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

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SUOMI COLLEGE, HANCOCK

ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEW BETWEEN:

INTERVIEWEE: Jane King

INTERVIEWER: Keith King

SUBJECT: Travel and Life in Ishpeming, Michigan

DATED: June 28, 1973

K: I am interviewing Jane King from Ishpeming, who was born and raised and, brought up in the Excelsior Location in Ishpeming.

What was it like living so close to the Section 16 mine in Ishpeming?

J: Very dirty, lots of hematite, very much noise with all those cars running across the trestles during the night as well as during all day. Trains early in the morning waking up 5 or 5:30 in morning right at your back door and, you try um to hang your clothes out on days that the um engines weren't running back and forth and, all that ore dumping down over the stockpiles. You looked out your back windows and all you saw was stockpiles, all during the summer months and the winter as well. Steamshovels, sometimes two or three steamshovels, working loading the cars, the ore cars to be hauled away each and everyday. They spot the cars at night and um during the day why there was just one engine to move them to be loaded.

K: How did the miners get back and forth to work during that time?

J: Most of them walked.

K: Did any of them bring their cars?

J: Very few cars that you saw go back and forth, very few.

K: What were the means of transportation at that time then?

J: Well, about as you would say about two blocks from our place, you would be able to walk down and catch a street car which was at a corner store and get it for a nickle a ride in to town. And that was our transportation to go to town and, of course you would have your passenger trains after that for to get into Marquette and, the street car also ran into Neganee.

K: Um did your families travel much during that time?

J: Well the only ways you travel when we were youngsters for a while there was to take and um more so go on picnics that would be held in um around your bluff around your place or maybe in the church yard. Things like that then you walked to them and pulled a wagon with your goodies in, to get to the picnic grounds. You had fresh lemonade, you never had package stuff like we do now a days. And um you would take the train then to Presque Isle for a picnic with um the family. It would be all basket stuff, you had a nice big basket which you um foods in your food supplies but, that's the only way for a good number for a while then finally we did um, my Dad did finally buy a Model T. car which didn't even have any windows in then like we have now. If it rained you stopped and you put up a snapped in material for to protect you from the rain but, someone had to get out there and get wet in able to do it. And of course most of your cars those days to had the top that could be lowered, then we could get finally places with the Model T. but, that was shared quite often with others as well needing transportation. To go berry picking you used um the Model T. and you would go for the day. You would go early in the morning and you would have powder boxes at that time. They were wooden containers that powder came in for the miners. Those were kind of cleaned out, washed, etc. and probably lined with paper and there were straps put on these for to be able to haul them up into the mountain hills which a lot of places call mountains but, they were pretty steep hills. You would go up in hillsides, up in the Humbolt Location a lot of times to pick your blueberries and you walk through swamps and those days why you didn't jump out of your car many a times to pick berries you would go up into those places and be gone for the day. Take one of the containers would probably be your food and water and ah you didn't have kool-aid or pop to take along you just carried water in containers and ah you would stop around noon hour possibly and have your picnic. Never a day that wasn't called a picnic when you went berry picking even and ah remember one time getting up there and we got lost up in the hills and that was quite an experience that time to be lost for a part of the night having police out looking for you and those days you only had lanterns, gasoline operated lamps etc. Kerosene lamps to go out and look for people if they were lost

maybe horns blowing down in the area.

K: When did your family get their first car?

J: Oh it must have been in 1929 or 25-29 something like that.

K: That must have been an exciting time. What must it have been like around the house when you received your first car?

J: Oh everyone was waiting for to go for a ride that was natural after having to walk a mile or a mile and a quarter every time you went into town if you didn't use the street car.

K: What was considered a days trip in your car as far as driving?

J: Well, driving that was quite an experience when we got the car because as youngsters we had families up in the Copper Country area and so on week ends after Dad would get in from work on Friday nights and everyone else would be thru eating possibly and Dad would grab his pasty probably afterwards and get his pasty eaten and get washed and changed while the rest would loading the car and you would take off for the Copper Country. And those days you didn't even have the lighting system on your cars like we do now. You would go with your lights hanging on the side of your car and even back when the lanterns, barn lanterns as you might call and that was when ways ah means a seeing a good part of the time. You would take these along especially in case your other lights in your car went out, which we experience one time going up that we were lucky we had these other lanterns along with us and heavy fog you would experience so it took you probbaly 5:00-5:30 until midnight to get into the Chassel area to visit with relatives up in that part. And then Sunday why you would start out on good time on Sunday right after lunch possibly to return home again. But it was quite an experience. People now a days don't have they don't realize the fun that there was really in travel those days.

