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and Museum

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

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Gust Hill  
September 9, 1974

Elma Ranta

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SUBJECT:

SOURCE: Gust Hill

COMMENTS:

Interviewer: Elma Ranta

I: September 9, 1974

R: Prior to Finland's independence from Russia in 1919, they had very little industrial manufacturing; but rural home industry provided the Finn for most of his needs. And the Finn who was not handy was of no account. My mother raised the sheep, sheared them and spun the wool, wove the cloth, cut and sewed the clothes by hand which she, my brother and I wore when we came to Waukeegan, Illinois, in 1895. Utensils from wooden spoons to barrels to vehicles were homemade often after a day of hard farm work and in winter by the firelight by the hearth. There was a blacksmith in some villages who could also pinch hit as a tinsmith and on some occasions shape these tongs to suit the job and pull an aching tooth. Shoemakers and tailors with their apprentices usually traveled together from one village to another and lodge in some farm home as long as the work lasted.

In those years Finland had no free public schools, so only the wealthier people could afford to educate their children. Even so, the rate of illiterates was only five per cent, less than it was in the United States then thanks to the State church which then was an arm of the government and required parents to teach their children. The rate of illiterates now, 1974, is one per cent. Statistics show that Finns in their own country now, buy more books, periodicals and newspapers per capita than any other people.

In 1863 and 1864, frost killed nearly all farm produce and uncounted masses of people starved to death. They had peeled bark of pine trees dried it and ground it to pulp and made betko bread of it which filled but did not nourish. Betko derives from bettia pine. Ironically the Finnish bettia using two t's means deceiver. There were no railroads and the gulfs of Finland and Boknia freeze over in winter. A killing frost in mid-summer is not unusual in some parts of Finland. Such were the conditions that impelled so many Finns to immigrate to this blessed land of milk and honey. *Boknia*

My parents were not able to procure enough money for the whole family to come here together, so Father came alone to Ishpeming, Michigan, in 1890 like many others; but the so called Credelant panic came and it

took him five years to repay his own borrowed fare and to save enough for his family's fare. Labor wages then were seventy-five cents to a dollar and a quarter per ten-hour day. Jobs were scarce, but Father said he was lucky sometimes to be selected out of a group of applicants.

Other reasons for immigrating were escape from military service in the Russian army, family ties, love affairs, friendships, and the dream of scooping a supply of gold and then returning. Single women soon learned that a market existed here for their services too as domestics and in some industry; so many came, found work and often husbands. That is how this writer got his wife. The largest concentration of Finns first came to the eastern and mid-western states; but fate sometimes plays tricks. A young lady in Canada had just signed a contract to work a year for a farmer, common practice then, when she received a letter from her sailor boyfriend who had jumped ship at Seattle, Washington, and was sending her a ticket to go there. She wanted to honor her contract so she had asked my Aunt Mia to substitute for her with the promise that at the end of a year's service they would send her a ticket too to Seattle, which they did. Later, relatives and others from Finland and the mid and eastern states began moving west which was then in its rapid development stage. Later there were so many Finns at Astoria, Oregon, that it was dubbed the capitol of the Finns to which the Finns of Hancock, Michigan, quickly retorted that "you may keep your capitol, but we have our (???) of the Finns", referring of course to Soumi College. *College*

As opportunity beckoned, the Finnish immigrants have spread over most of the United States and much of Canada. Such an opportunity was the discovery of iron ore at Negaunee, Michigan, in the 1840's. Experienced miners were imported from Cornwall, England, but other skills and the brawn of the Finns also was needed; so the Marquette Iron Range became home to many Finns. The Cornish miners brought with them the pastie, a nutritious meal in one package and the peculiar Cornish wrestling which now seems to be forgotten. The contestants wore rather long loose-fitting jackets and the trick was to twist your opponent's jacket so that his limbs would fail and he could be thrown most easily. Not to be out done, the Finns brought their heritage too. Religion, love of literature, poetry, music, art, skills, brawn and the sauna which has spread to parts of the United States and Canada where there are no Finns. But, let us not kid ourselves that we did not bring our faults too. Some finding that for the first time they had a few more dollars than their living expenses, celebrated with whiskey and then they could lick the world; so then the term "drunken Finlander" was applied to nearly all night-time commotions. Incidentally, a drunken Finn is best left alone. I have not seen one in over thirty years. To combat that evil, temperance societies were organized and churches were founded and the Kuleva Lodge was formed to perpetuate Finnish traditions and culture. <sup>A</sup>

The Finnish churches were predominantly Lutheran but are divided into three different groups with variations in affiliation and some points of the confession; however, as the immigrant generation passes away, the Finnish churches merge with the American churches and the other

organizations having performed their purpose, die for lack of interest and support.

