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Wallace Anderson
February 20, 1975

TOPIC

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Heberts and Finntown
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COMMENT

In reference to their lives and accomplishments

Copy of tape sent to Mr. W. Anderson
4.21.74
Okay, now let me just introduce us. This is Art Puotinen interviewing Wally Anderson at his home at 1107 Ruby Street in Houghton. Today is February 20th, 1975, and Mr. Anderson has a very interesting story about the Robinson family in Pequaming. Oh, this is the first family that went to Pequaming, is that right?

Well it seems so. As I recall as a child, my parents often talked about the Robinson family being the first family there; and that must have been in the early 1870's along with the arrival of the Heberts to get started. Now the story is or as I heard it from my parents and grandparents and other people, it seems as though the Robinson family were the first family there...whites, you see, because the Indians lived near by on Bay Shore there. And all these years have passed up til now I have never heard anybody raise the question about the Robinson family. Whether there's anything about it in the history of Pequaming, whoever is writing one or whoever has written one, I'm unable to say. But I have often thought of Pequaming and thought of things and something occurred a day or two ago about the Robinson family and I wanted to mention where they started to live in Pequaming proper or that is out of the community, but in Pequaming proper on the island there or what they thought was the island. There was a long point, it seems, going out from Pequaming proper towards Baraga and L'Anse pointing in that direction and this had a ridge of land running out to this point then it enlarged. And in the middle of that like an island in the middle of that was a large oak tree.

About how big was this point? I mean how many miles was it?

I would say it was about at the most five eighths of a mile long. It was the land and this point joined. I can't recall whether they said there was water inbetween this point or this land out there or not. But I don't think so. I think it was like a reef running out there some places covered with water. And then came to this point out here where there was this large oak tree. The only tree there and it remained alive oh for many years from the time I left Pequaming, it was still alive but it was in among the lumber piles that Hebert had built out there. Now, Heberts did not want the Robinson family to live out there among those lumber piles because they were gonna build a causeway out there with the waste of the logs, the slags.
They had no place to dump these so they dumped them in at the edge of the...and kept going along cribbing these slabs from these large pine logs because they were cutting pine those days. There was no hemlock or hardwood cut. It was all pine.

I: How long would those.

R: Oh, they had logs at that time up to twenty feet

I: Twenty feet?

R: Yeah and sometimes a whole strip would come off the sides, both sides before making the lumber, see they were cutting the boards and making lumber. The result was it made excellent cribbing. The dumpcarts would haul it out or the wagons would haul it out, they'd unload it and they had men there laying them side by side and then crisscrossing them again and they built that and they kept increasing the width until they got it to the side of that piece of land out there. And they gradually filled it up and then as they filled it up with slabs and got above to the water level, they dumped sawdust in there and filled it in or covered it and spread it out. Then they cut some large timbers and laid timbers out there and piled their lumber on there. And eventually from the mill out to that point, that was a lumber yard, see. And they built it wide enough to make two tramways out there. See, at first they hauled the lumber out with horse and wagon, then they put out a raised narrow gauge railroad that went around in a circle and they piled the lumber along side of that. Now, then when they had to get rid of the Robinson family...the first family that they said was the first there, they had to build a house for them somewhere. So they built a house in what is now called Finntown; but that Robinson house was one of the first houses built there.

I: But the Robinson's weren't of Finnish decent were they?

R: Oh no, but that didn't make any difference. There was other people out there. The only thing that they did was they built for these Europeans coming over, lumbermen coming over and knew something about saw milling and lumber and went to work for Heberts, and they built residence for all of them out there and in order to get rid of the Robinsons they built a house out there and that's what started them. And they continued until they had a small community out there called Finntown.

I: About how many houses would you estimate that there were there?

R: Oh, let's see. About twenty-five...about twenty-five houses and of course each family that moved out there, like if a Finnish family moved out and bought a farm somewhere else and moved out of there they had to be replaced so another Finnish family moved in, see. And of course they wouldn't live over in Pequaming proper because that wouldn't be home to them. They'd be more at home in Finntown.

I: Were they two-story frame dwellings?

R: Yeah, they were two-story, four and five room houses and all shingled
with pine shingles, see. And that was the reason that I called you was that I wanted to tell you about this in case you ever get to the beginning of it, you've got this to start with.

