FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978
(Funded in part by the National Endowment For The Humanities)

(Funded in part by the Keweenaw National Historic Park Advisory Commission / U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service)

CONDITIONS FOR USE OF .PDF TRANSCRIPT:
Finlandia University, formerly Suomi College, holds the exclusive copyright to the entirety of its Finnish Folklore and Social Change in the Great Lakes Mining Region Oral History Collection, including this .pdf transcript which is being presented online for research and academic purposes. Any utilization that does not fall under the United States standard of Fair Use (see U.S. Copyright Office or Library of Congress), including unauthorized re-publication, is a violation of Federal Law. For any other use, express written consent must be obtained from the Finnish American Historical Archive: archives@finlandia.edu.

PREFERRED FORMAT FOR CITATION / CREDIT:
“Maki, John”, Finnish Folklore and Social Change in the Great Lakes Mining Region Oral History Collection, Finlandia University, Finnish American Historical Archive and Museum.

Note: Should the Finnish American Archive be a resource for publication, please send a copy of the publication to the Archive:

Finnish American Historical Archive and Museum
Finlandia University
601 Quincy St.
Hancock, Michigan 49930 USA
906-487-7347 - fax: 906-487-7557
Interview with Charles McManiman, by Paul Jalkanen  7/17/72

Paul: Could you tell me a little bit about your father, where he came from and what kind of work he did? What kind of work was blacksmith work, village blacksmith. What kind of work did he do for the town?

Chas. Well, he had his own shop, he built his own blacksmith shop and the family lived upstairs in a 7-room apartment and the work that--village blacksmith consisted of making wagons, buggies, hacks, and I remember as a kid, why we built the first double-bar sleigh and wagon and the first team: at the fire station was the one that pulled the sleigh because he didn't have money enough to maintain a team like they did in the larger villages of Houghton and Hancock. And then he shod all the horses, that is, he put shoes on and I remember, I used to help my dad and I learned the trade and we had, we got 50¢ a shoe, furnishing the shoe, the nails and labor and some of those horses were pretty wild, were brought in here from Iowa and we used to have to hold these horses and put a twitch on their nose, probably put them in a "hold" stall and hold, tie their legs, to shoe those horses and then we had one race horse in Houghton, in Hubbell (I'm sorry). There was one race horse that was owned by Nick Redding and it was called Ginger Mack. I remember my dad used to make the shoes out of iron, punch the nail holes in them, then he'd tick them over to me and I'd put them in the vise and file them until they shine like silver. They were going to the race track and he got 50¢ a shoe for them, too. Then like the C&H smelter had probably about 35 horses, he used to take care of all of them. They had their own smelter blacksmiths, I think there was 8 blacksmiths down there and their helpers but my dad did all the horse shoeing and they did all other repair work. Then we had 2 liveries in Houghton; Slattery's Livery and they had in the neighborhood of 35-40 horses and different weight horses, some for carriages and some for everything else, and all the grocery stores and meat markets had horses. That's all they had in those days and then Beauchamp's Livery out of Tamarack. That was another large livery, we used to take care of all their horses. The doctors had horses, and the farmers clear up to Oneco and Tamarack Hill, they--all those farmers used to bring the horses down to my dad to shoe horses. And make wagons, as I said before, for the different individuals but the grocery stores used to get their wagons all repaired and fixed at our shop. And then every 2 years the grocery stores would have their wagons all painted up and lettered all thru and that was a job! My dad had a painter by the name of John Dunn and he did all the painting and lettering. He was really a clever artist. He was more so than a painter, he was an artist. I remember on one hack in Slattery's, that Slattery had, a winter hack, he painted a peacock on the dashboard like that, I'm telling you, it was something to behold and gold lettering was really something then, you know, and, oh, it was quite a busy place, the village blacksmith shop.

Paul: Did you get up early in the morning?

Chas. Oh, very much so, because they were rapping at the door at 5 o'clock sometimes. Especially in the fall when they wanted to change the shoes over from, when it got icy, they put the winter shoes on with spike forks, see this was all hand operated, there was no patent shoes of any kind or anything, the shoes were made in sizes from 2 to 8 for the different work horses and the medium horses and then the light drivers and saddle horses and some of these individual owners--a lot of the men that worked in the mills and smelter, they had their own driving horses, Because it didn't cost much to maintain anything at that time. We used to get a horse and buggy and harness for about $200, see.

Paul: What time period are you talking about now? What years?

Chas. 1905-1917.

Paul: What was your house like? Or what was the place that you lived in like, above the livery stable and that, over the blacksmith shop?
Chas. Our house was just as modern as this is today. We even had a china closet, we had a telephone and there wasn't many homes had telephones at that time but we had one and we had inside toilets, which was rare at that time; we had electricity at that time, which was rare, and, but, most of the houses in those days, they probably didn't have much and they—the house over here matched that house and mining company houses and all this kind of stuff but there is one thing that you could remember in those days, you might find one or two dirty families. Others, you could eat off the floor, there was no linoleum in those days either and a soft-wood floor of the general life at homes and rag carpets and all this kind of stuff. Mothers and sons and daughters would have to get down and with a scrub brush, scrub those floors once or twice a week and it was, well, it all was summed up in one statement: our living conditions, our way of life and the way we treated our fellowman, there was respect for the rights of others!