Perhaps the worst difficulty the Finn encountered here is the inconsistency of the English language where R-E-A-D is pronounced "read" (long E) and a moment later in the same paragraph it is pronounced "read" (short E)...past tense; where a man cleaves unto his wife until death do us part and the butcher cleaves the carcass of a steer apart with a cleaver; where northerly, according to Winston's Simplified Dictionary, is defined as "tending toward the north or away from the north"...take your choice. The Finnish is a consistent phonetic language that never sends you south if you want to go north. Interpreters were not always available and often their Finnish was so mixed with corruptions of English words, that one could not understand the other. The mixture was properly dubbed, Finnlish. When I was a boy we lived in a settlement where there were about forty Finns and I was the only one that spoke a little English. So, on one occasion I was interpreting for a Finnish lady who had some sex problem and me being a minor of the opposite sex made it difficult for the doctor to learn the essential facts and he asked so many round-about questions that I was getting bored. Finally he asked my age. So, I told him, I was fourteen, but no part of the case in hand. I can still see his pot belly heaving with laughter.

Other problems were new but easier to overcome...evaluating the money, adapting to new types of work, and in general a new life style. Some had difficulties with their names like our in Finland was Riamaki...ria - dividing line or boundary...maki - hill. With varying prefixes to the Maki such as Kilomake, Rostomaki, etc., some had dropped their prefixes and were plain Maki. So, to simplify things, my father did likewise. But when he went to a lumbering camp near Sidnaw, they already had three John Maki's identified by number. So, the foreman translated his name to Hill, and we have been Hill's ever since. In those days, no one questioned the authenticity of names nor could anyone see a time when it could matter.

Most Finns who stayed in this country became naturalized citizens... more American than the pilgrims who merely came. In Finland there is some tendency to disparage us immigrants as traitors to the land of our birth while they were left to improve and defend it against their ruthless neighbor. I salute you native Finns. On the other hand, many of us sent clothing, food and other goods to relatives in Finland in their time of need.

But, let us take another look at the Marquette Iron Range. For utilizing the newly found iron ore, small furnaces and forges were built in and near the mining area wherever there was hardwood timber for the production of charcoal for fuel. These furnaces operated only as long as the timber was available. One of the longer lasting and perhaps the largest was the Forestville furnace, a few miles west of Marquette on the Dead River. The ore was hauled from Negaunee by horses and so was the charcoal which often was baked in stone or solid kilns where the timber was cut. Forestville was so totally French, a Mr. Gelf went there to operate a store and he had to

learn their language to deal with them. Such were the beginnings of the iron industry on the Marquette Range.

Then it was discovered that the smoke from the charcoal kilns could be condensed and refined into wood alcohol leaving a residue of acetate of lime and tar, all commercial products. This discovery was first utilized at the Kipling furnace near Gladstone and so elated the owners that they built a larger furnace and a chemical plant with research facilities at Marquette. Many Finns were employed at both plants and were considered good workers and some held fairly responsible jobs. The Kipling Furnace was shut down about 1925 and the Marquette Furnace closed in 1931 due to the demand for no more charcoal iron. But the charcoal and chemical industry continued for many years. These plants had an impact on Alger County also as nearly all of the cord wood was harvested there and many of the rugged Finnish wood cutters bought the stump lands and tried farming with indifferent success.

Some of the Finnish newspapers in the United States have been plus periodicals of the various groups.

While the many short live furnaces operated in the Upper Peninsula, it was manifested a larger more permanent market was needed for the increasing volume of iron ore being mined. Such an area was Ohio and Pennsylvania where coal for fuel was abundant; but a shipping route was needed. So, a wagon road was built from Negaunee to Marquette near Eagle Mills. To bear the heavy loads of ore, that road was paved with wooden planks sawed there and is now known as the "Old Road".

