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SUBJECT: A historical tour of Pelkie.

SOURCE: Evert Larsen is a native of Pelkie. He is swedish and lives rather isolated from the rest of the Pelkieans who are virtually all Finnish. We are driving around in his good ole truck and he is casually talking about the old buildings, homesteads, communist hall that "used to be right there". All of these sites have been claimed by history, but Evert recalls them as he drives into Pelkie.

I: You say right here on this corner...

R: Yeah, right there was the cook camp where them weeds are there, and them thimble berries right there was the men's camp, and then the barn was over there.

I: Now this is right on the main Pelkie Road about...

R: ...two miles from Pelkie

I: Quarter mile from the county line too...south.

R: About a half a mile.

I: And who was this Carlson guy?

R: Oh, he was a logger. They logged for Wooster Lumber Company.

I: Un huh...had a contract with Wooster.

R: Yeah...yeah.

I: What was he logging here?

R: Well, hemlock and hardwood and stuff like that.

I: How would he get it to Chassell?

R: Well, the hemlock they hauled in the river and the hardwood they hauled to Pelkie...shipped it on the rails.

I: Hemlock floated okay?

R: Yeah

I: Where would they stack it in the winter?

R: Well, along the...they had a landing...I think they had two landings over there on Hietikko's land that that's where they...then in the springtime they had to drive and they rolled the logs into the river and they floated to Otter Lake and then from Otter Lake they towed them to...there was a channel from Otter Lake going from Otter Lake to the Sturgeon, see. And, I think they used some kind of tug or something to tow the logs over there from the mouth of the Otter to the Sturgeon.
I: To the outlet there, yeah, and then out into Portage Lake and then to Chassell to Wooster. Were there a lot of men at these camps here?

R: Well, I imagine...there wasn't too many but probably was maybe about a dozen or more maybe.

I: Were they Swedes here?

R: Norweigians

I: Norweigians?

R: 

I: Then right around...

R: And then the office was right there on that side the road they had a office right there.

I: Boy, you can't see any remains of it now...it's just all ferns...and that was right around 1912 you said?

R: Yeah...1911, I think, or '12. And then there was Ed Carlson...he was a brother to Ed and he was staying in these camps all by himself in the summertime so he used to bach you know, so he cooked these two big bowls of oatmeal, you know...well he cooked it so he didn't have to cook it every morning. Well, he always took a chunk out of there. So, he had two of them big bowls and then he put the butter and the sugar in the oatmeal and put it out to cool and then the Gunner had two big pigs, you know, that was staying here and when Ed was in the camp why them two big pigs come and they cleaned up the oatmeal. They thought that was pretty good when they had oatmeal with sugar.

I: What did he do to the pigs?

R: Oh he couldn't do nothing anymore...go and chase them away, I suppose and cook more oatmeal.

I: Lot of people at that time had pigs around here.

R: Oh yeah...they all had pigs because there wasn't stuff to buy at the store them days like they do now. They didn't have no Frigidare's at the store or anything so they couldn't keep much meat like in the summertime. Like when they butcher a cow or buy some meat, well in a couple of days the magots would be on it, you know. See they didn't have no coolers or nothing in the stores.

I: What would a person do then if he butchered a cow...well he wouldn't butcher a cow in the summertime.

R: Well, they'd have to salt it down in a barrel or something. That's the only way they could keep it, see. Most of the butchering was done in the fall when it would freeze, but in a pinch if they butchered in the summertime, well they had to salt it down in a barrel.
I: I imagine in the early days too...if someone shot a deer in
summer...

R: It was the same thing.

I: ...they would either salt it down or maybe smoke it or else they'd
give it away so that someone else could have venison.

R: They didn't do much smoking them days. Sometimes they used to hang
it up to make this here dry meat...jerkey or what they call it, you
know?

I: Well, freeze-dry it?

R: Well, they used to hang it up on the wall...I suppose they salted
it and then they hung it up...up on the peak someplace where the
sun cured it, see. That's the way they used to...well just like
dried beef.

I: What would they give a lot of that away?

R: No, I suppose they only used some of that for themselves. But, I
mean like fresh meat they would give that away.

I: And then someone else when they got one they'd give it away so it
wouldn't spoil.

R: Yeah...because they only had like a root house or something like
that and you know they're damp...it gets moldy quick in a cellar and
then it ain't too cool so you can't keep it very long and most of
them never had any air tight places to keep it so the flies wouldn't
get on it either, you know. Even used to buy meat from the store
used to have magots on it.

I: Is that right

R: Oh sure

I: You'd eat it anyway?

R: No...and then lot of times when they hadda kill a cow in the summer-
time or something happened to the cow like cow got sick or broke a
leg or something and they sold it, well sold it to Pelkie, well that's
the kind of meat you got. You know, they wouldn't butcher a good
cow...because they never had so many cows. Everybody had a small
herd them days, you know.

So, if you bought meat from Pelkie chances were you were getting...

R: It was spoiled meat...I mean

I: Bad meat, hey. People would buy it though

R: Oh yeah they'd buy it. That's like now...this happened here...oh
must have been back in the twenties. Our neighbors...Mayanpaas had
...oh I shouldn't...you got the recorder on?

I: That doesn't matter...the name...we can cross that off later.

R: Mayanpass had a cow and she got lost in the woods or sick...that happened like in August and that's a bad month, you know, August, you know for flies or if you get sick or anything like that why you get all kinds of trouble, so anyway, the cow was lost. They looked all over for the cow. Well, then they finally found the cow back there about a quarter mile below the forks. So, they butchered the cow...they skinned it and they took some and they put...they had to carry that meat out so they couldn't take all the meat so they told some of the fellows that lived over there that if they wanted some of that meat they could go and get it. So they did...they went over. This fellow told me he went over and he got a chunk of meat from that and he says, "he couldn't eat it...it was no good". You see that cow had layed there maybe many many days...couldn't move, couldn't drink or nothin, you know, she was in bad shape...you know when a cow laying in the woods maybe a week or so before they found it and then they butchered her, see, well that meat wasn't no good so this fellow told me he went over there and he got meat from there but he couldn't use it...he was the one that told me about it...of course I asked him about it because I'd seen where the cow was so I knew where the cow was. But you take like now in the hot weather, you know, if a cow break her leg or laying in the woods, you know, couldn't get no water to drink or nothin, you know, why fever and all that...why that cow was in tough shape.

