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

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

INTERVIEW BETWEEN:

INTERVIEWEES: FRANK HINKS AND RICHARD HINKS

INTERVIEWER: ART PUOTINEN

DATED: JUNE 24, 1974

Perhaps we should begin, Frank, by getting a little bit of information about you. Where you were born, went to school, your educational career and etc.

As far as I'm concerned personally, an interesting life. As far as I'm concerned, not a glamorous one, but I'm well satisfied and had a very happy life. I was born in Alpena, Michigan in 1887. I attended the public schools and graduated from high school. In high school I participated in the athletics, principally football and a year or so I was President of Alpena High School Athletic Association. After graduation from high school I worked mostly in the insurance business and I graduated in 1906. In 1908, I entered the University of Michigan and graduated from Law School in 1912. Then I went back to Alpena and practiced law until through the year 1927. While I was there, I served as Commissioner for four years. Then I was prosecuting attorney for the following four years and that was during a very interesting period with prohibition. I also was the United States Commissioner in the United States District Court. Eastern Division or the Northern Division _____ I was interested in Civic matters and I was on the Board of Education, President of the Chamber of Commerce, and President of the Alpena Agriculture Society _____. At the end of 1927 I moved to Detroit. I was associated with a classmate.

I.: Who were some of your clients in Alpena?

F.: Well, I represented one of the founders of the Peoples State Bank. At times I represented the Fletcher Paper Co., Alpena Wholesale Co., and the _____. I had a very nice client, _____ in Alpena.

Did you represent the ^{uron}Hären Portland Cement Co.? Also organize the Besser Manufacturing Co.?

F.: Well, I did not organize the Besser Manufacturing Co.

I.: I thought you incorporated them.

F.: No. I was attorney for Mr. Herman Besser and Father Jessy. I was present when they bought the plant, which was sold on bankruptcy by Defont Automobile Concern.

Well, that was quite an outstanding list of plans. I'm sure you

fellow I have trouble remembering his name. He often did appraisals. He was on the board. He was one of the originators of _____ or that outfit. I can't think of his name. But there was Mr. Aldrich in Flint, Mr. Fred Eddy in Flint, and Chet Sybillski in Flint. They were all directors.

Plus Clyde Webster

Yes. Plus Clyde Webster

And Mr. Hanchet in Detroit. So that is five, right there.

Yes. So they almost accomplished, I guess, the move and that was very much resistant. The idea was not liked at all by the local people, thinking of Detroit and Northern as an Upper Peninsula organization or association.

: What arguments did the men from the Lower Peninsula offer to suggest the move down there?

F.: Well, Detroit, at that time, was the _____ Detroit. A much better Detroit than it is today and more attractive. Prior to 1927, Detroit and Northern made loans to an association, a building association, that was really a subsidiary of General Motors. They made large loans in Flint. It was a big operation. Housing in Flint. Of course, there was a lot of business down state. That was the argument, I think, that the home office should be in a large city that originated a large amount of business or had large prospects of originating business.

: What or who was the prime moves in keeping the association here?

F.: Well, I wouldn't know that. There was a member of the legislature that was on the board here. Forgotten his name too. Of course, there was Mr. Douglas, ^{son?} Lawton, an attorney that was here, and Don Seaton. That name almost came to me, of an older man that was on the board.

I.: Well, we can check that out.

F.: But there was enough local politics to defeat the project to move to Detroit.

Has there been any serious consideration to moving it or was that really kind of a key point in history that the association said that, we're going to plant our feet here, with the head office and develop the business?

Well, I would say that the latter, that the association has become a Hancock and Houghton and Upper Peninsula Association. While the lower part of the state does originate quite a bit of business. I think the policy is to have the home office here as evidence by the direction of the costly building.

I wonder if we could go back to the early period when you moved to Detroit and Mr. Bell. I guess he was your immediate predecessor. Was he not?

F.: Yes, It was Hanchet and Bell and of course, you know of Mr. Hanchet's connection upon his death. Bell became an attorney for the association, which consists of largely of examination of titles and he past on a type of work of the loans in Flint, as well as in Detroit. He was to send the applications to Bell and then Bell was very unfortunately killed in an automobile and train wreck. Very serious wreck. Also was killed was the engineer and a fireman and later, a passenger on the train died of injuries resulting from the wreck. Then when Jay Bell died, was killed in that manner, August of '42. Then Mr. Jory, who was the director and Detroit manager and gave to me temporarily until they selected a competent attorney Since that time, I have still been on probation.