The first steam railroad in the Upper Peninsula, the Marquette, Houghton and Ontonagon, was completed in 1857 and speeded ore moving. That railroad followed the Morgan Creek and Carp River valley and entered Marquette on what now is M 553. The rails were taken up in November, 1932. The DSS & A, now the Soo Line, and LS & I now haul all the ore and contribute largely to the economy of the area and continue to maintain the only industrial enterprises in Marquette.

At the time of the Civil War, many colored people fled north and there were sufficient numbers of them in Marquette that they had their own Presbyterian Church on the south side of Jackson Street, a couple of blocks west of Division Street. That church was dismantled about 1920. The colored men did not go for the heavy work like the Finns did, but were barbers, porters and teamsters.

The second generation of Finns has now taken over and are no longer Finns, but Americans and proud of it. When we, the first generation, wilt on the vine. Gust T. Hill

- I: Now, what year did you come to Marquette then, Gust?
- R: September 20th, 1908
- I: And where did you come from?
- R: Chatam *at on*
- I: From Chatam...and had you lived in Chatam very long?
- R: Five years
- I: And you had lived in Kipling.
- R: Before that from boyhood.
- I: From boyhood...and from Kipling you went to school?
- R: Yeah, a little bit in Kipling.
- I: Would you tell me your age? You did such a good job here.
- R: I'm within exactly one month I'll be eighty-seven. Let's say, I'm eighty-six.
- I: You're eighty-six and eleven months.
- R: Yeah, right.
- I: And what day is your birthday.
- R: Ninth of October...but I don't want anybody to remember it
- I: Oh...well I know you did such a good job on this. Now, coming into Marquette...was Marquette quite different at that time?
- R: Yes, it was relatively primitive compared to today. It was much smaller...population was less than half of what it is now...and there were quite a few industries. There were sawmills and Lake Shore Engine Works operated much heavier than they do now and the Longier and Harts was here and the furnace contributed to a large portion of the industry, and so on. The college was very small with an enrollment of somewheres around eight hundred or something like that and now what is there, two - three thousand?
- I: At least that, I don't know the exact number now. And so, it was a normal school at the time.
- R: Yes, that's right.
- I: And there were quite a few Finnish people?
- R: Probably more than there are now. I believe there were because there was more common labor.

- I: And there was a temperance hall at that time?
- R: Two...(???) Savola and Alto Savola. Later they merged and made Alto.
- I: Yes, and then the workers had their hall on Washington?
- R: Oh yes, they had the Liberty Hall on Washington Street. I guess that move had dried up now.
- I: And then, one Finnish church.
- R: Yeah, there were really two congregations. One was sort of by Pastor Saganin from Negaunee and the other was started by David Gootsala who was ordained from here.
- I: That would be the National. There was only one church then, the National Lutheran Church until 1941 when St. Mark's was built.
- R: Yeah.
- I: Now, what were some of the hardships that the people had in 1907 and '08 when you came to Marquette and after that too?
- R: Well, for one thing, the wages were awful small, very small. Common labor paid a dollar and seventy cents for a ten-hour day and skilled labor a little bit more; but relative high-skilled labor paid only about two and a half to three dollars a day...highly-skilled labor.
- I: It was hard for the Finnish people to get into some of these.
- R: Well, they had to take the lowest paying jobs naturally, sawmills and city street work and so on.
- I: And the railroads.
- R: And then the ore docks they hired them, lot of the Finns worked on the ore docks in the summer months and in the fall when the navigation slowed, many of them went into the woods and worked at lumbering camps, the hardwood camps.
- I: And there was no compensation
- R: No such thing...nobody dreamed of it. And there was no Social Security and so on.
- I: But many of the Finnish people, the young couples and so on, they bought their own homes did they not?
- R: Many of them did. I did myself...I had a home built in 1912.
- I: Where was your home
- R: 1616 Presque Isle Avenue...for awhile I never thought I'd ever get out from under the debt and I don't know how they ever trusted me with that amount of money, but I had to borrow three hundred dollars to

get the house built and I thought I'd never get that paid up with my small income; but within the course of a few years the wages began going up slowly, not too fast...not much at a time, but we had to pinch, I guess I wore one suit of clothes for about ten years, much of it needed patching...but I guess I was typical of many others. Well, I was probably better off than many others because I was learning a trade at the time and after a few years I got to operating a steam crane...locomotive crane they called it...and that paid two and a half dollars a day.