I: Now the Robinsons were of Irish decent?

R: Apparently, I know that Mrs. Robinson was and as I said, the two boys the sickly boy couldn't go out and play with the other kids, he later died, and then these two boys, the Robinson boys...Frank...I can't tell you whether Frank was the oldest or Fred; but I believe Fred was the oldest and he worked on the tugs there on the lakes as a wheelsman...steering the vessel. And Frank became a mate and worked up to first mate. And if you go to Pequaming today or tomorrow, before you...just as you are coming to the bay off the Bay Shore Road and you're coming in, you can look across a big wide area and the lake on one side and then an open spot, that's a swamp on the right going in. And the lake or harbor or Pequaming Harbor is on the left. You will see the last thing that Frank Robinson did before he died was he had a tavern and it will be on your right just a little while or a hundred yards or two before you see the opening going into Pequaming. And it would be about a mile from Pequaming.

I: Well the tavern is not occupied by anybody at the present, is it?

R: Oh yes, they've changed hands numerous times; but there is a tavern there. And I think it was called the Belle Vista.

I: Is that right.

R: Yeah, by him.

I: Now, you said it was the last thing he did. About what time period are we talking about? When did he die?

R: Oh, he died sometime in the 40's I believe, maybe the 50's. I'm away from there and I seldom get any news from down that way because there's only one family living in the place, in Pequaming. That's the Indian show, what they call the reservation now, is Zeba and there's whites and Indians living right together, have farms there. And, of course, at one time you could buy a piece of land there, see. And Frank bought that piece of land and built that...had a tavern there and that's how he finished up and Fred died somewhere else, I never heard where he died. But it seemed to me a shame that this isn't mentioned somewhere so it can come out.

I: So the Robinsons are one of the real pioneer families.

R: I believe they are probably the first ones because why would he build out on that...and you see now my grandfather and grandfather, my father and his brother, Uncle Nels and my father came from Norway with their family. They were born in Norway. My father was born in Norway.

I: What area in Norway?

R: My father was born in (???) and so was my grandmother and so was my Uncle Nels.
I: Near Oslo did you say?

R: And my grandfather was born in Bergdt (?) and was quite a fisherman.

I: Well did they come over here to fish then?

R: No, my grandfather came in good with Heberts. Some employment agency in Chicago asked him what he could do and he told them that he was a lumber grader. As the lumber came out of the mill on a transfer chain and to be piled onto wagons or whichever way they went out to pile them in the lumber yards, he graded every board before it went out. I don't know, he put his check mark on it and it was a cull or it was a standard or it was an extra or what have you. I'm too young to remember what he did there.

I: Well, that was quite a skill and he learned it in Norway then.

R: Oh yeah, because all the pine wood over there

I: Why did he come to America?

R: Well, it was a time of a lot of migration...at that time immigrating, you know, and he came over and it took him thirty-eight days, I guess to come over. But in between he had been a sailor on the ocean. He had covered most all important ports in the world, that is sailed, didn't steam, that was sailed.

I: Did he meet your mother over here then?

R: You mean his wife...not my mother?

I: Oh, his wife, okay

R: You see, I'm a grandson.

I: Oh yes, I'm sorry. Yeah, grandfather came over.

R: Right and my father came over when he was six years old...either five or six years old and Uncle Nels was small and they had been in the United States one year when he got that job. And he died there.

I: Was your father a grader also then?

R: Oh no, my father was a sawmill man, but he was a millwright...took care of the machinery...lacing belts and greasing and building whatever they wanted new, see. And I, of course, I started to work in that same mill when I was ten years old.

I: Is that right! What did you do?

R: I was in the shingle mill nailing bands, bands what they put around the bundle with the two wire ends on the sides. I was nailing them and I got fifty cents a day; and then the next year...in the meantime while I was doing that I'd catch up on my bands and then I'd go in and work on the packing machine...learned to pack shingles and the next
year I packed shingles so I was getting eight cents a bundle then.

I: Well, let's see...when were you born...what year was that?

R: I was born in 1896

I: Is that right...so you were...that was about 1902 then when you were.

R: No, that's '96 and I was about...I said ten years old.

I: Oh, ten years old. 1905 then or '06.