Still in a temporary release here?

F Yes.

I.: Then you've been acting lawyer in title and in also _____?

F Yes.

: I think it would be important for the type of thing that we're trying to do here.

F.: That was in '42, like I already stated.

I.: Forty-two.

R.: What railroad was it? Was it the Chesapeake and Ohio or was it the Pierre Marquette?

F.: I believe it was the Pierre Marquette train from Detroit to Grand Rapids.

R.: Didn't the Pierre Marquette actually institute a suit against Mr. Bell? For damages resulting in that accident?

F.: Yes

R.: This is an unusual twist. The person driving the automobile usually sues the railroad but in this instance, the railroad sued Mr. Bell, for damage he did to the engine and the death of the various people. My father defended that case and was very fortunate to get Mr. Bell's estates off on it. The damage to the engine was several hundred thousand dollars.

F.: _____ engine and it torn up at least a half mile of track.

R Was that near his farm?

F Yes, It was within a mile or so of his farm. He was delivering a basket of peaches to a neighbor friend.

Can't remember the name of the town. Western part of Wayne County.
Lyon.

Lyons, Michingan.

Could you say something about Mr. Bell as a personality and maybe something about his own background as a lawyer coming into the situation.

Well, Mr. Bell was a very competent man or he wouldn't have been associated with Mr. Hanchet. He served in World War I as an officer. Don't know what rank he obtained, but at least a lieutenant.

He was first lieutenant.

I.: We were discussing Jay Bell as a personality. Could we pick that up again?

F.: Jay, after the war, completed his legal studies at the University of Michigan, graduated and became associated with Mr. Hanchet as we've said. After the death of Mr. Hanchet, he represented the association, particularly with reference to the title of examinations and he took care of the Flint office as well as Detroit. That was representing the association at the time of his demise.

Perhaps we should move on to your career with D & N. Mr. Jory asked you to come on. What kind of job description, if you would call it that, did you have as you came on? You handled the titles?

Yes.

What have been some of the other involvements that developed over the years?

F.: Well, we've been very fortunate there have been very few suits instituted against the association. We've been obliged to defend and I would say have been very successful in maintaining a good position legally. In all matters, we have never suffered from any legal action.

R.: How about in your title opinion? Any questions ever been raised or any difficulties resulted from any?

F.: No.

R.: You must of examined probably thousands of titles from the association.

- F.: Yes. In the early days from '42 and I came on, most of the loans were closed on abstract. Practically all loans were closed on abstracts, which required the examination and opinion, of course. Then later, of course, title insurance became popular and so examination of abstracts now, especially in Wayne, Macomb, and Oakland county. This is rare, because most loans are made on mortgage policies written by title companys.
- I.: You joined the company in the war years?
- F.:
- I.: Do you have any recognition of that period of any unusual opportunities or any unusual problems that the association faced during the war times?
- F.:
- R.: How about the Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act? Did that effect the operation _____?
- F.: Yes. It did and we had to cope with it. We never suffered because of it.
- I.: What was the nature of that act? What did it say in substance?
- F.: Well, it really suspended the proceedings against it and properly so against the soldier and sailor during his service and for some time there after.
- R.: Particularly _____ closure?
- F.: Yes.
- I.: What year did that come into effect? Was that early in the war or later?
- F.: I would say it was probably early in the war.
- R.: I would say it was about 1941. _____ the Soldier and Civil Relief Act is still in effect, so that you can still run into that problem. Today some are on active duty.
- I.: I think just on the stand, my own father-in-law went ahead and sold his house and also put his family into a rental property and later, I think, was aware of this act, which would of probably allowed him to maintain his home.
- R That's just what it was for.
- I.: Right. I guess legislation is so very important for the home owner as well.

F.: Another interesting thing from the legal standpoint of the war, was the so called moratorium acts and they extended the period of redemption after mortgage for closure sales. The legal argument was made against the validity of the moratorium that it finally did the contract that trained the parties. Because the mortgage provided the sale upon the fault that was a remedy that was prescribed in the contract. The supreme court got around by saying that they didn't violate the contract that the moratorium only went to the remedy and not to the legal aspect of the contract just matter of remedy, but that's pretty

Particular results was that you couldn't foreclose against a man, the service man.