I: You bet. Years ago was there a lot of giving of venison?

R: No...not to much. I suppose you'd share with somebody because you couldn't trust everybody, you know, you couldn't go and shoot a deer...like we never shot a deer in summertime...we never shot any and I mean like some.

I: Lot of people did.

R: Yeah...some did but they could only give to the ones they could trust. You know there was a lot of people them days as now that you can't trust...you give 'em a piece of meat they go and squeal on you. So you couldn't do that much either. You know like if you had a neighbor close by, well, something like that why then they do it.

I: Yeah...that's what I've heard. Oftem a farmer when he needed meat in the early days, he'd shoot a deer and since it was so hot at summertime and the meat would spoil, he would give a hind quarter or so to a neighbor; and then when that meat was gone...see they'd have to eat it quickly, you know, they couldn't delay the consumption of it...well when it was gone that neighbor then might go out and get one and then he would give a hind quarter to this neighbor and that neighbor and it would work that way...but only in a small group of people.

R: Yeah...you couldn't go and give it to everybody because you couldn't trust everybody. Like now you go and give it to somebody..."oh, he's killing deer" and then the first thing they'd see the game warden
well they'd go and tell him that I've got deer meat from him...well you know you couldn't do that either.

I: But from what I understand, though, the enforcement of the game laws is altogether now than it was years ago. Years ago every now and then the game warden would sort of turn his back, you know.

R: Yeah, they did that...but I mean somebody squeal on you they had to go and do something about it.

I: Right...because then the game warden could be accused of not doing his job if somebody squealed and he took no action, right?

R: Yeah...I heard about it...I mean I've heard lot of things like that. You know you hear it and then you forget about it. But it happened, I mean that people was gonna be good, you know, and help out, and then they got in trouble about it.

I: What would the neighbors think about a person who would squeal on another one for shooting a deer in the early days? Wouldn't think much of them, eh.

R: No...well just like my neighbor up there in Elo. He was working for Ford...he told me he was getting good wages when he was working for Ford...he said he killed seven deer one summer and that wasn't...I mean that was from the twenties on, you know, when Ford was...Ford bought I think in twenty-two...they bought the Stern and Culver and the Heberts Mills, you know. And he was working there and he told me himself he killed seven deer although he was getting good pay for working for Ford.

I: Yeah, that's...generally though I don't think that kind of waste I don't think went on from what I've heard. In those days when people would shoot a deer they'd generally use all the meat.

R: In some cases...in some cases they didn't.

I: Now I've heard that they shoot deer and leave 'em there.

R: Sure...I know even last fall a fellow told me out there in (???)... he said they were driving back and forth and shooting deer and sometimes they shot the deer and deer went in the woods and died there and other times they shot a deer they just took the hind quarters and left the rest...that happened over there in Aura.

I: That shouldn't....

R: That's the way it is now...that's like them kids now...they're running
up and down the roads shooting deer and they don't even need the meat...just to killing deer. They shoot them and leave them there. Like they go by them apple orchards, you know, like you go on the Grist Mill Road there's them apple orchards there...well the deers go in there and eat apples, well then they drive by with the car and shoot them deers and leave them there.

I: I've heard about that...I've heard that they've left them too.
R: Sure
I: That's different than years ago. Years ago at least they'd eat them. Times have changed.
R: Yeah, they sure have.

Stop in tape.

R: Was a barn there with a peaky roof...like a church roof. There, one time, I was a kid then...I went down to get some hay from there with the horse and a single wagon and old Dunsmore...he used to live over there...so he told me to back the wagon in the thrashing floor. See them buildings were...you know there were two buildings and a thrashing floor in the middle...you know what I mean?
I: No
R: Well see, here there was one barn and then the other barn was over here and then the thrashing floor was in the middle, see...they could drive in there with a load of hay just the same way you can see them doors on there...that there barn that's got...see them doors on that?
I: Yeah
R: That's what they call a thrashing floor in olden times when they had doors like that they could drive in with the wagon, see, unload the hay. So, I couldn't back the horse up and the wagon in there, so old Dunsmore he says, "Gimmee them lines" he said, "I can back that wagon up a cat's ass".
I: Did he back it up?
R: Yeah sure...he says, "Gimmee them lines"...he used to be an old teamster, see, he used to work driving horses in the woods all his life, you know, and he used to be barn boss for Nesters, you know, down in Baraga before he came up here. So he could do it, of course. I couldn't cause I was only a little kid, you know, I couldn't do it.
I: What kind of guy was Pelkie?
R: Oh, he was a happy-go-lucky fellow...kind of a big guy. One time he was making ties for Gunnar Carlson there below our fence down there, so I heard he was talking and laughing down there, so I thought he had company down there so I was gonna go down and look and see who
he had for company, you know, he was talking to himself and laughing, you know, he was using the big broad axe, you know, cutting them ties you know.

I: Well, when did Pelkie come right here?

R: Well see, he homesteaded this...he was one of the first ones that homesteaded around here and then Dunsmore he helped him I guess, so then he give them two forties over there to Dunsmore or he bought 'em, either one, I don't couldn't say.

I: I heard he logged them out and was going to...was going to log them and sell the logs, but for some reason they never got the money for those logs.

R: Yeah, I heard that too. See, they used to roll the logs in the river, like I was telling you over there, well then there were many different outfits like there was Nesters had logs in the river and there was Robinsons and there was Heberts and there was many...

I: Smith....

R: Smith and McCabe and lots of them they all had logs in the rivers.