K: What were the roads like?

J: Oh roads were just a gravel roads, washboard you driving over those you sometimes could hardly hold on to the wheel of the car. Narrow, times when you practically was pull over on the side of the road to pass each other, because of the roads being so narrow. And it was just one narrow path to drive on never say concrete it was oh it was for years. I can't recall just when the concrete roads ah the tar roads used to comw in that is what it was tar roads but, that was even an immense improvement when they started with tar roads. But this it was all

gravel before that and washboard.

K: How long would it take you say to get to Marquette from here?

J: Oh from here to Marquette it would take you oh I suppose I would say about an hour an hour and a half anyway because you only drove along about fifteen miles an hour or twenty miles per hour , your car didn't go very fast .

K: What was the train ride to Marquette like?

J: Well the trains were pretty crowded those days. You'd have maybe four or five coaches on for to take care of all the people for to get into Marquette. And of course that was a slow ride to, you'd go away ah but, of course you'd plan to go for the full day when you'd go into Marquette because that was quite a um well trip like you'd say now that you'd take by car to get anywhere. Why um you would go away good time in the morning and um.

K: What was downtown Ishpeming like that were the streets like or that were they also gravel?

J: Oh, they were graveled but majority of them right in the town area was more of a cobblestone that ah even the sidewalks were cobblestone or wooden or more so wood ah wooden sidewalks ah that you would know if may trip as far as that go knowing how wood planks and that were put together, and um the streets of course with this cobblestone was pretty clean any way they were always a went through street cleaners would go through with big wide brooms which we would call patio brooms now and brush up the streets and have their wagon along and or shovel and so on to clean up the street because there were a lot of horses at that time used around the town and ah of course in the areas to they did use a lot of horses and of course buggies what you'd call the carriages was a great deal down through for to get into town. Which we of course never did had a horse and buggy but, there was a lot of that used to get around and, um oh um they were kept very clean you didn't have the traffic around town then that we do now. You could get across the street any old time as you might say without worrying about getting bumped into. If you were afraid of a horse you would keep your eyes open so you wouldn't be meeting with a horse.

K: How did you get back and forth to school?

J: Oh we walked to school if you had a .if you ever got a ride to school or a ride home that was a treat. You think it was just like a child getting a candy bar now, to get a ride to school or home. And that was just special

occasions if you got picked up at school. Might been a day that ah a voting day or that and father had a day off of work, and you were going for a picnic or going somewhere. Maybe even a treat even to go to town to do some shopping after school was out. Then you take and be picked up and ypu'd go into town and shop, or go for a little picnic afterwards. But, um you'd never saw cars around school then . Even the teachers didn't come with a car they'd walk, and um be able to catch a street car or whatever might be. That was that was something those days.

K: About how far were the schools from where you lived?

J: We walked um for grade school, we walked about ah I would say from our home about 3 quarters of a mile to school. And um you'd walk have to walk over these railroads were which we were talking about before where the trains coming back and forth, that was our short cut. If, they weren't blocked behind the house so as to get over to the other road. If it were blocked then you'd have to walk down the street a ways and go back around in order to and, then you would take a short cut through someone elses yard , um to get over to the road. You always watch for short cuts if you could because it seemed a long ways to school. Then you walked home for lunch as well. You never carried lunch to school , very very seldom , if there happen to been a big snowstorm you might of carried your lunch to school and you could eat there. But, otherwise each one walked home for lunch . Then you would have your hour-hour fifteen minutes possibly and, you'd walk back again at noon. So it was it was use your legs those days and your feet to get where ever you wanted to go or had to go. And then to get to school in town where was the Grammer School that was a good hour I mean mile and a half walk from ypur our home at least and, that was a grand rush, You could take your lunch to school but, um it wasn't ah like now a days, the hot lunch and everything. You you'd packed a sandwich probably and tucked it in your pocket, which was very seldom done. People had preferred to take and um walk home for the lunch and walk back again , Of course you didn't have the contend as we know with cars we have now. But it was usually leg work very seldom did anyone come along so as to pick you up so you could have a ride home and a ride back again. The schools were always kept very clean and ah and ah it just seemed to be an enjoyable time to get back to school again. You didn't have all the activities now that is carried on around.