That would be because of your Sailors and Soldiers Act, but this moratorium applied generally.

Oh, so you didn't have to be a soldier or sailor to become under that?

F.: Yes.

R.: During the war this was?

Yes, and for sometimes after.

There is a book on the savings and loans industry, written by Josephine E. Walts. The way that book is outlined, 1947 is kind of a..... She picks up like a new chapter and says that in the post World War II period that boom in housing and you have the service men coming back. Did you have any first hand contact with the veterans in your dealings? Or how were you involved in making new housing opportunities available for the.....

Well, that would be prior to the administrative function of the association that I had little or if anything to do with. Might say that when anything reached our office the contact and the agreement had really been made and it was just a matter of acting as scribbler and putting together in form.

I.: What was Detroit like in that post World War II period? What were the signs of the times and what was happening in the motor city? In terms of housing.

F.: It was quite active. It was a breezy time, of course. We had prohibition until Roosevelt's election and he was elected in '32, so running into '33. The _____ Act was repealed and that was the National Prohibition Act and then later the states and so forth. But Detroit began to be quite a lawless town and night life was very active and that was the _____ of the Purple Gang in Detroit and kidnapping of this Thompson child. It was a pretty hectic period.

R.: That's the period that you're talking about now that was _____?

F.: Yes. It was during prohibition.

Prohibition was completely repealed^{repealed}. The first sales were made in Michigan, January 1, 1934, 0001 hours. I think Art was wondering more about how Detroit was in the 40's.

Yes. When you had the stream of veterans coming back, was there a building boom?

R.: That would be in 1946?

Yes. Around '46 and '47. We kind of jumped a little bit further on in the story here

F: Yes. Detroit and Northern was very active during those years, '45 and '46. What year was it when you came home?

I came home in 1946. I think in February or March. Was there a lot of activity in the association at that time of expansion? Wasn't it there shortly after, that you considered moving the office from Lafayette onto Griswold Street and opening up out on _____ and _____? Weren't you active in selection of the number of the branch locations?

F.: Yes

R.: Tell us about moving from Lafayette over to Griswold. That's a rather interesting case.

Well, that took place later than '47, '48. I would say that would be in the 50's. We were renting from Lafayette from Stare Free Press and we had an opportunity to buy the building on _____ that had formerly been a bank, United Savings Bank, but at that time, the bank had been taken over by the Manufacturers Bank, so that the Manufacturers Bank owned the building that we bought on Griswold. That was a big step. Then, I know that we started out in Livonia. It was proposed to lease the site. That was, I can't tell you the year, but a lease had been arranged and Mr. Martino and myself went out to look at the property that was suppose to be leased and we did like it, the building and location. But there was a building very near the same site in Livonia. I think near the Corner Farmington Road and Five Mile. We ended by purchasing.

R North West Corner

F.: Yes and that turned out to be a very good branch and it was about that same time that we opened a branch in Grosse Point, that turned out to be a very good branch. The branch on Six Mile, had really been operated by a man who had been director in Kingsberry. He had been a real estate, and insurance business and had an office. He really controlled the business of Detroit and Northern in his office. Well, we finally made a deal that Kingsberry and got a building of our own so _____ have our own office building on the Six Mile near the earlier location. Well, it was that year that

we really branched out a good deal in Detroit vicinity, but since that time, we've been extending. For instance, in Romeo, we taken and put up a new building, the same thing in Davidson, Grand Blanc, and many little branches in the lower part of the state.

R.: Well, when you took over, let us say, when Mr. Bell died, in August of 1942, there would have been the down town office of Detroit on Lafayette Avenue.

F

R Was that the only branch in Detroit? Really there was no branch in Detroit because Kingsberry's office was an agency.

F.:

R There was no Grosse Point office, there was no other?

F

R So the only office in Detroit in August of 1942, was the down town office on Lafayette. Right?

F.: That's right

R.: So you see, all those branches come into being in the Detroit area. Another field that Dad saw come into being, that I think would be interesting initially, I believe that again referring to 1942, the principle loans that the association is making a single family dwellings and an individual in loans on individual, segregated separate dwellings. So, I believe that my father saw the beginning of a tremendous area of business, of which, his so called land development loans. That would take us back to the day that you and Bill Martino made your first contact, I believe with the Mosary family.