I: Where was Smith and McCabes?

R: They were at their mill in L'Anse...they had their mill in L'Anse.

I: Hebert was in Pequaming.

R: Yeah...they were in Pequaming...and Robinsons...they were in Chassell, and then there was others, so there was lots of logs in the river, see. So, when they got the logs down to Chassell, well they sorted them out. See, all them logs were stamped, you know, on the end. They had their stamp, you know, like Woosters they had the cloverleaf, that was their stamp and Smith and McCabe they had M&S and I don't know what Nesters stamp had, but Robinsons they had theirs, you know.

I: What was theirs?

R: R...you know Robinsons...there was R and something else.

I: What was Heberts?

R: Well, I don't remember now what they had. So there was a lot of logs, you know. So, in the spring when they got 'em down to Chassell, why then they all sorted them out...you know...some went to L'Anse and some went to the Robinson's mill...it was Robinson's had it before Wooster, I think, and then some went to L'Anse...different places, see. So, well when Pelkie put the logs in there they were stamped for Nester, see, but then Nester said that they never got the logs. But that was only BS...you know...they got the logs...so then they went to court about it. Well when Nester's knew that they were gonna lose, you know, so they were foxy.enough they went and they got Pelkie
drunk, see, so he signed the settlement...so they said the attorney for Pelkie he was so mad because he woulda won...they would have won the case...but they were so foxy, you know, that they went and had Pelkie sign a settlement and they got away with it that way.

I: They found his weakness, huh?
R: Yeah, they knew it because he used to work for them in Baraga, before you know. So that's the way that was.

I: Do you remember any other stories about Pelkie?
R:

I: Did he come up to your place ever?
R: Oh yeah

I: You can remember him coming up to your place?
R: Yeah, he was up there before he...when he sold the farm when he went down to Detroit...he came up and stayed at our place for one afternoon before he left.

I: Oh, he sold the place here?
R: Yeah

I: When did he sell it?
R: Oh, that I couldn't say...that must have been...I was just a little kid then.

I: Was he an old man at the time?
R: Yeah...yeah...he was an old man.

I: How come he was going to Detroit?
R: Well, I suppose he...his wife, I guess, was sickly and I guess she was down there, I think, and that's the way it happened and he went down to Detroit and I think he died there.

I: There were a lot of French families in this area here.
R: Yeah

I: Was Dunsmore French?
R: No...he was Canadian Scotch...well I guess Pelkie wasn't all French either and he was...I think...half and half or something, you know.

I: Do you know where he came from in Canada?
R: No...I often wished...I used to visit lots with Dunsmores to see
Johnny...young Johnny...he was about my age so we had quite a lot in common and old Dunsmore he came from Canada and he used to always talk about Berry Township...he came from somewheres I think up from Detroit...he used to talk about the Georgian Bay and...which province is next to Detroit?

I: Oh gee, I don't know. Windsor?

R: No, that's a town...see that could be...

I: Oh, which province...I don't know.

R: Ottawa ain't it?

I: I'm not familiar...I thought you were referring to the city...which I know.

R: So, I often have been thinking that God darn I shoulda, you know, asked old Dunsmore where he came from although he always mentioned...I think was Berry Township where he came from.

I: Well, all these French people that were here, they seemed to move out.

R: Yeah, well, they moved out...see they were more woods-working people, they weren't farmers...they came out here and they cleared land and like that and then they moved away when the timber was cut.

I: But, there was still hardwood here.

R: Yeah, but they...them days there wasn't no sale for hardwood.

Oh...there was a time period between when the pine was gone and when the hardwood...

R: Yeah, well see the pine was...that was king you know, that was first back in the 1880's until the 1900's and like that...that was the pine days.

I: You once told me when the last pine was cut here...do you remember that?

R:

I: About when do you think the last pine were...

R: Well...most of the pine was cut already...you can say by 1910...I think biggest part was cut by 1900, but there was odd patches, you know, that they were still cutting...'cause you read that book there, *Michigan History* that I gave you, well it said in there, I think it was around 1909 when they were logging up on the Peskekee (???)...you read that...I think that was around 1909 or 1903...I couldn't say for sure but something like that.
I: I'm thinking more of this area here.

R: Well, see this area here wasn't a very big pine area...yeah there was pine here but it wasn't...you know it was more mixed timber like Hemlock and hardwood and pine and cedar...so like here they went all the way up close to the Copper Range, you know, and took the pine that came down the river here and then all the way up towards Otter Siding and like that, see well, you know, through that area there was bunches of pine, you know, but then there was places where there was no pine, see.

I: Well, in the Pine Creek area there was more pine.

R: Yeah there was lot of pine over there, see and right around here there wasn't so much pine...but here, like over there on Pelkie's homestead over there where Dunsmore's had it...there was lot of pine over there...there's lot of stumps over there.

I: Do you remember seeing all those big stumps when you were a kid.

R: Oh, I seen the stumps...the stumps are still there yet.

I: They're pretty well deteriorated though now, eh?

R: No, they're...you can still see them...they're black...when they're burnt why they stay that way for many years.

I: Did you have to clear any of them on your land?

R: Yeah, I cleared them...I had some big pine stumps over there where we picked up that hay there...boy I had a heck of a job to get 'em out...that one was so big I think I used up about forty-five sticks of dynamite to get it out.

I: Is that right. How did you finally get it out?

R: Well, I blew all the dirt out from under it and then a fellow pulled it loose with a tractor and pulled it out.

I: Must have been rough when they didn't have tractors and tried to them out, eh?

R: Yeah...well they couldn't get 'em out...they left them...lot of them were left, you know 'til later years when they got dynamite, then they blew them out.

I: Right around those stumps is pretty fertile ground in the early years, from what I've heard.

R: Yeah, well it was all fertile ground because the leaves fell down and it rotted, you know when the leaves rotted and there was just the trees growing...there was not no grass or nothing, you know so been coming down for years and years...the leaves, well the ground was rich them days.
What was it like walking through the virgin timber in those old days?
It's different than walking through the woods now.