I: And where was the job?

R: At the furnace...Pioneer No. 2 furnace, otherwise known as the Cleveland Cliffs furnace; and then I was on top of the world. From then on it was easy sailing.

I: Because you made two-fifty.

R: Yeah, I got my house paid in a short time then and then I breathed easier.

I: Did wages go up then about World War I time?

R: Yeah, they raised from then too; but not near as much in proportion, I mean, as they do nowadays. When we got a raise...I remember the first raise we got when I worked in the pipe can, we used to call it, helping pipe fitter, the first raise we got was ten cents a day. And after I'd been there about a year and a half...something like that... ten cents a day.

I: And you thought that was fine.

R: Oh, it was good, yeah.

I: But you had a job.

R: I had a job and that was the main thing, and we lived on it and the family was small at first, but it began increasing quite rapidly and in the end we had five children.

I: So you had how many boys?

R: Two boys...

I: And three girls. Now, quite a few people lived in North Marquette in the area where you lived.

R: North Marquette was the center of the city/<sup>Finns</sup>at that time because it was close to the furnace. That was the biggest employer in Marquette at the time.

Unable to transcribe due to bad sound.

I: Nowadays they'd be real antiques.

- R: It'd be worth a lot more now.
- I: Were you able to drive in the wintertime?
- R: No, everybody jacked their car off the floor so that the tires wouldn't get damp next to the floor and we'd block it up on blocks, you know so that...
- I: And maybe you did the same thing that my dad had done to his 1919 Maxwell, that he would take, as he said, the heart out of it, and put it in the basement. Did you do that to it...your battery?
- R: The battery, yeah, we took out of it, oh yes.
- I: And then all winter he tinkered with the motor...took it all apart and put it back together again. Maybe you had done the same.
- R: No, I only had my car five years and in the meantime, we didn't drive near as much as people drive nowadays; and so the motor didn't need any servicing except oiling and so on and all the while I had it. And then I traded it in for a Buick. Oh, we were up on top of the world then, you know.
- I: Yes, well some people think of the Buick the same way today; but you enjoyed your first car.
- R: I enjoyed it and I wouldn't have gotten a new car yet, but the little Overland got too small for our family. There were seven of us and everybody wanted to go at the same time, so we couldn't all fit in there anymore very well so I had to get a bigger car.
- I: How were the streets at that time? Was it easy driving?
- R: Mostly earth roads, earth streets, and the city had we called it pavement alright, but it was loose rock that was rolled down. First it was wet down, so we called it water-bound macadam...and only the Front Street hill and the Third Street hill and the Fourth Street hill had tarred roads.
- End of Side A
- I: Third Street, Fourth Street and Front Street were tarred.
- R: The hills were tarred but the little parts of the streets were water-bound macadam.
- I: And these were early 1920's and the streets were not all plowed in the winter at that time.
- R: They weren't plowed anywhere in the wintertime except right after a snow storm so the horses and their sleighs could get through. But no one drove their cars in the wintertime then.