Do you think that

That was the key to the whole thing.

Is that how not only your family lived, but others, too?

Others, I can talk generally on that statement and one nice thing about it, like all of our foreigners that came over, I've said this time and again in politics and everything else, I've said it in Lansing, the nice thing about the Copper Country and what made the Copper Country "tick" were all descendents of foreigners more or less and these different ethnic groups that came over here, regardless of what they were, they sort of congregate in a certain area and before many days would be up, you'd see a church steeple amongst them, of their own faith; that's what held them together thru lean days and good days, because they were a part of the church.

Paul: Whether they be Catholic, Lutheran, or—

Chas. No, that never—

Paul: never mattered at all?

Chas. None. Those people believed in what was handed to them from their parents in the old country, they come over here and they instituted the whole thing to their own liking and they followed thru with their father. Listen to some of the ministers and that on the radio today, their still carrying on in the same light and that's what I think, but our younger generation, say since 1930 have drifted away from the word of God and we're loosing ground every day. Our scientists today, have they ever done anything to prove to you about the religious side of life? Nothing! Not a thing! And that's why I say, they say that people we're ignorant. Half of the people couldn't write or read way back there before the turn of the century and that we're still living in young people up to the 20's. I know a lot of people how, all they could do, was put an "X" down. But those people understood the respects for the rights of others.

Paul: Where did your dad settle in the Copper Country, you said he came from Canada.

Chas. Came from Canada, sort of a migration of Canadians from the Joliet and Quebec areas and all those different provinces of the east. They came via Windsor, across that way a lot of them did, and over Niagara Falls and that way, because Montreal is 60 miles away from where my dad lived, now we could prove that because we covered it and believe it or not, it's all wilderness within a mile from my dad's home and that's only 60 miles from big Montreal and then Joliet is in between there and he came here and he worked in the woods as a blacksmith, he worked for the Nuster
Lumber Company back in the 90's and he got married in 1896 and he was a blacksmith here in Hancock. That's where he started blacksmithing in Houghton County.

Is that what he would have done in Canada, too?

Oh, yes. He learned the trade

Was he born in Canada?

He was born, like I told you, in St. Alphonse province of Quebec

Where were his parents from?

Ireland. Right from Ireland. And my dad could talk very fluent French. (I should put this in there) I'd be working in the blacksmith shop down under a wagon or someplace and one of these Frenchmen would come to the door and they'd start this "parlez vous Francais"? And I couldn't understand it, and I knew my dad was Irish and my mother was Irish, and I couldn't understand why in the devil he was talking something I couldn't understand and I'll never forget, one day I was sitting there under the wagon fixing, putting a clip on an axle and a fellow by the name of Budzine Baril came to door and he said: "Sharley," and my dad answered in French, they started right away. I took the hammer and I threw it right out the door! Right at his head, in fact! but it hit the door. And I got my "needings" for that! But right in school, right in Condon school there (that's what we used to call it--Condon school instead of parochial school) the kids used to talk French right across the aisle just like the Finns did when I came to Houghton and Hancock. Kids would talk Finn because that's all they talked at home, plenty of Italians did the same thing, they talked Italian --

Paul: Do you think that the Irish, the French and the Finns and the Italians were very clannish? Did they "stick together" very close?

As such, yes. Very much so. And they were--never were organized other than churchly matters. They never would get organized and there seemed to be a feud at that time between the Irish and the Finnish. And I'm not saying something that others don't know about. Everybody knows ______ and it was on account of this here language barrier. The Irish people never learned a foreign tongue over here. They old folks come over here, they'd talk Irish but they never talk in front of their kids and, but the French, the English and the Cockney as they called them, from Cornwall, they had a sort of an accent, well, hardly anybody could understand sometimes when they first come over but there were ______ - I say this without fear of contradiction, there wasn't one of those nationalities, one "top shelf" people, without an education, they come over here to find something better than what they had over there. And that's all summed up in that one statement: that's why they were here. I can remember in '21, after the 1st World War, they brought the Germans over here. Those people were educated then. And Rev. Feldscher would be down to the depot, he took Rev. (I forget what his name was in the German-Lutheran Church over there) and he'd be down there at 5:15, 5:45 in the morning waiting for that Soo train to come in and there'd be probably 2 coaches of Germans right from across from Germany, and they'd all go up to Painesdale, that's where they all went, and as I understand it, there's a few left up there yet. But the majority of them were educated and they weren't going to work in the mines, they migrated elsewhere.

What was the population in 1920-1930 around here? Do you have any idea?