Oh yeah, heck, that was all open...heck you could see way all over in the woods you could see because it was...there was no underbrush...it was clean, you know, just an odd tree or something fell down, you know, then after they logged it, well then all this here second-growth brush and stuff grew up.

It was a lot different hunting in those days.

You didn't have to squeeze through the brush like you do now.

I would imagine you'd even get long shots in those days.

Oh yeah...well, of course, I mean you couldn't get too long because there was always trees in the way...like you might see a deer over there and when you come to aim at him well there's a tree in the way.

Right now, we're just in your lower field here a little bit northeast, about a quarter mile northeast of the LaRue home and you say this is Hilliards homestead?

Yeah, this used to be Hilliards...fellow by the name of Loutie Hilliard had a homestead here.

What was his first name?

Loutie...and he homestead, I suppose, in the pine days I imagine.

Do you remember him at all?

Oh yeah...he used to have a sawmill in Baraga.

That was quite a big sawmill at one time.

Yeah, he had a big sawmill there...that's a part of that that's Northwoods' got now that used to be Hilliards sawmill.

Well, he didn't live here while he was running the sawmill did he?

No...no...he lived in Baraga...but the homestead clearing and the shack was down by the river...that's all down in the river now.

Would he ever come up and visit?

No, that was probably before my time when he homesteaded here.

What was his nationality, do you know?

No...I don't know...that's something I wouldn't know.

What about that old barn out there...that old place there?
R: That used to be Matt Holmes place. It belongs to George Mattson now. He works for Buckie Round in L'Anse. He owns that place.

I: That area that's fenced off?

R: Yeah, you know, there's a forty-acre patch right there.

Stop in tape.

I: Right up in this area was the old Communist Hall.

R: Yeah, that was over there by the other end of the swamp...there used to be a blacksmith's shop right here one time.

I: On the corner here where Froberg Road and Pelkie Road meet?

R: Yeah, there used to be a blacksmith shop.

I: Who run that blacksmith's shop?

R: Well, it wasn't run there very long...they built it and they run it for a little while...like that. I think a fellow by the name of Larsen was supposed to run it, but I suppose it didn't pan out, so...

I: And when was that hall built there?

R: Well, we'll drive over there.

I: Okay.

Stop in tape.

I: What did you call that hall over here? Punecke? (?? )

R: Yeah, that's what it was, Punecke Hall. Punecke that's red in Finnish, isn't it?

I: I guess so, I don't really know.

R: It was a communist hall.

I: When was it built?

R: Oh, I imagine it was built around in the twenties they built it.

I: Do you recall who built it?

R: Well, I mean it was a whole bunch of communists, you know, that built it there.

I: Why did they build it? To hold meetings...?

R: Yeah...and dances and different things like that
I: Would they try to raise money through the dances?

R: Well, I...

I: Why would they hold dances then?

R: Well, I suppose...I don't know, I suppose they was promoting communism, I suppose that was the biggest item there.

I: Oh, would they try to promote communism at the dances?

R: Well, they used to have their meetings and talk there and have their pep talks and everything...they used to have an attorney from Hancock come down...I think he was from Hancock...fellow by the name of Keeskela (???) he used to come down there and give 'em their pep talks and he used to hollar and roar...you could hear him all the way to Dunsmores place.

I: And, you remember that?

R: Yeah

I: Do you remember what the dances were like...would a lot of people come?

R: Oh yeah...there used to be big crowds sometimes, you know, they used to...well there wasn't any other place to go, so they used to have pretty big crowds sometimes.

I: That was the only dance hall around, eh?

R: Yeah...well there was other ones, but they were burnt down or something happened to them so...well this one was here...see, they had two dance halls...one by Pine Creek, up there, and then that Rainbow Gardens. They were two dance halls.

I: Where was Rainbow Gardens?

R: Well, that's right by the road that goes to the damn, you know where that road goes to...

I: Prickett Damn Road?

R: Yeah...you can see...Rainbow Gardens is still standing there. You look there you can see the sign on it there.

I: What was this place called?

R: They called it the Punecke Hall.

I: How big was it? I can't see any...

R: Oh, it was pretty good size, I mean it was about...oh I couldn't say. It was a big big building.
I: Lot of people could fit in, eh?
R: Yeah

I: Would people come from all around?
R: On yeah, they'd come from Herman and Covington and...Watton and Aura and all around...see them days there were a lot of communists around so they used to always bunch up, you know.

I: But also people who weren't communists would go to these dances too.
R: Oh they used to go there too, you know.

I: Would the parents try to keep their kids away from the communists' hall?
R: Oh I suppose some would...some would do it.

I: Do you remember your folks telling you not to go over there?
R: I wasn't...my mother was only living at that time...my father died back in 1911.

I: When did they stop holding these dances and meetings?
R: Oh, it hasn't been...it could be twenty years anyway now...maybe twenty, maybe more.

I: In the forties?
R: It petered out around that time. Lots of them died, you know...lot of them that was head of it they died or went away, so it petered out and ended and there was nothing...was empty for many years and then finally a fellow tore it down and moved it to Keewenaw Bay.

I: Oh, the hall is still in Keewenaw Bay?
R: Well, I don't know if it's there...he probably made some other building out of it...took the lumber and made some other building...I don't know what he built out of it.

I: What kind of things were these local communists advocating at the time? What kind of opinions did they have and...
R: They were talking about overthrowing the government and they were for Russia, you know. Russia was doing...it was the big thing, you know. Yeah, they were...

I: They were actually talking about overthrowing the government?
R: Oh sure, sure.

I: How did they think they were going to do it?
R: Well, that's what they were planning anyway...like they used to have
a place in Pelkie there...they were communists, you know, and they used to have meetings there in the nighttime, there was all kinds of cars outside but there was no lights in the house, they were in the dark...they were in there because you could tell by all the cars on the road, you know.