- I: That's why everyone made their garage in the back of their lot then.
- R: Yeah
- I: I've had the trouble of cleaning a driveway to the back.
- R: Yeah, I suppose so.
- I: Now, anyother special things that you can remember about the cars and so on? Were you interested in keeping them clean?
- R: Oh yes, everyone took more or less pride in their cars while they had the decent paint on them and some repainted them when they got shabbylooking. So, some people took pride. I couldn't take pride in my Overland because it was one of the smaller cars.
- I: But when you got your Buick?
- R: Oh then that was something better.
- I: Now, your Buick was not a touring car.
- R: No it was...enclosed.
- I: Were you ever in on the races? My father would tell about the Finnish people who had cars as they went out into the country to see some of their friends and so on, they'd try to bypass or pass each other and see how fast their cars would go. Did you know of any of that?
- R: I've seen that, but I never took part in any of that. If somebody wanted to pass me, I let them go. But the roads were usually narrow and you could only pass in certain places. They weren't wide like they are now.
- I: They'd try to go in high on Green Garden hill when it was so curvey there.
- R: That was considered a good car that would go up Green Garden hill on high. I remember I had trouble with my Overland when I first bought it...brand new car and I didn't know how fast a car should go or could go and I was satisfied with it, but my brother drove it one time. We went to Kipling and he drove it and when we got back he said, "there's something the matter with your car". So, I asked him, "why, what's wrong with it?" He said, "it doesn't seem to have the power that it ought to have." So, I asked him...well he was a pretty good motor mechanic then, I asked him "what could be the trouble", and he says, "well, it could be several things," and he mentioned among other things that the valves probably weren't set right. So, I asked him how they should be set and he told me that on that type of a car the intake should be 4/100onths of an inch and the exhaust 6/100onths of an inch. So, I bought me a feeler gauge and I checked them and I found that they were way off. I reset them then. Nowadays you can't reset them, they're made at the factory in such a way that there is

no adjustment to them; but in those days you could' adjust them. So, I adjusted mine and I was careful with it. Next time we went to Chatam with it, on Green Garden hill we passed another Overland that was having trouble climbing the hill and we passed him like nobodys business. I could see their eyes just popping out of their head when we passed them with the same kind of a car that they had; and they undoubtedly couldn't figure out how it was done. I couldn't have either if it wasn't for my brother telling me. Green Garden hill was a test usually, and also Fourth Street hill here. Any car that could come up Fourth Street hill on high, that was a good car.

I: Yes, and going back now, Fourth Street hill and Fifth Street hill my dad said.

R: Fifth Street is worse yet

I: Yes, but those were streets that you would try a car on and then decide whether you wanted to buy it or not. Now, how did you get a driving permit when you bought your first car?

R: I don't think I had to have a permit. I don't recall a permit at all.

I: That's what my father said too. That in 1919 he didn't need any.

R: No

I: He had just gone with a friend of his who knew how to drive a car down to the garage to pick up his car, and the fellow on the way home showed him how to drive it.

R: That's the way I got mine.

I: And then the fellow went home, he was a neighbor, and he went home and my father asked my mother to go around the Island;...and so with my mother they had gone to the Island and the hill there at the Island as you go up the hill, my dad had given too much gas, and it stalled. But he did know how to put it in reverse and they came back down and started up and went around. And there was no traffic so they didn't have to worry in 1919.

R: No...no, you didn't need to worry then.

I: And he said too that there was no driving permit. You just learned on your own...that it was quite a few years after that. So, those are some of the real experiences.

R: Those are the years that many people speak of as the "good old times".

I: And so you had a Buick. How long did you keep the Buick then?

R: Fourteen years.

I: And it lasted that long.

- R: Then I practically gave it away then. I got forty-five dollars for it. And then I bought a Chevrolet. I liked that car too.
- I: But by that time, most of the Finnish people had cars.
- R: Oh yes
- I: They all were interested in them.
- R:
- I: And some of them were speed demons too.
- R: We Finns, many of us, are kind of stuck up, you know, on ourselves. We don't want to be any poorer than our neighbor. So, a car was a sort of a .....
- I: Status symbol?
- R:
- I: But most of the Finnish people owned their own homes, wasn't that true in Marquette?
- R: Yeah
- I: Now, what about medicine and doctors and so on in those times when you came to Marquette?
- R: Some industries, the furnace in particular, had a so-called company doctor; and one dollar a month was deducted from each employee for the services of the company physician who took care of the employee and his family for all their medical needs excepting, of course, major operations or something like that...that cost extra. But ordinary every-day ills were taken care of by the company doctor. And he used to drive by horse and buggy and visit out by North Marquette almost every day and other industries or smaller industries couldn't afford anything like that, so they had to have their individual doctors. And there were several of them in Marquette so a person had their choice. But, the company doctor, he was assigned to that and you couldn't ask for some other doctor, you had to have him for all your ailments. And for anything like operations, they charged extra.
- I: Now, do you remember the doctor's name?
- R: Thomas Cunningham was the company doctor for the Pioneer Furnace No. 2; and later he was succeeded by...what is his name now...my memory basket leaks.
- I: Oh, you do well.
- R: I should know his name as well as I know my own, but that's the way we go. His son is a doctor here now.