Chas. Yes, between 19____ up to the strike, and a few years later, it was up 88,000

That's for the whole Copper Country area
Copper Country. They say we didn't have much in the line of census figures in those days, ahh, but they say there was about 40,000 people in the Calumet area alone. Now, back when I was president of Houghton, Houghton was a much larger, had a better population than they got today without the college, you understand. What was it, 3800, now it's 3393.

That was in the early 50's.

Chas. '52. The '50 census. And Hancock was about 5900 but we, look at the way the census shows up every year. I was listening to the school board report in Hancock the other day over the radio where they thought there'd be probably a loss of 15 students and now they're fearful of the thought that it might be 40. And look at all those new buildings that are being built up there but people don't even think about that big manor over there, that senior citizen's, you see, they've got the people here but they have no effect on the tax base and that's the thing you're gonna have to, people are going to have to learn and learn fast. Like our Tech out there, they take out, but they don't leave too much with us other than the line of money, now, our Tech students for instance as I see it, now I sure put my nose to the grindstone in regard to Tech because, while I was in the Senate, I worked hard for Tech to keep it here because the jobs were the only thing that we could count on.

Paul: It must have brought some money here to the community by students spending the money.

Ya, you see the student money is probably going in one or two channels: the automobile and entertainment. And the food, the local businessman doesn't affect, maybe the baker shop might; he's the only one gets the bite out of this thing. For instance if I may go back a little bit: back when the school had probably about 300 to 1200 in my time, Michigan Tech I'm talking about now, and we had 4 packing houses in Houghton, that's meat packing houses, there was Weaver & Sons, Karger & Sons, Morrison Company, Cudahy Pack, they were wholesaling meat, mind you, and they had branches in Calumet, now what have we got? We have one truck comes in from Swift, one from Armour, and over here to Vollwerth's.

Paul: What kind of meat were you talking about when there was 4 packing houses?

Chas. Up to 1940, (repeat) up to 1940. So you see--and then we have the Lake Superior Produce Company, they also owned the Peninsula Wholesale Grocery Company where Cohodas is now, and there was the Martin Candy Factory which produced some of the best candy that was ever made in this country; they had a nouget that nobody has ever duplicated since! And Charles Markham, the senior member of the family, they accused him of having a secret formula all his own that she didn't tell on, and there's a lot of his offsprings around here in Houghton and Hancock and Stanton Township that are inter-married into other nationalities today, it was a big family and we were proud to have them, and the thing is that all this--and they employed people, you understand, then there was the Roach & Seeber's grocery. And the Sanitary Dairy; Malfroid Mill stuff, that is, animal food, (what else did we have?) then we had the Isle Royale Mine--people worked up in there--you see all this and this was the business center, outside of company stores up in Atlantic, Freda, Redridge, Painesdale, Trimountain, Baltic, they all had big company stores. And those are all things that made it better for people, everything was charge, credit--

Paul: At the company stores?
Chas. The company stores

How much money did you make for your first couple of jobs?

Chas. Well, I started for $20, then I went to $25, then I went to $40 and I started for the Express Company for $65 a month, no hours, you worked until your job was done. And that was $5 for taking care of the horse and you worked every second Sunday, too. And that's, and developed, or increased from 1920, 1932, up to $185. Then I went back as a driver and first time I was agent, was in '28, a relief agent and I was relief agent more or less on and then permanent (sometimes) up to 1932. Then I went back to driver, and I went back to hack-driver, went down to $80 a month.

What can you tell me about politics in the Copper Country? I suppose, politics including the Finnish population, and what they were like in politics.

You see a goodly number of our people in the Copper Country never became citizens. They couldn't vote. And those that were on the election list, or the voter list, some of them never got off of there whether they were in the cemetary or not and there was rumors around when I was a young fellow, when I first got into politics, in '22, in '22 I think I was passing out petitions in those days, and then at that time, the Democratic Party could hold a meeting in a telephone booth because if you said you were democrat, you were poison! Republicans ruled the roost and there was rumors at that time, that if you wanted to be sheriff of Houghton County, you had to make a trip up to C&H and if they okayed you, why, you run for sheriff and our first Finnish sheriff in '28 (if I remember right) was Gust Hamina and he died in office, Frank Francisco took his place as undersheriff, an Italian, then our next Finnish sheriff

That was for county sheriff

Chas. Well, there's only one sheriff

Oh, yes, that would be for the city --

Only one sheriff, see, to make it clear of what political sub-division consists of is, you have your federal, your state, your county, your city, your township. These are constitutional sub-divisions of our constitution. A village is a political sub-division superimposed on the people! They have the same treatment as the city. The township has nothing to do with the operating of the village other than the fact that the they're on the tax roll, the village is on the tax roll of the township and but, they have no say-so in the operation of the village and that's what I was sort of grieved and I aggravated when the people of Houghton were so gullible to go and make a city out of Houghton without any enlargement of any--or no benefits and right now, with all their expenses they--it's the same identical thing as was in the township and the village because Houghton people belong to the Portage Township district schools and only it's on the city rolls, they—the school millage is on the city rolls and they have to pay the same thing as the guy out in Royalewood or out in Dakota Heights, he pays identical, the same thing and there's some—many people who are intelligent, supposedly intelligent people that told the people that they would only have one tax to pay.