K: When the school burnt down, I understand the high school burnt down what was

J: Oh ya.

K: the experience of going to school then.

J: You always say when your going to school as a child you think, if my school would only burn down so I wouldn't have to go to school. Now was quite an experience because that was my first year to go to high school when our Ishpeming High School burnt down. In August month and you thought oh boy you just sat around on the bluff, that was near our place, and just watched it flaming up and, you thought oh what fun that would be. It was no fun when September came along because your different halls opened up, your churches opened up to class rooms. The Y.M.C.A. it was called we had it at that time, where on the corner of South Pine and Division Street the city has it now for a gasoline and parking area, opened up. That was an experience those days carrying your books to school, carrying them home again. No place to let anything your coats, your overshoes in the winter time everything just stayed right in the classroom with you there wasn't even a cloak room. And you probably be in one building ah go into one building and maybe you might have to walk 4 or 5 blocks to go to your next class and ah that was quite an ordeal. So never wish for a school to burn down that's one thing because you still have to go to school regardless and that was a trying year, until the school opened up in ah following year and ah that was my second year in high school a Sophomore and then ah it was really marvellous to be able to go into a class room and be able to have a place and hang up coats and ah all those varies things. Of course it is a beautiful school. All though the old school would have been adequate enough at that time and it caught on fire and burned to the ground. But um it sure was marvelous to know you had a school to go back rather than running around. And of course that involved at about a mile and a quarter from our home and there it again you did the same thing, went in for class at nine in the morning and ah you walked home at noon and back again for class usually dismissed at 3:30.

K: Well um when they fought the fire at the high school there ah was it fire department or volunteers or what?

J: Oh yes there were many fire departments at that time the ah I think the Ishpeming Fire Department, the Negaunee Fire Department and any one th

volunteered that could get out there and help fight this . Salvation Army down there serving coffee and donuts and what even might be for the firemen because that was quite quite a big item. The fight that because they had right along side of it the big church as well, in fact two churches, the Methodist Church and the Swedish Church so there was quite ah quite ah big ah item there to watch over those two big buildings as well . You would think the whole city was going up into smoke to see the flames and the smoke that was rising . That was an all day fire in fact I think they watched over it for two - three days with all that smoldering and that afterwards.

K: The fire department ah what kind of vehicles did they have , were they horse pulled or what?

J: Oh, no they were trucks at that time but ah previous to that of course it was all horse drawn ah vehicles and ah buckets and so forth hanging on when before years before. But these were fire trucks and of course they didn't have the big pumpers and all the bigger equipment like they do now a days. It was smaller trucks so it involved a lot of hand work and so forth pulling these hoses off the trucks and getting them hooked up to hydrants at various things. Maybe now had they had these big pumpers why ah it may have helped to save a great deal more but they were really old fashioned trucks in fact you may see any of them around at anytime in parades and so forth that they used to use.

K: Where there donk ah mules back during um the early mining time? Did you ever see any?

J: Oh, yes ah underground um in the mines they used mules to be able to pull ore cars. They had their own railroad down there and ah when the cars were ah full or empty as far as that go why the mules were hooked unto the cars and they would pull the cars out the cage where there um yes cage where they were ah be able to dump the ore into big cage or buckets to be able to be risen to the surface and then of course when they were brought up the shaft why then that was dumped into the ore cars and run out on the trestle or over head bridge, if someone wonder what a trestle is and ah unload the cars or open them up. Of course that involved a good number of men up there to for open these ddors up on these cars for the ore to be umpt emptied out and sometimes these cars would get derailed up there. They have to ah you would see them up there working with big bars (crow bars) and that trying to lift these cars back