R: No, it was later than that. I was twelve years old. I don't know why I've always said I started when I was ten. Then in the winter, you see, the mill would shut down and the men would have to go to the lumber camp; so the first winter I went to the lumber camps with the men and I helped log off...well some of those logs are Jess, pretty heavy.

I: Is that right! Who was the jobber at that time out there? That's quite a long way back.

R: Well, I can remember one...the first one after...in 1910 they built a railroad out to Point Abbey from Pequaming proper to log off Point Abbey in 1910 and the first camp was at Sucker Creek called Camp 1 and I worked in that camp the first year or that first winter swamping and you know, cleaning brush and taking the limbs off of trees and so on. The next winter they give me a better job, I was a teamster...had teams to take care of.

I: Did you have horses or oxen?

R: Horses...they had quite a few teams of very heavy horses, heavy-duty horses. Of course, that was hard to take. Go in the lumber camp at night, go in at night and wash up and clean up and get ready for supper, eat supper and then go into the men's tent and here I was a young kid sitting with eighty men around and, of course, that led me to being very handy throughout my life...from men. I've always worked with men...after that I didn't go to school, so I had to work. So, I learned to blacksmith and I learned to shoe horses and I learned to carpenter and I learned to do this and I learned to do that and it was an education in a way and later I came to the Copper Country and I worked in the wire mill and I made a lot of copper wire...probably enough copper wire to go around this earth about twenty-five times or more.

I: Now the wire mill, is that the operation that Jack Foley had for a while?

R: That's right...his father and his older brother operated it. I worked for that family. Oh yeah, you mention Jack and he'll tell you right away that he knows me well because I lived in the bay, see. After we moved to Pequaming to Baraga and stayed one winter in Baraga and then moved up to Dollar Bay because there was a job open in the wire mill.

I: You came in 1914?
R: We came to Dollar Bay in 1914; but if I had to go through the whole story...we were in the Copper Country a couple of times before that because my father followed the mills and we moved during the winter.

I: Well you came at kind of a tough time into the Copper Country. That was right after the strike.

R: Right after the strike, yeah. In fact, I was up the summer before and I had a job down in the bay...that's what started us moving up here because I stayed with a family down there that knew my folks very well and they wanted my mother up there...that old lady wanted my mother up there and I finally coaxed them to come up and they talked for a job for Dad and he got a job. But I was working in the saw mill in Dollar Bay at that time...1913, the strike was on.

I: Who was the owner...whose saw mill was that?

R: I can't recall...it was the Dollar Bay Lumber Company...it could have been Meyers (?) and yet Meyers had a mill in Berkeley.

I: Well, did the people in Dollar Bay feel the strike in any way?

R: Well, what hurt was...we were in wire, but of course I didn't work there during the strike in the wire mill, but they told me afterwards that the strike interfered because they weren't producing copper and they were hitting Delaware Copper and where that Delaware Copper come from because it was shipped in here anyway and Quincey Copper; but it was all smelted here and put into ingots here. The copper was shipped here and re-melted and put into ingots because the wire we were making was for mostly electrical and they had to have a certain tenths of strength in order to get it they mixed coppers like coppers that was harder or had more of this in it than the other...they mixed it and they finally achieved it and then that came in as bars and went through a rolling mill then after it came out of the rolling mill it was cleaned, all the black scale was taken off of it...it's jet black when it comes out of the rolling mill...and that molded into rods and smaller and smaller and finally down to a size where they could pull it through and then it was cleaned and went into the drawing department where they could draw it down so many times, take it in and they'd anneal it. Reheat it so it got cherry red, then they'd cool it quickly and then it was cleaned with sulphuric acid and water solution, take the scale off because it was blacked again when it was annealed. Then it was nice pink, went into the drawing department or drawing rooms and was pulled down so many times...eight - nine - ten times and if they pulled it down any further it would get so brittle it would be like chalk; and then they annealed it again and drew it down again and...General Electric, Western Electric, the Bell Telephone and the telegraph companies and so on would get big orders of that wire that was shipped out.

I: Well, did you work with the wire company until your retirement?

R: No, World War I came in.

I: Oh, so you served in...did you serve overseas?
R: Oh yes, you bet I served. I soldiered on five major offences.