It didn't work out that way?

Chas. No, it never does work out that way. I say this in all sincerity from my political life, that the individuals that would promote something like that are thinking of
themselves a lot more than there are of the general public.

Very few people were interested. And our mining companies ruled the whole political life of the Copper Country. I remember in the 20's, we had a time meeting in Houghton.

What?

A "time" meeting

What was that?

See, they used to have mine "time" around here every summer, like we have daylight saving time -- and the mines--then all of the communities would go on "mine" time. So in 1920, see during the war we had daylight saving time, and we'd go back to the--in the winter, we'd go back to the standard time. And I remember this very well, we had a meeting upstairs of the firehall, we didn't have the community building then, that was the Houghton Club then, and oh, we must have been about 150 men up in that little room, the firemen's room, upstairs there --

the party got a little larger?

Hm? Oh, no, no, this was the people. This was the city of Houghton. We had voted to stay on standard time the week before and they called this meeting, some were businessmen in the town, and the president of the college, they were all there and I'll never forget it, those men said, well, if the mining company wants the fast time, we'll all have to go fast time but the thought behind this story is that the people voted in a good, democratic American way. And the next Monday we were all on fast time again. After the people voted to stay on Standard time because at that time Baraga used to stay on Standard time because at that time.

Paul: Well, why did the mines want you to go on fast time

Chas. They used to call it "mine" time then, it used to be a half-hour at one time and then they made it a hour. Don't you realize that the power--anybody that has power, we have it today, these power-crazy people--they want to keep you under their finger--it's another "Hitler" arrangement, that's all to it, and we have them right today in our educated people who try to run the show. And they have NO right to run you or run MR. Their contribution to the whole operation is no more than what I give; if you were the boss man, the superintendent, everybody else, what good would it be for you to be superintendent or anybody, if you didn't have anybody down to superintendent? They were all an integral part of this life; you are your brother's keeper in this whole picture and that's the thing I don't seem to be able to get home to the majority of people. Then, in WPA times, '32, this was before WPA, '32, we had a meeting in the community building, the community building went bad, the Houghton Club went out of existence, then it was up for "grabs" and If I remember correctly, it went just like the Amphidrome, or the Dee Building, or whatever you want to call it. The village took it over for taxes, I think they got that building for about $6,000 and tax title, that big community building, can you imagine? And we had a meeting down there of the general public, Republicans and Democrats and what-have-you, and there was no Republicans left, it seemed. Everybody was against the government, against Hoover, and I never could develop that feeling against him and I've had that feeling all my life, that there's no one man at fault for anything. It's the greedy gooks like we've got today and the thought is that everybody--we had to do something--we had to have some kind of welfare--and it started and here me, a Democrat, I was getting a big kick out of it and that was the end of it.
Paul: What kinds of things did you do politically? In 1930's, during the depression.

Chas. I organized the Democratic clubs in Houghton County, in '32, and then when, in fact I got several men interested in and I got high office in the Democratic Party. I can remember being down the Gazette and that was the only source of information we had at that time on election night, everybody congregated down at the Gazette. They'd put a big poster, bulletins all along, as the story came in whether it was national or state or county and I'll never forget, (I won't mention any names)--

Paul: If you feel like it, you can mention them--

Chas. Alright. OK. These gentlemen, or Grover Dillman back in the '30's, '38, they came down there and Doc Ferries, Dr. C. T. Ferries, he was a dentist and he had been at times chairman of the Republican Party, and I hadn't been on, at that time I hadn't got up to be an officer in Democratic Party yet, Dan Holland was the chairman, he used to be postmaster in Hancock, and he come up there and as you know in '38, or '36 it was, Alf Landon was losing everywhere and I was standing over there with Bob Schumacher, Doc Ferries come over to me and put his finger up to my nose, he said "you're to blame for all this, you're to blame for all this", (repeat); I said, "what in the hell are you talking about?" I said, "I'm only one, Doctor".

Paul: Ya, they tried to put it on one person

Chas. And then he went on to say "No. 3 precinct which was down at the Amphidrome at that time, that took care of East Houghton, he said to me, he says, "Yes, look at it, they're all Democrats down at that board!" I said, "You don't know your Republicans very well, do you?" I said, "East Houghton went Democrat in one census in the last 40 years, and they're not Democrats down there, and you name 'em" and he said something else but I wouldn't want to repeat that. Then he came back and he says, "I didn't mean that, Charlie", he says, "I've bought pillows and everything else from those people and I helped them a lot". I said, "The hell you didn't help anybody in your day but dictate". That ended that, they broke the whole thing up, well, that was one of the many things that I've gone thru here.

Paul: Were there very many Finnish people at all involved in the Democratic Party?

Chas. No, they weren't--

Paul: there were more Republicans then--

Chas. Some were Republican like the Johnson's and a few more of the business Finnish--they were Republicans and--

Paul: how about the miners themselves, the ones who could vote, the ones who became citizens, or did they go and vote, was it hard to get them to come out?

