at the time religious type of man and so disciplinarian, showman sitting up, chest out, feet formed an angle to a perfect square; he put us through-- we drilled there for about 2 hours in the evenings and we had rifles, little shooting guns so we felt that it wasn't just a joke, we mean substantial business. I have pictures around here somewhere, packed away somewhere, the Boy's Brigade. Standing there, lines rigid, straight.

Paul: What other kind of recollections do you have of the past? Some things that you think are very important? that we have not talked about so far?

Warren: Well, I don't know; my first thought was that I at my tender age was the man of the

house, my mother was frail, my oldest sister was epileptic, she was subject to epilepsy and did not go to school, she was home, she needed someone to look after at home, keep people from taking advantage of her and then Alice, my youngest sister, she was smart and alert and red-headed

Paul: Did Alice get married then?

Warren: No, she never married, she died about 10 years ago. But she got restless here and she went out to California different times from here, work for a summer, work for a winter or something, very competent stenographer, clerical, so that she said that I remain in the house with my mother, the others might go and come but I was here all the time, to look after my good mother. So I've always gone---I never drank at all, never tempted because it was right in my order of religion, wine is a muffler, strong drink is region, and whosoever did sieve thereby, is not---something---right. (I can't think of that word) whosoever drinketh is not wise. So that I'm not a bit too , I say darn once in a while, and maybe damn once in a while, but I try to be fair shooter and those people getting relief there lives were in my hands frequently so that if I said yes or no, hard times or poor times or good times, why, it would fluctuate with my

Paul: That's right, you had a very important job!

Warren: For Houghton County. There's a lot of people in Houghton County That needed help.

Paul: Ya. And so you had to make a determination.

Warren: That's the idea. You wanted to be fair to people that were hungry or needed clothes or whatever, and let the people that were digging in their pocket and putting up the money, to equip, feed those other people; if I saw one of our clients, as I called them, was wasting food or doing something else, "take it easy, fella, you're not spending your own money, your spending money from all the nice people from around town so you just pipe down", I'd bring them down to a common sense, little, so they would not

Paul: Were there more of one kind of people on relief than another kind? That you can remember, can you remember some other things about that job that stand out, or some individual cases that people that are passed on now that you could mention?

Warren: Well, I tried to be fair to everybody. And when they come to the office and a visitor would say, they have all the things in the world in their homes, spent all their money in new carpets and curtains and furniture and everything that's the latest, but now they want something for groceries, what'll we do for them? They're maybe hungry. Well, I'd say, there's a little matter of , why do they spend so extravagantly in buying clothes, furniture and all that, why don't they think of the next day, or next month, they'll be needing clothing for winter pretty soon, so I feel that they had not shown good judgment in handling their affairs, and clerk and I would say, well, we can't let them go cold, can't let them starve but please be a little more slow in dishing out your money because your neighbors across the street and your neighbors around you are digging in their pockets to buy bread and butter for you. So I admonished them, solidly or mildly , but please don't come back again for quite a long while. Make it stretch out as far as you can. So I gave them a little advice, try to make them realize that they're grown-up men and women now and have responsible families coming up and they should give them good, wise instructions and patterns for them to go by.

Paul: Do you think the mines will ever re-open? Do you think there's any great future for the Copper Country?

Warren: I don't know. I notice in the papers that they're thinking of something but really

Suomi salutes the people who make this area great

grandfather
Doctor

Suomi College
Folklore Album

Father

- a. George Bell
- b. Chicago
- c. Groceries Store
Had died 1877.

Mother

- a. Louisa Mott
- b. Chicago
- c. Housewife

Father

- a.
- b.
- c.

Mother

- a.
- b.
- c.

1882 born

Father

- a. Warren Bell
- b. Hancock
- c. Western Express

Mother

- a.
- b.
- c.

B. in MC.

A - yrs old

Quincy Min. - 15 yrs. 1905-1920
 1922 Public Relief Comm.
 grad. from h.s. in 1900 Retired 1940

Child

- a.
- b.
- c.

think Quincy Mine is probably pretty well worked There's ground
that they have been into but it may be lean copper much any copper
same way with most of them they had their best days just how lucky they **will**
with picking loose ends

(end tape

12-12-74

Warren Bell, ex-Welfare director, dies

HANCOCK — Warren M. Bell, 92, a prominent Hancock citizen, passed away Wednesday evening in the Houghton County Medical Care Facility, where he had been a resident-patient since August.

He was born August 26, 1882, in Chicago, a son of Louisa and George Bell. He moved to Hancock when a child and attended the Hancock schools, graduating from Hancock High School, class of 1900.

Mr. Bell was first employed by the Railway Express office in Hancock and later worked as a clerk for the Quincy Mining Company for a number of years.

He was director of the Houghton County Welfare Department for over 30 years, retiring in 1955.

Mr. Bell was a member of the Portage Lake United Church and faithfully served as clerk of the Congregational Church of Hancock for 50 years.

He was a member of Quincy Lodge, F. & A. M. No. 135, the Royal Arch Masons, Hancock Lodge, No. 351, B. P. O. O., was a life member of the Hancock Rotary Club and for several years was chairman of the advisory board of the Salvation Army. For 33 years he served as treasurer on the Easter Seal committee.

Three cousins, Mrs. Robert (Helen Adelaide) Beste of St. Charles, Mo., Mrs. Virginia Kreiter and Mrs. Katherine Galtz of Evanston, Ill., survive.

Friends may call at the O'Neill Funeral Home from 3 to 5 p.m. and 7 to 10 p.m. Friday.

Funeral services will be Saturday at 2 p.m. in the funeral home, the Rev. Samuel Oliver to officiate. Interment will be in the family plot in Rosehill Cemetery in Chicago.