I: Yes, we're looking here at a medal that Wally has from World War I and he was involved in five major battles. The Croix DeGaire is the one?

R: Yeah

I: The Croix DeGaire, the Aisne-Marne, the Oise-Aisne, the Meuse-Argonne and the Defensive Sector in Germany. Well, you went in in 1917?

R: April the 6th, 1917, war was declared and April the 10th I was a soldier; however I hadn't been sworn in yet. I didn't get sworn in and we trained out here at the college until May month, and then they swore us all in and then we trained again until August the 17th, 1917, and we were shipped to Texas where we trained there until January...I think it was January 14th or 15th. Then they transferred us to the East Coast, Fort Dix I believe, and then from there about the 10th of February, 1918, they put us on board ship and they sent us over and we landed at Briscue, France.

I: Now did you go as kind of a Copper Country unit overseas?

R: Well, our whole company was Copper Country boys.

I: Who was your commanding officer?

R: Captain Schmidt, Harold M. Schmidt...you mean our company?

I: Yeah, from the Copper Country.

R: Yeah, he was from the Copper Country. He married a Shelden girl and later after the war he became City Engineer in Saginaw. I met him at the 32nd Division Reunion in Detroit, 1931; and he was the engineer there then. I was the handyman of the company, the same as here. Oh, I did a lot of things for him and for the officers and then I became...see that Croix DeGaire comes out of running...lot of people ask me what I got that for and I tell them for running. That's carrying messages through the front and back to the headquarters again, wherever they came from; sometimes brigade, sometimes divisional and so on or different brigades, that is there were two brigades right along side of each other has to liaison...liaison between them.

I: Well, you mentioned you had a few scares. I bet you had a few scares in that job.

R: That's why I got that. I do have a divisional citation in paper but I got it all wet coming over...coming home. I had it on my inside pocket and I got wet three-four times, waves coming over the rail, and it pretty well obliterated it.

I: Looking at some medals here and the one was the Croix DeGaire medal, this is what...a bronze star?

R: A bronze star...that's divisional citation
I: And this other, this red one here is a...after the war was over?

R: Twelve years I got that and it comes from...

This says Ber-Dunn, does that mean anything?

R: Liberators

I: The liberators.

R: Yeah the (?), that's Jean of Arc

I: Oh, I see. Right

R: It's tarnished now see...see the writing at the top (?)...and out of this Croix DeGaire, you see, the French took my name and sent me one of these and I had to go down to the Post Office and pay a dollar for the transportation from France over here and then the Post Master give it to me. This is a medal that the Copper Country people gave us when we came back...our names are on the back...in recognition of World War I.

I: It says here, "Presented to W. Anderson by the citizens of the Copper Country, Michigan, in grateful recognition or services rendered in the World War, 1917 to 1918. Was there a kind of a celebration for all of you at a certain time? When was that, in 1918 or 1919?

R: The last of May, 1919. We left Germany to come home and go back through the same route down through Brisque, I think it was in April something. One of these pictures was taken just a short time before we left Germany by the same photographer, on April 3, 1919...about eight or nine days after...about seven or eight days after the 10th of April. I put that on there, see.

I: Can you make a rough estimate as to how many of your buddies returned? Did you lose quite a few?

R: No, we were very lucky. We lost some, but not in battle. We got some that were hit, but were healed up and some of them got partly gassed. But the Wisconsin 2nd Battalion D, E and F and especially F Company got shot up. The Germans got the beat on them one day and there was a whole bunch of them around and they dropped a lot of shells in there and killed a lot of men. And, of course, my fear came out of going on reconnaissance because I was a trained reconnaissance man and I carried messages and did reconnaissance work for whatever regiment was up there, see. And see, this is how these papers come...I don't know if my name's on this one or not. Yeah, the last one down here. But you can see how it got all wet from salt water from the ocean.

I: Oh yes. Corp. Wallace D. Anderson, Company B, 107th Engineers..."For great courage and devotion to duty in delivering important messages across a shell-swept area." It's signed by R. Andeck, Jr., Col. General Staff, Chief of Staff. This is dated April the 12th, 1919.
R: I received that then...I was pretty close, I said we left the 10th that we left there. It was after that see.

I: Ringsdorf, Germany

End of Side A

R: I was pretty close...I said it was the 10th we left there. It was after that see.