I: Wonder why they wouldn't have any lights on in the house.

R: Well, they didn't want other people to see what they were doing or what they were talking about.

I: When was this...when they were in those meetings...was that during the same period?

R: Yeah, around that time.

I: And they thought Russia was pretty good, eh?

R: Yeah, they thought Russia was super-duper...this country was no good they even bunched up a whole bunch and send them to Russia.

I: Is that right?

R: Yeah

I: What happened to those people?

Stop in tape.

I: What did these local communists think was wrong with this country? Do you remember?

R: Well, this was a capitalist country and they felt like in Russia you got everything for nothing...see over there...that that was a better country over there. Capitalist country was no good.

I: Did they have any gripes?

R: Oh yeah, they always had lots of gripes did

I: What kind of gripes/they have.

R: Yeah, but you see they were Finnish, you know, and I wasn't Finnish so I couldn't explain that...but you know yourself that they had all kinds of things was wrong the same as it is now, you know.

I: And some of them did go to Russia.

R: Yeah...that's what we were talking about...there was a whole bunch from E10 and some from Aura, I guess, and some I guess from Watton and Covington...they shipped them to Russia. They thought it was so good over in Russia so they went over there. There was a fellow in Aura, he was a carpenter, so when he went he took a whole bunch of carpenter tools with him...he thought he was gonna go over there and make money, you know. So, he got over in Russia...well they took
his carpenter tools away from him. They said, "you don't need them anymore." Some took their cars, you know, and lot of them took lot of stuff with them, you know, and when they got over there they took it away from them...said, "you don't need that stuff".

I: Did they try to get back here?

R: Yeah, well see that carpenter he did get back...from Aura...he did get back and then there was a fellow by the name of Sam Saari up there in Elo...well he went there too and he got back into Finland so he died over in Finland. That's where he died.

I: Did he have a rough time over there in Russia too?

R: Well, I suppose when he went to Finland...well I suppose he didn't like it over there either and there were lots of others that went there and they got left in Russia like Storms, and Jack Saari and lots of them...I suppose they're dead now.

I: Did any of them go to Siberia?

R: No...they went...I don't know where they went, but this here Sam Saari, one of his boys was visiting here a year ago last summer. But, he's in Finland now. But their oldest boy is still in Russia...got left...but see he took his whole family when he went...Sam Saari...his wife and kids and all.

I: Did these local communists get along with the other people?

R: No...they were other people...they were no good, you know. You know how one clique gets the devil like the other one, you know.

I: The church people didn't like them and...

R:

Stop in tape.

I: And here is the first Pelkie school, eh?

R: Yeah...they had one before this...they just got it built and then got a forest fire and it burnt down so then they built the second one here.

I: When was the forest fire here?

R: Oh, would be way back around 1909 - 1908 or something like that.

I: Was it a big fire?

R: Oh yeah, there was fires all around them days. There was bush fires all over...they didn't have no way of stopping them once they started why they went, you know, 'til they died out.

I: Did they burn over this whole country here?
R: Yeah, most places it was burnt.

I: Where did it start?

R: Well, somebody clearing land or railroad or something you know, a spark started it and away she went, see. You take back there in 1900 there was fires all the time. Look at this...L'Anse burnt down...Ontanagon burnt down...there's many places burnt down years ago.

I: Where did this fire that came through here start? Do you know?

R: No...I don't know

I: Okay, so then they built this. Do you know when they built this?

R: Well, it was...I think...when I started to school, it must have been around 1910 or 11...something like this...it was just completed then, see, around that time.

I: Who was that first teacher there...do you remember who your teacher was?

R: Roy Stratton...he was a fellow from Baraga.

I: Would he come all the way out here to teach and then go back every night?

R: No he stayed out here. Them days it was horse and buggy days.

I: Did they have a house out here or did they stay with families?

R: They stayed with families...that's the way the school teachers used to stay, you know...get a place to board and sleep...they didn't travel 'cause I mean them days it was rough roads too...there was no blacktop like now, you know.

I: So, they'd come out here for the week and board with the local families and then go home for the weekend.

R: Yeah, sometimes I suppose they stayed over too...would all depend on.

I: Did you ever have a teacher staying at your place?

R: No, we lived too far from school.

I: How many kids were in that school?

R: They claim sixty-five at one time.

I: In that little school.

R: Well, there was lot of kids them days because the families were big and they had eight - nine - ten kids, you know, and now they only got one and two and none, see. And then they built a smaller school and
and then they had a smaller school there too.

I: Right next to it?

R: Yeah, right long side... see that post sticking up over there... it facing the road... see that post? Yeah, it was right there.

I: Do you remember any old happenings in that school when you were going to school? What was it like then?

R: Well, it

I: Was there any fun there?

R: Oh sure, I mean we used to play... ball and all kinds of things. We used to walk to school in the wintertime and they had one stove in there and put the lunchpail by the stove and then we'd eat out lunch and had one water pail with a dipper in it and we used to drink out of it... everybody drank out of it.

I: What were your shenanigans? There must have been a little mischief not bad, but you know the kind of stuff kids do to have fun. What kind of stuff did you do in those days.

R: I don't know. I suppose there was some tricks the kids played, but I don't remember. See, I quit school in 1916... I only went as far as the seventh grade.

I: Then you hadda go work on the farm.

R: Yeah, and work out in the woods and all over. So, I was a drop out in those days.

I: A drop out from a one-room school, eh?

R: Yeah

I: That's as good a place as any to drop out from.

R: I suppose.

I: And that was called the Pelkie School. Who was the next teacher after the man you just mentioned... do you recall?

R: Yeah, I think for awhile there was one by the name of Tebeau... but I can't remember her first name. And then was one by the name of Melina King and then there was another one by the name of Albertina Stenson and then there was one Ages Ingstra... that was my last teacher.

I: I heard that they kept order in those places... that it was nothing like it is today... that they kept order.