Chas. Well, let me tell you one thing: I remember an Irishman that was over on the City Council over in Hancock, was never a citizen! I'll never forget one time when I was on WPA, we were talking in the shack one day and a fellow by the name of Matt Mattson, he seemed to like me and I seemed to like him and he told me when he come over here at the turn of the century, he used to have to go up to Hurontown then and go across thru the sands, the Isle Royale sands and across up into Baltic, and he said, "Kalle, I no speak English, I get job in Baltic mine, down I go, everybody down, we have Finnish straw boss, then mining captain, shift boss, election day come around that mean nothing to me," and I says, "well, what do ya bring it up then ", he says, "I tell ya, you know us fellas all Democrat now, you know ", I says, "ya"
he says, "this day just before dinner mining captain come down, down, we were down
to no. 4 level and he says, everybody up, go vote, vote 'publican ticket' and I
say to shift boss, I say in Finnish, I no citizen, I can't vote, he say you go vote"
(laughter) and that's the way it was. There was no democrat who would dare hold
an office around here and that's why you were such a blackballed individual. And
then in '32 when we started to get together and John Salmi was the first democrat,
see Hamina was a republican, and later his son, Karl, run for treasurer on the democratic
ticket. Karl Hamina. And that's the way it started—people were so fearful of
the mining company, well, they were in this last strike,

the one in '68?——

Chas. Yes, they—instead of being afraid of the mining company, they were afraid of the
union leaders.

It went the other way

The pendulum swung all the way over. We should never had those mines close at
any price but those are the things that happen and then we got more and more Finnish
people interested in politics and then in 1932 or 33, George Harma from Atlantic
run for representative of this district, Houghton county had 2 districts, the
south and the north, and Fred Kappler was a Democrat and he got elected on the north
group and George Harma on the south group. George didn't last, I think, 2 terms, if
I remember right; Kappler lasted about 2 terms, and in '38 the choice of ballots
came in, otherwise, up to an including '38 or up to '38 you had to declare your
party when you went to the primary—see, and they gave you whatever you asked for
and that's why so many of the people wouldn't go and vote. They wouldn't ask for
their ticket because they were afraid of losing their job in the mine and they would
lose, many a man lost his job in the mine by being a democrat. My grand dad, O'Brien,
they were down at Keweenaw in the Cliff Mine and I remember him telling a story
how they were, they used to go down in buckets and pulled up in buckets and he tells
this story and his, Cornelius O'Brien, his word was as good as gold. I've heard
not only from him but hundreds of others and he told this story that they were
going down this day, on election day, they told him to go out and vote for the
fellow by the name of Billy Shea, an Irishman, for sheriff of Keweenaw County, and
his name was Billy Shea and they went down and came up at noon, that's when they
were working 12 hours a day, and they came up at noon and mining captain was
standing there and he said, "now everybody go and vote and vote for Billy Shea for
sheriff". My grand dad made this statement with 4 others out of the 12 that the
vote for Shea-Billy and cut their throats were the 2 last things they would do
and you know what the mining captain told them, he said, there's: the agent which
would be the paymaster and he says you go over there. And I never forget, his
young wife, he said, I guess they had 1 son, and they didn't know which way to turn,
there was no stores or anything, no credit or anything, and he said they went over
there and they got their last pay, I guess it was about $40 a month and he said he
went home and he was afraid to tell his wife, she was much younger than he and
they didn't know what to do. He said it was just like the bottom of the barrel fell
out and he said, the next day, when they got the results of the election, this
Shea-Billy or Billy Shea had lost! And at noon time, the call boy, they used to
have a call boy in those days, no telephones or anything, call boy came to the house
and told my grand dad that the mining captain wanted to see him. He went down and
the other 3 were called too and he said, Con, I admire you for the way you stood up
yesterday. He says, if it's alright with you, go back to work and he told the other
3 the same way, and that was the first fight that my immediate relatives ever told
me about in politics.
Paul: Where did political—like democratic party become stronger during the war then or after the war?

Chas. '32, when they had no place to turn to, all our mines were closed, industry and business was closing all over the United States and Roosevelt had lost in '28, no Smith had lost in '28, on the religious question, see, and then the depression came on in '29 and everything was closing from '29 on and Roosevelt come into the picture and what's his name, Bill Comstock run for, on the Democratic ticket for governor, he won and Roosevelt won and then this was in—he was inaugurated on March 4 and before April, all the banks were closed, you remember reading about that and Bill Comstock, under Bill Comstock, inaugurated the sales tax, 3% sales tax, and then we went along, he held office for '33-'34 and they had their election again and Fitzgerald won for governor and there were a lot of things there and then '38 he didn't finish his term, he died, and that guy that had the pipeline to heaven, he finished out, Dickinson, and he was a good governor. He was an anti-liquor, he was a dry, both ways and he wasn't one who would go behind the door and drink cider and think it was whiskey or drink whiskey and think it was cider, he was sincere and some of the cartoons that were out in those days had a line up to heaven, he had a pipeline up to heaven. But he was a good governor, don't let anybody tell you different. Then we got Murphy, a Democrat in '38, that's when we had the sitdown strikes in Flint and Detroit and all, then there was a change back to war.