- I: Dr. Bennett?
- R: Bennett, that's right...that's right.
- I: Oh, Dr. Bennett's father.
- R: Yes, he succeeded Cunningham.
- I: So, you had some type of medical care.
- R: Yes, employee and his family had medical care that way.
- I: What type of medical care did you have at Kipling where you came from Finland?
- R: Same type as they have here...had here. They had a doctor named at Kipling Furnace, his name was Richard Forsythe.
- I: And he took care of all the employees.
- R:
- I: Was there a company hospital?
- R: No, no hospital.
- I: Where did they go to the hospital?
- R: At Kipling Furnace if anyone needed hospitalization there, they had to go Escanaba. There was no hospital at Gladstone or Kipling nor Rapid River.
- I: Now when you came to Marquette, what<sup>was</sup>/the hospital like in Marquette at that time.
- R: The hospital, St. Luke's, was in that first building west of the Peter White Library. It's an apartment building now. I was in there for ten weeks for typhoid fever...sort of like home to me.
- I: Yes, my dad had a dislocated shoulder and he had been in there too. And then there was St. Mary's.
- R: There was another doctor had a private hospital on North Front Street. I don't remember his name anymore either; and he only took his own patients in there. He didn't take other patients. And St. Mary's Hospital was here then too; but it seemed that mostly the Catholics only went to St. Mary's Hospital; although in later years many others went there and now they're specialized into accidents and mental cases.
- I: When both hospitals have gone together now

- R: They're together now, but they still segregate the patients according to their illness. All emergency cases go to St. Luke's, all psychological cases go to St. Mary's and they're both equipped for that particular area.
- I: And the facilities are very different from what they were when you were in that small St. Luke's that was behind Peter White Library.
- R: Sure...yes
- I: Now, do you remember any home remedies...infinment...when you had illness?
- R: Oh, there was some Hoffman ensoopia...Hoffman's drop...I think that's a German name, Hoffman; and I don't remember many of the others. But, they were quite limited and those were almost...one medicine was good for half a dozen different ailments according to their belief.
- I: Now, where did you come from in Finland?
- R: Alva Haavma, Finland. You've heard of Haavma, they were noted for settling their differences with knives; so I had a bad reputation to start with. But, I left my knife in the old country.
- I: Did you live on a farm?
- R: We came to Waukeegan, Illinois, and my father had a job there in a starch factory and I understand that that starch factory is still in operation there now...made cornstarch there. Surrounding farming area there is corn country and so it fits in very well for cornstarch factory. My father worked there and he was getting a dollar and ten cents a day, and they employed quite a number of young women in that plant too and noon hours...they had an hour for noon lunch...and after they ate their lunch some of the younger people would dance in the shipping room. And it seems that the floor must have had nails in it and somebody's shoe nail struck a nail in the floor and ignited the starch dust which had settled on the floor and exploded. Blew out all the windows and doors and damaged the building a good deal. So, it was shut down indefinitely then. And work was awful hard to get in those years...that was during the so called Cleveland Panic and at that time the wire factory in Decalb was just starting and my father heard that they were hiring men there and he had worked in the wire mill in Waukeegan before, so he went to Decalb and he got a job right away at dollar a day. And we lived there for about a year, I guess; but he remembered having cut cordwood for the Newberry furnace in earlier years, and he thought he could make more in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan here and he went to Newberry looking for a cordwood cutting job again and they weren't hiring any men, they had all the cordwood they wanted; but he learned there that the furnace at Kipling was just starting up then, 1895. So he went to Kipling and he got a job there, a dollar and a quarter a day mind you, and so he sent for his family then and we came to Kipling in early summer of

1896 when we came to Kipling. And from there then, father got a fairly good job at the furnace there, he eventually operated the blowing engines which blew the air into the furnace proper and humps and dynamos and stuff like that. Stationary engineer we used to call them then. And he got a job there and he was getting two dollars and ten cents a day mind you, but it was 365 days a year and you worked a month on each shift and when you changed shifts, one man would stay on twenty-four hours and the other fellow he had a whole day off then. And the next time they changed, the other fellow would have the day off. So, I don't blame my father too much for getting disgusted with that routine and he remembered how well off the landowners were in Finland, so he figured he could make a farm out of a piece of hardwood timber land and many others thought the same way; but he gave up a good easy job to come to Chatam and we tried for five years...six years all told...to make a farm out of it and I helped him in my teen and early manhood years and then when I was getting to the stage where I was leaving and starting a family of my own, he got discouraged too and gave up and sold it for six hundred dollars...the amount of money he had invested in it when he first started. And he went back to Kipling and knocked around at various odd jobs until he died in 1927.