R: Oh yeah they kept track of the kids. They used a stick on 'em.
I: Where would she keep that stick...do you remember

R: Oh, they used to use that yardstick...it was always laying on the blackboard, you know, that's where the yardstick was. And they used to have a library...they used to put the kids in there.

I: If they were making too much noise or something?

R: Yeah, I remember this here Roy Stratton, he was my first school teacher, he used to like to play ball. Sometimes we started playing ball why we'd play all afternoon...we didn't go back to school at all...you know for afternoon...but played ball all afternoon.

I: That was alright, eh?

R: Yeah...oh of course it didn't happen too many times, but it happened once in awhile.

I: Did you ever get your knuckles rapped?

R: Oh yeah, course I wasn't a roughneck like some were

I: Were some guys always getting their knuckles rapped?

R: Oh yeah and they used to pound them to beat the band, you know.

I: Is that where she'd hit you, over the knuckles?

R: Oh she'd hit you on your hand, you know, that used to hurt. Hold out your hand and they'd hit you with a hardwood stick, you know, that hurt.

I: What language did they speak in there...English right away?

R: Well, lots of them they couldn't speak nothing else when they came there. They were like me...that's all I could talk was Swedish and I come there. My father and my mother they come from old country and the same way with the rest. French came from Canada so mostly they'd talk French, you know, and that's where they learned to talk English.

I: And then, at this time, were there any Finnish?

R: Oh yeah, there was Finnish too.

I: So that there was...at that time in that little school...the kids spoke Swedish, French and Finnish and it was the teacher's job to teach them English, eh?

R: Yeah

I: How did the different kids get along...the different nationalities?
R: Oh, they used to fight once in awhile, but I mean they got along as a rule. They used to have their scraps, you know, and that, but it wasn't, I mean, nothing serious.

I: One-room school...what kinds of things did they teach then, do you remember?

R: Oh, ABC's and arithmetic and language and physiology and geography and history and all them things, you know. History and geography that was my end...I liked them...the rest I didn't like.

I: Now, did they used that for a townhall afterwards even?

R: Well, yeah, they used it for a little bit, but not much.

I: A local townhall?

R: Well see, they had the school there afterwards and they had the buildings in Pelkie so most...they never use it as townhall there much. They used for voting a few times and that, but most of the time they had voting out in Pelkie.

I: Why would they have a townhall...what was there to be talked about?

R: Well, I mean, if they had some meetings or something like that, why they could have it there.

I: What would the meetings be about...what sort of things...

R: Some had church meetings and there was sometimes like in the depression days there was a money shortage they were talking about getting loans to buy seeds and all kind of stuff like that. So, I mean, lot of times they had I suppose like sometimes some politician come around and they want to make a speech or something, that's where they had it. Of course they didn't have too much here because just sort of rotted away, you know, then when they built that school they had their meetings over there. They used to haul their junk what they didn't use over there. And then they used to have the old creamery building down there.

I: Let's go down that way and take a look.

Stop in tape.

I: Okay, you said there were two blacksmith shops...right where Alfred Pelto's place is?

R: Yeah, there was one there and then the other one was right here. Right here where Maki's place is now...there was a blacksmith shop.

I: Who ran these blacksmith shops?

R: Fellow by the name of Takkenen run the one, John Takkenen, and then I think there was a fellow by the name of Neimi run the other one.
I: Now wasn't there a blacksmith here by the name of Emil Pelto?
R: Yeah, he had the blacksmith shop right there, see.
I: Oh, was it that same building?
R: Yeah, that building right there. Yeah, that was Emil Pelto's place. He was the head of the communists.
I: He was the local man then.
R: Yeah, he was the...he's still living in Baraga. And then right here used to be...a logging camp used to be right here by the name of Goddell, I think had a camp...a logging camp there years ago.
I: Right where Matt Rouna's house is?
R: Yeah, there used to be a camp there.
I: What nationality was he?
R: I wouldn't know...that was before my time; but, there was: a camp there and then there was a shack there and a fellow by the name of Kampagusti, he used to have a gambling joint there...same place. Then he moved that over there on the...right across from where I told you they had that blacksmith shop over there right on the other side the road. See, when Rouna's built the house here, well then he hauled his shack over there.
I: Kamp what?
R: His name was Gus Johnson, but they used to call him for Kampagusti.
I: Oh, he had a gambling place,
R: Well, yeah the lumberjacks used to go over there and gamble...well they played pinochle and cassino and poker and whatever...they do a little gambling around here.
I: Oh, it was just a little shack, eh?
R: Yeah, little eight by eight...or twelve by twelve or something like that.
I: Lot of smoke and tobacco.
R: Yeah, and right there where Ralph's gas station is now, there used to be a saloon right there.
I: Mittie Gauthier.
R: Yeah, Mittie Gauthier.
I: What was that like? Were you ever inside? Could you describe what it
was like?

R: Oh, it was just a small building...oh high building and they had their mirrors in there, of course I was only a kid that time when he had that saloon there. But, he didn't have it too long. He went out west I guess and he died just a few years ago I seen in the paper...out in Idaho.

I: Well, what kind of...who would go there?

R: Well, lumberjacks and I suppose them days there were traveling men, you know, salesmen going back and forth selling stuff, you know, I suppose they stopped there.

I: I heard that Mrs. Gauthier there had a room...there were rooms for rent there also something like a hotel...

R: And then there was next to that there was a store...that's where Jokkelu's are living now, that was a store and Gauthier had a store there and then he...

I: That was Alphonse Gauthier.

R: Yeah, Alphonse Gauthier.

I: He was the first one to have the store. Was that the first store here? The very first?

R: Yeah, that was the first store here. And then Rouna's had a store right there where...

I: ...the building supply is now.

R: Yeah...and then on the other side used to be...

I: What were these stores like? What was Gauthier's store like?

R: It was only a small store, you know, just like...things what they needed them days, you know, ...shoes and blankets and cloth to sew with, you know, nails and you know, general merchandise, you know.