How do you think the war affected the Copper Country, World War II?

Chas. World War II! Well, we had a boom.

The mines opened up again?

Chas. Oh, the mines were all opened up again

Paul: When did they open again, you said—

Chas. They started opening in the '30's, after '35, they started opening and getting bigger and bigger and they were all going pretty fair, but not too good. The Quincy opened up at that time and they run to about '47, C&H was running and there was a great demand for copper, when the men were going back to work I got disbursement officer in '41 and I was placement officer then, too, that I find a job for some guy on WPA and we took a goodly number of the men that were able and I'd send them over to Michigan Tech and put them over on the lathe and learn the lathe trade and then ship them to Milwaukee, well, you should have heard some of issues in those days but we busted up WPA altogether and men were all back to work more or less by '42, then I went to purchasing agent and employment officer for Waino Komula in Toivola.

Paul: What was he doing?

Chas. Logging. There's a fellow who deserves a lot of credit and he had the brains to get good men around, now that doesn't include me now, I'm not saying that, but he got a bookkeeper that was second to none—Onni Malila—I think he's associated with Suomi on the board, and he's a very brilliant young man and he got in there but Waino could organize, he got a fellow by the name of Aho as woods boss, that's the way he worked. That fellow had gone bankrupt and everything else, and he went into this thing at the right time, the right place and he did things, maybe a lot of other people can't see it but I could see it and I was pretty close to him and he was there for the viewing if anybody wanted to give him credit for it and I think he managed a lot more than a million dollars for himself and he spent it here. He, I
know several projects, he bought the DX gasoline wholesale outfit, he bought the first, built the first Naval Reserve over there, he bought the first Firestone Store here, and several others that he invested his money, he had the first sandwich shop on Quincy street after the big fire, he built that, Wallace added to that, he bought it from Wally and Eddie Yankovich run it for Waino Komula, so many other things the man did and he never got a bit of credit but—if Waino had done something just a little bit contrary to the thinking of a lot of people, why he was a no-good and everything else but I do believe, no matter, we all got out faults, I never saw anybody that's got all the brains and all the good virtues: in the world, and, but he was singled out at different times of which I defended him as much as I could and I think he should go down in history around here that he helped develop this community when it needed it.

Paul: Why have you stayed in the Copper Country all these years?

Chas. I love the Copper Country. The climate, the people, where could you find a more friendly people? I've been down to Lansing for 6 years and I didn't see any sign of it down there. I've been in practically every state in the union, I haven't been in, we made a trip this last February, Mom and I, we covered 21 states, 7,435 miles, and we saw every kind of people and I'll tell you, we couldn't get back home fast enough, we were down thru Florida and all those places and all thru, clear thru to Phoenix, Arizona. We drove it all, Mom drove about 150 miles, she drove over a long bridge coming into New Orleans, about a 5-mile bridge and she told me about it after, I was asleep—

Paul: Something like the Mackinaw Bridge

Chas. Much longer, and it was just as straight, there was some "overs" but this was straight over one of the bajous and we were glad to get back to the Copper Country and the snow! In the little bit in regard to my dealing in politics and business with the various nationalities, it has nothing to do with their ethnic background, it's the individual you are dealing with and there's good and bad in all of us and I've always said this in politics, if you ever want a good trimming, get it from your own! And it's true, the 6 years I put in Lansing, they were rich, the 3 years I put with the village of Houghton, we never operated one month in the red, always in the black, now they're over $800,000 in the hole, bonded and debted and they tell you they got money to buy a ________, it's so disgusting; Hancock, they always operated in the black more or less until the last 7-8 years so you see, this work progress with lot of rules but nobody can seem to be able to recognize it, there's nothing new in the Copper Country other than indebtedness and the closing of our mines which I think was the silliest thing, do you know just a little bit in this closing of the mines, in '59 White Pine was going down on a strike and they went on a strike and a bad one, they were off for several months and Bill Ryan, now the president up there in the bank in Ontonagon, Lawrence Walsh, got a hold of me by phone, they said, "Charlie, can you do something?" Well, I said, "I sure can try", and then I went in to see the Governor, I told the Governor the whole story, what can I do and that was Governor Williams, well I said with your contacts with the labor movement I think you can do it. Well, he says let me mull it over a little more, will ya? I says, but don't make it any longer than that, this is gone too far all together and a fellow by the name of Pat Trainor was in up there, then we had a man on the union that was in with us and we got the information from both sides because we weren't blaming anybody, you understand, Gene Saari was the International Union man and he and I had been at loggerheads for several years because I am the one who branded him as a Commie in this county, you know. I resigned as county
chairman, that's when he won nomination for Congress. He beat Frank Hook, "I think and the next morning I went in to see Governor Williams, ... and back to the strike I should say, and Governor Williams says I talked to Mr. McDonald, head of the Mine Workers and he says, he will get on it right away. And as I remember right now, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Greenberg, was the secretary and attorney for the United Mine Workers and he -- McDonald, in turn, instructed Greenberg to immediately get a hold of the people up here and get a meeting again; inside of 2 weeks they were back to work!