F. Yes.

R.: I think it would be interesting to hear about that. is the Detroit manager.

F.: Yes, it was for a long time we operated as Building and Loan Association and Mr. Lawton who lived here in Hancock took the position that the Building and Loan Association could not loan except to members and not to corporations. It wasn't until, probably in the 50's, when we changed from Building and Loan to Savings and Loan, and did make corporation loans. Now as Dick says only to corporations just this week, we've passed on a loan of 3 million dollars as a building development, and of course, condominiums have come and took place very much in the last 5 or 10 years.

I.: And mobile trailers, too.

F.: Yes, mobile homes

R Never use the word trailer. The break through on land development loans was made by Detroit and Northern. None of the other associations in Detroit made land development loans. What I'm trying to refresh my fathers thinking on, is the introduction of Detroit and Northern to Mr. Mosary, who I noticed had been approved 17 million dollars worth of loans. How did this contact take place?

F.: Well, Mr. Martino is a very aggressive business man and business developer. While I was director for quite some years. Most of that time I was Vice-President as well. Mr. Martino thought that it would be nice if I would go out with him as Vice-President and give it some character and prestige. I did and in that manner we met for the first time, John Salogna, Ed Sequin, and Mr. Mosary, and many of those developers that didn't know us or ever done any business with us. But since that time, we've done millions of dollars worth of business with them and others that I could name.

R.: I seem to recall you telling about going out and meeting Sebastian, the father of the Mosary's. It was an extremely hot day. Did Mr. Mosary take you out in his air conditioned Cadillac to watch?
luncheon

Yes.

And then you made the mistake of not asking somebody in the office. What happened on that?

F.: Well, the head of the sales department was offended because he was not included.

In the luncheon?

Yes.

Since that relationship has developed into a warm and lasting business and friendship.

I.: That's terrific. The opening up of the new field was this just a matter of sort of internal policy and direction or did there have to be any kind of change in legal statutes in the state of Michigan or did it just mean creative thinking on your part?

F.: Well, of course, the association is a state association and loans are examined by state authority and we're insured by the Federal Corporation and they also examine us and in the beginning they look very critically at some of the land development loans, but permitted it. They've all been successful. None of them have gone wrong. There's no question about it now. In fact, most of the associations are doing the same thing.

I.: How did your initiative meet with the thinking with the rest of of board? Were they initially in favor or opposed or how?

F.: Well, they were cautious, rather skeptical and wanted to feel their way quite properly, but Mr. Martino was able to sell the deal and

the board went along and deal after deal until now it's quite routine.

Did Bill Martino have a lot to do with the development?

Yes, very much.

R.: Is _____ the initiative?

Yes, very much so.

I.: In the initial stages, did the D. W. Seaton come down and any other persons from the North country here? To work with you?

Yes, he would come down and we would go out and look at the proposals and the land and etc. But Mr. D. W., along with others, was very conservative and cautious.

Wasn't part of the problem on getting those land developments loans going, the legal instruments that would provide the vehicle for accomplishing a loan. When was it when someone came up with the idea of conveyance of title to the association and then selling back to the borrower on land contract? Was it your idea? It seems to me, that the development of those instruments that took place in Detroit, was pretty much between you and Bill Martino, didn't it, or tell us. Can you remember that?

Yes. I think that the course of those deals were originally all handled in that manner title of the land were conveyed to the association and insured by title company. Then there would be many lots, we'll say in an excess of a hundred or two hundred. The association handled it by executing deeds back to the builder or developer so that.. Then we would deliver the deeds to an escrow agent which would be the title company that insured the loan or the transaction, so that it was a very expeditious way of handling it. We'd make the loan to Dick, we'll say, and Dick was a developer and what-not, and he could sell a lot to you and wouldn't have to come to us at all. The deed would be there waiting for you with a title company, and then go ahead and build.

R.: That I would be buying the property from the Association on land contract and the land contract would have a release clause, that when such-and-such a percentage was paid, then that lot would be released, Lot No. 1 we'll say, and the deed would be at Burton's or with Phil Greco or whoever handled it; so that we could go ahead and close the deal if someone was buying a house on that lot and at the same time, the developer would continue to be paying on the land contract.