I: Where would he get his merchandise from?

R: Well, they used to...train used to come into Pelkie here...get it off the train.

I: I heard he had another store on the other side.

R: Yeah, he had some stores back there—by the Silver River he had a store over there too.

I: That was before the train came in.

R:
I: And after the train he moved it over here.
R: Yeah, yeah and then..
I: Do you remember going to that store?
R: No...no that was before my time.
I: That was the first store here from what I understand
R: And then I think they had another store over there where Tepsa's is living...I think there was a store there too.
I: He gradually kept moving this way, eh?
R: Yeah, welll....
I: Who worked in the store?
R: Well, the owner and sometimes he had clerks hired, you know.
I: Do you remember any of the people who worked as clerks?
R: No...oh yes I did remember, there was different ones...there was Allena Porola (???) was one I think and...that was in the later years you know, and there was others but I don't recall their names.
I: Would people take their eggs and butter to Gauthier's store?
R: Yeah...yeah...they'd take their eggs and strawberries and stuff like that and what they had to sell...meat or...and they'd bring it to the store and sell it.
I: Oh, they would sell meat there too.
R: Oh yeah, that's how they got their meat years ago...mostly local meat, you know.
I: And then would Gauthier give people cash or would he just sort of give them credit on things they could buy.
R: Oh, they used to sell on credit...some paid cash, whatever they could, you know. Same as now...there are some buying they pay cash and there are others right it down in the book.
I: But there was bartering...a little more bartering in those days, I mean, you'd give something for something else rather than just with money.
R: Yeah, they...like lot of them if you had eggs to sell or butter well you brought it out there and then you took groceries in exchange, see.
I: What kind of groceries would they have?
R: Coffee and sugar and salt and pepper, whatever they needed them days.

I: No, I mean...

R: And hardtack and crackers and cookies and they didn't have so much of that canned stuff like they got now, you know, they had some canned stuff too, like corned beef and sardines and stuff like that, you know.

I: Un huh...did they sell many clothes there?

R: Oh yeah, they used to sell shoes, you know, they didn't go into that fancy stuff, but they, you know, like working clothes and shoes.

I: Do you recall any of the prices like for shoes in those days...what they would cost?

R: Oh, they were five - six dollars...like that...up to ten dollars, know for better shoes.

I: And coffee, what did that cost?

R: Oh, probably seventy-five cents a pound or something like that, I don't know...or sixty cents...I couldn't say because there was different prices...they went up and down them days same as they do now.

Stop in tape.

I: A shoemaker shop was right next to the blacksmith shop and who ran that shoemaker shop?

R: Fellow by the name of Heinninen...and then there used to be a building here...it burnt down and then they built another one there.

I: That was right next to...just north of Ketola's station.

R: Yeah

I: What was in that building?

R: Oh, Maki's had it tor a garage...I mean...yeah for a garage.

I: A car garage?

R: Yeah, they'd store all kinds of things what they had in the store and that's the old creamery building.

I: Okay, why don't you stop right here...let's stop right by the creamery.

R: That's the old creamery right there.

I: Do you remember when that creamery started?
R: Oh no, it started quite a few years back. Must have started back in the twenties, maybe before.

I: What was it like inside there when the creamery was operating?

R: Well, they had a place there where they used to weigh the milk and they had a couple of big vats in there and then they had the other room, they had a boiler room there where they had the boiler and the water tanks, I guess, then they had an open sewer...it was an open sewer right behind there that used to smell like the dickens, you know. Was one time there was two drunks, they were sitting over here in the car, you know, and they were talking. So one said, "so this is Pelkie".

I: And it was stinking real bad.

R: Yeah, it was stinking and the other one says, "yes, and it smells for shit too", he says. And then this used to be all logs right here where the gas station is. There used to be a sidetrack coming in there. See, this used to be the main railroad right here.

I: Right where that building is.

R: Yeah, right where that there store is...that used to be where the railroad used to go through. So, this was all logs here in the wintertime and then they had a main sidetrack coming in right here.

I: Right where that Pelkie garage is, eh?

R: No

I: The gas station?

R: No, right there where that columbine is right now...right where that columbine is standing that used to be a sidetrack there and then you'd have big dead piles of logs used to go back in there all the way down pretty close to the river. Then they had another sidetrack over there that used to come right up to that...pretty close to that there building supply building. That used to be full of logs there in the wintertime too.

I: So, you had a sidetrack on each side of the railroad.

R: Yeah

I: One where the building supply building is and one just a little bit south of where the gas station is.

R: Yeah...right there where that gravel is between that barn and that gravel that's where the...of course it could have been where that columbine is because they hauled that dirt in there. See, they got them gas tanks underneath there where that columbine is standing.

I: Well, this was quite a busy place then years ago, eh?
R: Oh yeah, it used to be busy. They used to have two - three trains running through here. See there's the... no, I was gonna say there was ties, but they were just a car tracks.

I: What did it look like when you'd come down here years ago? What would you see?

R: Well, in the wintertime there was logs on both sides the road... big piles of all kinds of logs.

I: How high would they be?

R: Oh, some were... they were higher than that there gas station there. There was only enough room so you could drive through.

I: Were there many men around here?

R: Yeah, there were lot of men because the... Tourinen's had a... they were in the logging operation, they had a good sized crew and Rouna's they were in the logging, they had another bunch of crew and then the farmers, they were all doing little logging.

End of Part I

I: Oh, the farmers were logging too.

R: Yeah, they had a little timber of their own they were hauling it in, or they bought a piece of land with timber, well they hauled it out to Pelkie here. And that's where that Post Office is now, that's a second saloon over there.

Tom Bond owned that saloon, right?

R: 

was that like?

R: Oh, was a building something like that one over there... like that garage.

I: Pretty high building, eh... two stories

R: Yeah, two stories... it was right there where the Post Office is now.

I: Had you ever been in that?