Paul: Mr. McManiman goes on to discuss strikes in the next tape.
Mr. McManiman discusses in this part of the tape in introducing a section to the strike of 1968-69 when the men gave away their powers or what he thought to be their powers and discretion and the--gives their power--voting power to 9 men who then use the power and which ended up in a strike which closed the mines. He goes on to discuss this now.

because that's all you got. What do you want to belong to a union for? If you're not going to have something to say in the final result that concerns your job and your family. Where are we going to go from here if people are going to be so gullible. Then they have a meeting up at the town hall there and it went the same way because they were afraid that somebody would come down and knock their block off. Well, a man should buy a rope and hang himself that hasn't got enough guts to stand up and be counted. There's nobody--I'm not afraid of anybody in this world! Other than God. Because all they can do is kill you and you're going to go that way some day and that's what happened. When I met Gene Saari in Houghton, we were on opposite sides of the fence all the time and I, he knew why I disliked him but I'll say this, Gene Saari was a brilliant a young man that ever came into the Copper Country. But he used his brilliance for something other than good, in my opinion, understand. Communism will never have a place in my yard at any time and I exposed him as such, Joe Donnelly got behind me on the radio and the same thing and he said the same thing but in 1969 when they closed the mines, I met Gene Saari down at the Houghton Post Office, but getting back to our feelings towards one another, he respected me and I respected him, for our work. When I met Gene in the Houghton Post Office and I said, Gene, what in the hell is going on up there? I said, why can't you people go back to work? He says, Charlie, you know me and I know you, yes, you told me one time that you would close every mine in the Copper Country if you didn't meet your demand. Well, that isn't so this time. He says this is the best offer I ever received from any mining company as long as I've been a union leader, well, I says, I've heard it said that that's what you said to others but I said, now you're telling me and you say, they're not going back to work, I says, why, Gene? He says, you'll have to go and ask those 9 little men up there. He says, I've told them it was the best offer I ever received and go back to work and work out the other little differences as the men are working. But you know the people of the Copper Country don't seem to grasp the enormity of this and the loss to so many people like the men on their pensions and all this kind of stuff, and the businessmen lost all this money, and you know what it's replaced with? $9 million of Social Security, that's what's coming in here for a little over 7,000 people. And over 3,000 people on welfare and about $6 million payroll at Tech of taxpayers money. Our schools, villages and cities, and what have you, that's our source of income.

Paul: What do you think this area needs now or what kind of feelings do you have about the area kind of for the future?

Chas. Well, I'm at a loss, maybe I'm too ignorant to the fact that education is going to revolutionize this whole thing. You know this airport up here, it's got under my skin, to the tune that we are a slipping county, depressed county, and some of our people went out and promoted over $6 million of taxpayers money to build an airport that would be good enough for a city of 200,000 people. Now, the airplane company, the last payment of 2 years ago, their contribution to the airport operation was about $43,000+ for a year, on the average of about 180 planes taking off and landing plus the administration building, if you want to call it that or the depot, and this new operation with hangars and everything else and a new building, to hold the new equipment that will be necessary, as close as I can figure it will run between
$15,000 and $18,000 a month to maintain that. I see where Escanaba has just raised their rates, it was in the paper last week, the landing and the costs to the airplane company and I heard no talk about it. The people right now are paying 2 mills on their tax value towards the airport as sponsors contribution which amount to about $6-7 thousand, well, where will $6-7 hundred-thousand go if we're going to have to pay $15-18 thousand a month times 12, 12 times 15 is $180 thousand a month, a year, all right and 2 mills on our total evaluation as of next year will probably be about $144 thousand.

aul: What other feelings do you have about the future in this area?

Chas. Well, the only thing that is good for the Copper Country, from my observation and my connections in state, local and dealing with men in Washington and big business men throughout the country, we have to concentrate--everything--in one area that's going to go into one specific piece of machinery or anything else. Like our hospitals are proving it. You have your clinics, all hospitals build around your clinics, aren't they, our automobiles, the engines are made here; you go down to Baraga, that'll give you an insight of what's going on, with 4 feeder to the Pettibone-Milliken and we have the copper here but our forefathers never were foresighted enough and never had the nerve, as we go back to the same story again, that the mining people "run the roost". See, if people would have said like they did over in Canada, all the minerals belong to the natives of this Copper Country, don't they, wouldn't you think so as an American, all right, if our forefathers said that at that time, that if you're going to take this out of here, all foreign money, if you're going to take all this red metal out of here, silver was the bonus all the time from our Copper Country, Quincy Mining Company made plenty on silver.