I: So, you tried farming in Chatam

R: Yeah...Slepnik...two miles east of Chatam; but Chatam was the Office anyway.

I: Now, this was an area that had had lumber camps?

R: Oh yes, yeah...lumbering camps and cordwood camps. The company had camps at Trenary, later at Rumley, and Dorcey and Danling...two miles north of Rumley. They had cordwood camps there and big boarding houses there where scores of men boarded...they cut cordwood. They were getting ninety cents a cord for I think four-foot hardwood. Two very good men who were able to set and file their saw just so, could cut up to five cords a day. I never heard of any two cutting anymore than that; but they were tops. Many teams of two men would be satisfied with three cords a day, so they weren't getting rich. That cordwood was hauled to...shipped to Marquette, first to the Carp furnace and later to Pioneer No. 2.

I: About what year?

R: Well, we went to Chatam about 1902, and I left there in 1908, and my father left about a year later and went back to Kipling.

I: Yes, I know my father had come to the lumber camps.

R: Your father used to work at Danling...two miles north of Rumley. My first wife knew him from there. She used to wash dishes and help the cook for one of these boarding houses in Danling.

I: Where?

R: D-A-N-L-I-N-G, that's two miles north of Rumley. It's farming country now.

- I: It was rough work. There were some rough times at those camps.
- R: That cutting cord wood like that, that's he-man's work; and I had my chance to try it too, and I'm thankful too because my strength grew in proportion to the work, not in proportion to my size. I have, without boasting or bragging about it, I have been unusually strong for my size.
- I: Yes, my father said that it was rough. It wasn't just that it was heavy work because railroad work was just heavy if not heavier.
- R: Oh, that cordwood work was heavy and then after paydays there'd be a rough time in that boardhouse too. You know, Finns are known for their liquor and like I mentioned in there previously, a drunken Finn is best left alone. There were squabbles and sometimes some of them would get cut up.
- I: And some of them even at that time had the knife fights.
- R: Oh yes
- I: Especially at the camps at Seney lumber camps.
- R: Yes, Seney was known as the...one of the roughest spots in Michigan some fifty years ago...sixty years ago, maybe. They used to cut pine through there at that time and they had a lot of these rough lumberjacks. There were Finns and Frenchmen mixed and they didn't get along too well between them.
- I: That was around the turn of the century.
- R: Reminds me of one case...two brothers went to work at East Tawas in Lower Michigan, that was pine country at that time. They went to work cutting pine logs there and they were the only two Finns in the whole big camp and there were a lot of Frenchmen there. One great big giant of a Frenchman was constantly harassing them and teasing them and having a good time and amusing his countrymen by abusing these two Finnish brothers. They were both medium-sized men, but this Frenchman was a big giant, you know. So, they made up their mind...they knew when they left New York even, they knew that they were looking for cordwood cutters at Rumley. So, they made up their minds to leave that camp then, logging camp, and come to Rumley looking for cordwood work, cutting work. And still they wanted to get revenge on that fellow that had been abusing them so much. So, they got everything else just about ready and they knew just about when that train would be due that was hauling these logs out of there, so they layed for this Frenchman and between the two of them they got in the dark and they beat him up for all they were worth. They never knew afterwards if he lived through it or not, but they got satisfaction anyway.
- I: That was true in many places at that time
- R: Yeah, and then they left that place as fast as they could and bummed a ride from there finally landing at Rumley. Well at Rumley they

didn't need anymore cordwood cutters at that time, so these two brothers they come and cut this cordwood for my father when we first started there at Slepnik. And this one of them told me this story then how they come to leave New York in the first place and how they come to land at Chatam then. That was typical of the rough days in those lumbering camps.