onto the railroad or tracks to be to open up and loaded. There is a lot of excitement watching them working there and of course these poor mules were why they were just kept busy constantly they eight hours everyday and maybe a little lee way there ah rest for awhile . Of course they would have several down there so they could switch over so they could mule or team of mules ah to pull for another eight hour shift. But ah that was the only way for a good number of years that I know of. And eventually they began to put wiring, they found that electricity could be used underground and ah then they started with the wiring under surface for being able to operate these ore cars by electric power rather than mules but, those poor mules they spent a good many years underground. In fact I think there ah were many mules that passed away down there. Because of their work and so forth and when they were brought to surface I dear hear someone say when they hit the light it blind these mules because of being in dark darkness working all those years, The light was to much for their eyes but ah there were very few. I don't know if there were any mules actually when they finished up using them underground that ah were able to survive the outside area after being brought up in cages and so forth, .to be set free or put into other ways of ah work. Ah and again the men underground they didn't have electric lights to work by they'd have what we call a called carbide lanterns or lamps. That they would hook unto their hand hats and ah because they had to have these hard hats for protect of their heads in case of any fallen rock undersurface. And ah ~~these could~~ be fixed up at the shop upstairs or up in the surface with a little pebbles or pebble like stuff that would ignite when you they got down in the cage there would set ah flints to these ah lanterns and um that was their only lighting system for to do their work in underground. Of course previous to that they had candles that was somehow hooked onto their hats so, you can see how much distance they could see ahead of them when they were working. Now these lanterns or lamps hooked onto their hard hats. Then eventually of course they started after the lights got going so electric power to pull ore cars they were able to take and have electric lights to work with underground then of course they have to be careful, very careful to ~~electrocuted~~ down there with all the wires and dampness some have a lot of water in them and they can be ~~electrocuted~~ or get shocks very easily from all this type of stuff but, um it was quite an experience for those that did work undersur ah under-

ground.

K: How many mines ah underground mines were in the area of where you live close by?

J: Well we had there were four in fact, there was the Holmes Mine which is closed down for a good number of years that of course is where the Lindberg Contractors store a lot of their equipment and have their storage houses up there now. And then of course there was Section ~~Sixteen~~ Mine, ~~that~~ was right back of our home, and then in the Salisbury Location there was the Salisbury Mine that was closed much earlier some then the other two mines then there was the Cliff Shaft. So there were four mines within our radius of living. Of course Section ~~Sixteen~~ actually mine that was in our living area that ah closed down and now of course everything is just filled up with water causing lakes that's where our Lake Angeline came in with the closing of Section ~~Sixteen~~. The water had to somewhere so that our Lake Angeline where they do and enjoy a lot of fishing and even boating on there, there is another spot down there which they call Sand Bar which they love to go in and swim if you live where we do you can see them going everyday taking their dip even in early spring you see some youngsters going down there to take their dip to see who is the first one going down there to get a swim before the nice weather do come in.

K: Ah what was it like where an tradedy happened at the mine, ~~where someone~~ was possibly killed or several people?

J: Well there was for instance the Barnes Heckler when that gave way the walls gave way and water came in and trapped well every man that was employed underground at that time there was only to my knowledge one man that really got out of there and he just recently di passed away but the water just gushed in as the men were coming up the ladder but it took them right off their feet but it so happened I there wasn't anyone that were found or no really the whole person anyway they were finding boots and parts and so forth from the gushing water was such a force ah in fact we were in school when this tradedy occurred when we ~~heard~~ ~~ab~~ about it as many of my classmates had ah fathers, brothers some of their family that were in this tragic ah accident. In fact I had a girl friend two girl friends that lost their father and 2 brothers in this accident so this really was just in our location this upset just everything everyone ah was feeling sorry for families in their own area, But I think

that so many families thought the town the city that had lost families. Well people still think about it that is those that had friends and relatives and so forth there trapped but it got sealed over and that was a the um circumstances went of course that mine never did open up and um .

K: Were there any tragedy at the Section Sixteen Mine right behind your house?

J: Oh yes it was nothing everyonce and awhile to hear that um killed ever there or even ah injured as far as that go. But there were quite a few that had gotten killed in all various mines . And of course then you never had the ways of actually speedy ways of getting a man out if there was an accident or what ever it was to get them up you d have your communication was poor for getting ambulance or your doctors you would have a while to wait for your doctors then the doctors came to the mine before the person who was injured was could leave because your transportation was slow underground . They had your cars on the railroad underground being pull with the miles. And ah they had to get a person out they had to get this car out of the way because my understanding it was narrow no down there to and ah you had no ways of getting around ah they had to haul the basket in or the stretcher whatever might be they had to be lowered from surface and um gotten into where the injured person was so everything was slow at that time and though that when they'd lose many a person thru the ah accident and so forth because they didn't have the ways of getting them out in a hurry. And the doctors of course as I say had to be there before they could leave the mine so there again most times the doctor was there before person was brought to surface and of course the same with the ambulance would be setting there waiting to be able to transport them.

K: Did the doctors go underground or did they just stay at the shafthouse?

J: If ah..