I: Well, it's nice that you preserved that, you know. What sort of celebration did they have for you when you fellows got back?

R: Oh, there was dances, there was food, there was parades; and when we got off the train down here, you couldn't hear anything. You couldn't hear the guy talking next to you.

I: There was so much shouting and band music.

R: Shouting and every horn, steam - air - anything. It was just a buzz. There was a locomotive stopped across the depot down here in Houghton in Ripley and they got on that whistle over there and they just ran out of steam and all you could see was just a little beep coming out of it.

I: Well, Wally, you weren't married when you went in, were you?

R: No I was twenty-one years.

I: Well, did you go back to work then at the wire factory there?

R: For a short time and then I went to work for the Quincey Mining Company in machine shop. There again I learned something there to handle a lathe, work on a lathe.

I: Well, the Quincey continued to operate, didn't it, through the 20's where some of the others...

R: Many years after that the mines were running yet.

I: Yeah, but I think Quincey they called it the "Old Reliable" because it continued to operate when some of the others didn't even go in the 20's.

R: That's right; but I worked in the machine shop there and then my mother had a friend that was head of the Gately-Wiggins store and he needed a salesman, so he asked me to work for him and I went to work for him and I quit. The salesman shit was not in my book.

I: You could work better with your hands.

R: Yeah, you see I was a gunsmith for...I started as a child to be a gunsmith and I retired from that two years ago. Do you like guns?

I: Yeah, I've hunted with them, you know, when I was younger.
R: Well, this is a German rifle that I brought back from France that I made up for my brother as a birthday present and the wood is from up here by Duncan. Now, this is probably one of a hundred of guns that I made up like this total from a military rifle to...here's that wood in the raw.

I: Oh, let's see, what kind of wood is this?

R: That's curley soft maple

I: Curley soft maple...boy is this ever a nice piece of work.

R: You see the nice filings, they used that and call it fiddle back. And this is for sampling for color for the customer.

I: My goodness, this is...

R: In other words, you clean this off...not to close now, the width of your hand from the scope and it won't blur on you.

I: Yeah, a very nice gun. This finish is just so beautiful on here. How many coats did you have to put on that?

R: Put only three coats on there. You don't need as many on this hard wood. Mr. Williams from the Williams Gunsight Company offered my brother four hundred and fifty dollars for this gun. He said, "I'll never use it maybe, it'll be just put in a case."

I: Look at that, that's amazing.

R: Yeah, when you have to start with a military rifle and work it down to that, it's quite a problem. Now, this is what a military mouser would look like and it was made from that the only thing is I cut that much of the barrel off to get twenty-four...twenty-three and five eighths inches.

I: This was used.

R: That's an Argentine mouser...made by the Germans but sold to Argentina. The same thing.

I: This dates back how far?

R: Well, yes, that's in '98...1898. There's another one here that I blew before I lost my job at the school...see, there's the same thing...the only thing is, you see the Germans later bent the bow downward. Now you can see how much I cut off and this is my blew job here. I haven't made a stock for this one, I don't know whether I ever will

I: Well, that's really a nice selection you've got there.

R: Well, some of this collection is my oldest sons when he served. He served twenty years in the Army and he came home and he'd been out for about ten years now. He works on the island. He's maintenance man on Isle Royale; and he left this morning to go down to...I
don't know...went down to watch Teah play Wisconsin, him and his wife. So that means I have to watch his house now in West Houghton while they're gone.