R: Yeah

I: What was it like on the inside?

R: Well, they had a bar in there and a little extra room.

I: Were there tables in there?
R: No...they probably had some tables because I guess they used to sell some meals once in awhile I think when they used to...some of them traveling men used to come through.

I: So it was just a standing bar?

R:

I: Men would simply stand there...

R: That's the way they had them...I guess in olden times they were mostly standing bars...I suppose they had like a sheet along the...you know, along the bar.

I: Do you remember Tom Bond?

R: Yeah

I: What was he like?

R: Well, he was a big fat French fellow. He moved to Lake Linden and I think he died up there.

I: Can you tell me more about him? Do you remember any stories, things he did?

R: No, not much...I think they were...fellow was telling me that Houghton Lumber Company they had a camp back up there in Elo years ago and then they used to come to Pelkie to get their oats and stuff for the camp, you know, then there was a fellow by the name of Euie McDonald he was a lumberjack, used to travel from place to place, camp to camp, and this here (???) team was going home with a load of oats well then this here fellow he was riding on the back of the sleigh. Well, every once in awhile when the team wasn't looking, he'd roll off a sack of oats and then they'd go a little ways he'd roll off another one. Well, he'd rolled off quite a few sacks. Well, then he went back and got this fellows horse and went back and picked up them sacks of oats and traded them in for whiskey.

I: At Tom Bond's?

R: Yeah, that's what they were saying, you know.

I: So Tom Bond was quite a trader. Would he ever trade venison for whiskey.

R: Oh I suppose he'd trade anything...I suppose. I don't know if he'd talk about venison.

I: Do you recall any old legendary drunks...guys who would be here, the real drunks of the early days?

R: Yeah, I remember quite a few of them, you know.
I: Who were some? Any characters?

R: There was one fellow...yeah there were quite a few...there was a fellow used to watch camp for this here Reckala outfit...his name was Nester...I don't remember what his first name was, but he was when this store was operating, that's when it was dry, you know, back in the thirties, well this fellow he came down around Fourth of July and he had bought lots of this here Hoffmann drops, I don't know if you know what them is.

I: Unt-un

R: Well, they used to have these here stuff you could buy all kinds of them patent medicines, you know like Ward's linament and Bone's linament and Slone's linament and Ward's linament and Hoffmann drops and all that stuff, so he had bought this here Hoffmann drops and that used to smell like the dickens, you know, and if you took that you could smell, you know, for a long time. So, he was in the store there looking around and he was plastered, you know, and he was talking Finnish, he says (???).........in Finnish that's, "them collick drops are good cold medicine".

I: Werethere any brawls...do you remember any brawls. Those lumberjacks used to...

R: No, not around here, but they had lot of fights, I mean, they had fights every once in awhile.

I: Do you remember any?

R: No

I: Did you ever see any?

R: No, not too much

Stop in tape.

I: In the early days when driving down the Pelkie Road it was all woods on both sides. They were just starting to clear the land and you mean it was woods just right on the side of the road here?

R: Yeah, yeah, it was right on the...except where they had started to clear land, you know, like here and there. Like down here in the swamp, that was a corduroy road down there. When we used to go to school we used to walk on that because this used to be muddy right here and that used to be all made out of logs, you see. It started right here and then went all the way down to Froberg Road. It was, you know, all made out of logs. Of course...

I: Corduroy road here in this whole area.

R: Yeah, all the way from here up to the road that goes over there
I: Just a little south of Art Mantilla's to the Froberg Road was corduroy road?

R: Yeah...it was all made out of logs.

I: What kind of logs did they use?

R: Oh, you know, the poles and logs about that size, you know.

I: About a foot in diameter?

R: Yeah, bigger and smaller.

I: What kind of wood was it?

R: Well, it was handy there...cedar and balsom and spruce. Yeah, it went all the way up to here. But this was all...at one time this was all swamp right here.

I: Look at that starting to brush in there

R: Yeah...yeah

I: How do you think that would make the old timers feel?

R: Oh, it'd make them cry.

I: Does that kind of hit a sore spot with you too?

R: Why sure, look at all the hard work that's been done there and now it's going to waste. Jimmeny crickets that was hard work to clear all that land, you know, with the axe and the grub-hoe. There was no...and then you had to cut the trees down and wait 'til the stumps rotted to get the stumps out.

I: And now it's brushing in.

R: Yeah, now it's growing up with brush.

I: Do you think it was worth it?

R: For people who lived on it years ago. And the last drive, river drive that went down here from Wooster that was in 1917, and then Baraga Lumber Company they had one drive afterwards in 18 and 19, I think.

I: Would you start it all over again...clearing the land?

R: Oh yeah, it was fun I mean.

I: Rough work though

R: Yeah, I'll tell you boy there's been many a drops of sweat, you know clearing that land, burning all that brush and lotta of them didn't
have no horses or nothing, you know.

I: Do you think that this generation could take on a job like that?

R: No, they ain't got the git...they wouldn't do it unless they were forced to.

I: Do you think they could if they were forced to?

R: Well, I suppose if they had no choice.

I: That was the same thing in those days though, right? People did it because...

R: ...they had to do it...it was a way of living.

Stop in tape.

I: The first road to Elo and Tapiola used to go up to where the Otter River bridge is now...

R: Yeah, it come through the woods over there and came out right there by Slolems there then went through our land up to Elo.

I: From the Otter River bridge it made a turn to the west and went due northwest until it came to the Larsen farm and then it turned back north, right, and went straight to Elo.

R: Now wait, it went northwest there too.

I: Why did they stop using that route?

R: Well, the other road got...see this was only a tope road and then they built that there township road.

I: When did they build the township road?

R: Oh, sometime around 1902 - 1903 - 1904, something like that.

I: But you can remember travelers hiking up and down that road, eh?

R: Yeah, heck they used to go right around the clearing there...there was lots of traffic here years ago.

Stop in tape.

End of Part II