I: And if somebody would disappear, nobody would worry about them.

R: Yes...no, it was just his hardluck if he disappeared.

I: They stole from one another.

R: Oh, there was a lot of that. French especially were known...I don't suppose I should say that...but some Finns may do it too.

I: But they had long days at the lumber camps

R: Daylight to daylight...or I mean daylight to dark.

I: And poor facilities for sleeping and so on

R: There were bunks...rather they were boxes about five inches deep with straw put in them, that was your bed and a blanket to cover yourself, of course. And once a year that straw would be taken out and the lice with it and the bed bugs and new straw brought in. That's the kind of bed we had in the old country. Our bed that I slept in as a boy was nothing but a box about five inches deep, boards for a bottom and straw maybe...well would fill that box with straw and mother, however, had some kind of a sheet on there. I don't know whether it was a blanket or what it was and a pillow, and in the old country we didn't use blankets at all, we used comfortors, quilts. They were warmer than the blankets.

I: Did you have the sheep's wool (???) in Finland?

R: Yeah, we had those too. Yeah, robes, yeah.

I: Since they didn't have central heating and it was cold at these lumber camps too.

R: Central heating was the fireplace. That served as a stove and a heater and in the winter months to light the house. The flame from the fireplace would illuminate the house. We had one oil lamp about the size of a small milk can with a little spout in one end of it about an inch long and you stuffed some rag down in that spout and if you had to adjust the wick up or down, you did that with a darning needle...there was no screw on it to adjust it; and it smoked but at that time the word pollution hadn't been invented yet, so the smoke would go up to the ceiling where your bread was hung on a pole just below the ceiling. But the smoke, that didn't spoil the bread in the least, it was just as good.

I: This was in Finland when you were a boy.

- R: This was in Finland, yeah. We didn't have that in this country anymore. We had oil lamps with a chimney on them and they didn't smoke. Usually the lamp was secured to a wall somewhere with a reflector behind it and that was a big improvement over the old-country lamp.
- I: Yes. Do you remember when you got central heating...a furnace in your house on Presque Isle?
- R: Let's see, what year was that...I had the house built in 1912, and I think it was about 1917 when I got the furnace...warm-air furnace. Just about 1917...I'm not sure if it's exact, but that's pretty close to it.
- I: But about that time not too many people had central heating.
- R: No, we used to have what we called a base burner coal stove. It burned hard coal...nut coal that poured into a hopper from the top and then closed the top securely and from there it would feed down through a little funnel into a firepot and from there it spread by its gravity as it burned. And this hopper on top would hold enough to last overnight. And oh, that was a big improvement over the box stove that many people had where you put the big chunks of wood into a box stove and heat your house that way. But there was one fatal accident happened with the base burner stove, a family named Saari.. you probably don't...no you wouldn't remember them, the man and his wife and his boy died from gas leaking out from this. The cover on this base burner stove fit tight enough so no gas escaped from there normally; but when they had filled the hopper, a small chunk of coal had lain underneath the cover and left it open so a lot of gas had seeped out of there between the cover and the dome and during their sleep no one smelled the gas...you couldn't hardly smell it anyway.. and so this man and his wife and their son died of this gas.
- I: And this was in North Marquette.
- R: Yeah, a family names Saari.
- I: Did you have a basement built before...
- R: Yeah, we had a basement.
- I: Right away when you had your house made.
- R: It was only about six feet three inches high because when I excavated for the house, there was water showed up. So, that limited the depth of my basement; but answered the purpose very well. We're short and never bumped our head on the ceiling anyway...joices anyway. So, it had a basement and we had three bedrooms so it was big enough for the family.
- I: But at that time, many people in 1912 you said you built your house?
- R:
- I: Many of the people did not have basements.

R: No, most of the homes were on posts...cedar posts

I: Do you remember anything about streetcars in Marquette? Someone was telling me about them.

R: Streetcars...oh yes, that was good service. They run every half hour at one time. All the way from the Island out to Baraga Avenue on Front Street.

I: So it would go past your house on Presque Isle?

R: Yeah, and when we first moved in there I thought to myself,"For goodness sake, we made a mistake coming here."