I: You mentioned earlier that you had lived in this house how many years?
R: Forty-eight years
I: Let's see, forty-eight from seventy-four...that's 1926
R: Yeah, that's when the misses...the old misses, my wife's mother died and left the father-in-law alone...my father-in-law alone that is her father. And he immediately after she was buried and everything, we lived in that house back there...see, she wanted to live close to her mother. So he told us to move out and he lived with us twenty-nine years and then he died.
I: Well you live fairly close here to Michigan Tech so you've seen that grow over the years then.
R: Well, it's as almost good for me...I was pretty lucky because I worked nineteen years at the Tech.
I: Oh did you?
R: Yeah...I built their first mechanical engineering lab and lots of what's in that lab there now, I built. And, of course, I was welder too, so I got on that...cabinet maker, welder...but like I said, that's the way I got kind of an education. I've made kitchen cabinets and so on and a lot of things.
I: Did we have...did we talk to you one day on the Heritage Line program about hockey or was that another person I'm thinking of?
R: Over in Hancock...the skating?
I: We were talking about Pequaming and how they used to have six...was it seven man hockey?
R: Yeah, that was me.
I: Yeah, I thought that was you.
R: Yeah, was you in on that?
I: Yeah, I was on the air with Bob Olson.
R: Oh...well here is a picture of the team that I played with. A lot of people mistake this guy for me...younger see. Now, that's an Uncle of mine...I mentioned his name...and this is a brother of his. This Gordon Hill is an old hockey player, Dr. Marshall, Billy Neibert, Eddy Nelson, Dave Anderson and Bunny Neidem...he had one eye. To have his picture taken he took the patch off, but when he played hockey it stayed.
I: I see, and this goes back to December 29th, 1973...this is a picture of the team.
R: In fact, they had a little article in there about that team.

I: Oh, that's a very nice piece.

R: See, I played with them before I came to the Copper Country. I never played steady, I played spare and as I mentioned in that talk, you couldn't replace a man on the ice. Once he got on the ice he had to stay until the period was ended. The only way you could replace him was if somebody got hurt. So when you got off the ice at the end of a period, twenty minutes of skating, and that crazy hockey that we had those days...it wasn't anything that resembled this. There was too many scrimmages. We were facing off all the time. We get off the ice and our tongue was hanging down on our chin.

I: I notice here that Cerial VanAble was known as the rover. That was that extra man, right.

R: That was him right here. He was rough. And I played that when...if he got hurt, I'd play or anyone of them. I had to play defense or... Oh, I was small. I only weighed a hundred and thirty-eight pounds; and I got beat up playing Calumet and Portage Lake and others... Dollar Bay had the Wanderers team that time. The next year I played... I got off of that...I played with the Shamrocks was the first team. The Wanderers was the ones I played with...I played (?) with them. I had my nose broke, my collar bone broke and three ribs broke all at once down in the old (?)...

I: How in the heck did that happen? Was that just in check?

R: Look at those men...look at them...no pads, nothing and that's the way they went out on the ice.

I: Well, did you get a tough check to get bruised up that badly or what happened?

R: Well, the (?) went for the puck going towards the boards and there was a snow hole here where they hauled the snow out towards Houghton proper on the Houghton side...not towards the lake side...and Percy Grant was the guy and he skated low. He was a low skater which shouldn't be in hockey, you should skate upright where you can dribble the puck see and watch all around you. If you're down low, you're not...and he skated like lightening and he was onside and I was onside and we both met and we met in such a way as he got me in here...

I: Underneath the arm, huh, armpit?

R: On this side...he got me on this side and I went over the boards and struck three seats. Struck one seat this way and another one here...going up I hit this one...and then I got a lower one with the short ones.

I: Oh, one on the bridge of the nose, one on the upper chest and then the short one.

R: Look it, you can see this one. Run your hand down right over it.
Run your fingers right down over it.

I: Oh boy, yeah!
R: Never did straighten it.
I: Did they...were you in the hospital for awhile then?
R: No, right on the train that night with the crowd and went back to Keweenaw Bay and walked across the ice to Pequaming. All we did was have something to eat and hung around town. I was walking all strapped up, you know, and I had difficulty breathing and I had difficulty eating after the game; but I managed. And one of the guys grabbed my arm, you know, because I couldn't hardly see, you know...both eyes were swelled up. The right eye I could see a little bit but the left eye was closed completely. And they led me around by hanging onto my arm. And we walked around until...I don't remember if it was eleven or eleven thirty the train left Houghton. That was the same train we came up here on from Marquette, see. We'd leave Calumet at ten something and then (?) in Houghton and then we'd get on the train after the game when the train come in...we'd hang around Houghton...and then get on the train when the time came, go down to the depot and get on the train, go down as far as Keweenaw Bay and then down over the hill and walk across the ice to Pequaming.

I: Well Wally, we're getting close to the end of the tape here and I want to thank you for a very enjoyable afternoon of visiting about a number of things here.
R: You're welcome.
I: We'll have to get together another time for a little follow up.
R: Sure.
I: Okay, thank you very much