aul So does White Pine now

Yes. Silver City! and what we should have done was put an immediate mineral tax and a tonnage tax and then made a provision like I remember in the '40's when Canada had a lot of timber over there and Kekoosa-Edwards and different other ones-- Consolidated wanted to go over and cut that timber--they were told, you want to manufacture so much of it here and use Canadian labor, that's what we should have said to the mining companies. We manufactured it here and you use all of our Copper Country labor. That's one way of preserving it. Now all we are is a little Fort Knox for the powers that be that live in Chicago, New York, and elsewhere. Did you read Mr. DeMotts' article? He just touched on it on Saturday, now, I don't know how you feel about Demotts or anything but he's got his information from somebody but he didn't get it deep enough that he could prove it. And you know, like me talking here, I wouldn't dare put something on there that I couldn't prove. And that's the way I look at it and--

Paul Think the mining company will come back?

'es, very much so. And we're not ready for them again

aul Have you got the 'sure plan" for 'em?

All the minerals are still down there and they say we have much more minerals today or known minerals, let's put it that way, minerals have always been there, but what they should do is put a mineral tax immediately on all minerals owned or by the mining company and then a tonnage tax, a mineral tonnage tax because they're gonna manufacture, they're going to mine, mill and smelt everything down there, there are new
processes and we should be ready for them to take care of boys so that you don't have to leave the Copper Country; that's all that I'm worried about, I'm on my way; I'm past 72 and let me tell you this, that if the people don't get upon and think pretty soon our businessmen have got too much lead in their pants; they don't want to offend somebody, when so many people have got to offend so many others that are doing wrong and if that's offending 'em for the masses then I'm all wet from the day I started in politics!

Paul: Do you think there's any possibility of anything coming into the Copper Country?

Chas. I can't see why any other commodity, look at our timber in the '40's, we were shipping out at Komula's alone, we were shipping out from 115 to 125 thousand log feet of timber every day from the Toivola landing, now there was at least 6 others shipping timber every day and this goes back to the '90's when we made Grand Rapids what they are today. So many other ______, most of our copper was even-- the electric lidi-copper was all set up and milled and smelted in Buffalo

Paul: taken by ships out of here'

Chas. Ya, their own C&H ships, the Flagg, the Mourner and the Warner and the Thompson. And this was all done and our people just don't have enough nerve to use their right as politics to demand this right now. I had to go to Lansing, when was it, the 7th of June, no, or before that I went down for a Senate reunion, and I went to our Senator Mack and I said, I wanted a statement on this new Gem revaluation and reassessment and he called Mr. Hartenberg and I have letters to prove it, the mining companies are equal to you and me now as far as our properties are concerned and they're to be assessed by the local assessor other than the 2 exempted properties and that's the Kingston and the Centennial Mines. And the given area there. I have letters to cover all that and have you heard one statement of our board of commissioners what they're going to do? Not a thing! Have you heard one of our businessmen say a thing? No. The UOP folks transfer their operational rights over to Homestake and we'll be open in the same ol' place the same ol' way every day from now on in, only we'll be reaping a much bigger harvest in money and material. Well, then how can any businessman making a little better than the average working man today face these young people? How can he?

What kind of feelings do you have about the years that you've lived now, over 72 you said?

Chas. That's right.

Paul: What kind of feelings do you have about life? Or I don't know what you could call it, I suppose, some place they call it philosophy of life or just, what kind of reactions do you have after living these years?

At my age, do you know what I'm doing? I've got lots of work around here on these 46 acres. I wish you could come out in the day time and see what we've got out here and I can get several hours every day in here, that wasn't enough for me because I had served the public all my life, see, I'd have been talking to myself and probably out in the cemetery by now if I'd a stayed here, and I went down to the Gazette one day and I said to Irene down there "Irene, have you got a job for an old buck like me around here?" She said, "Ya, I got a job alright but there's only one for 2-3 hours a day". She said, "but you wouldn't take it". I said, "let me decide what I'll take" and she told me what she had; made to order for me, it
wasn't the money so much, it was meeting the public

Paul: Doing something
Memoirs of Charles Meinneman

CHILDHOOD DAYS

My parents were originally from Canada. After they married they moved to a village. Blacksmith (his own shop). My father worked as a Village Blacksmith. Mother and Father raised 6 children - 3 boys and 3 girls. Whenever anyone became ill, Dr. Parker came to the home.

The toughest problem we faced was another child born in Hubbard many years later. Robert.

As a family we took part in picnics, hikes, and music. The teacher who influenced me was Miss Martin. She taught me grammar, spelling, and how to read.

The good times we had were when we went on picnics and hikes.

MAKING MY MARK

When I started on my own, I left home to get married (1921). Since then I have worked as a train agent. I was on the train crew for 30 years. I voted for U.S. President in 1924.

Getting married

The local minister often visited, people were religious.

The people in our neighborhood were friendly and clean.

For a good time we used to go on picnics every Sunday.

People got riled up here when the mines began closing.

In our community we locked up the law enforcement.

My biggest accomplishment was helping pass bills for safer conditions. I went to the state senate for this area.

REFLECTIONS

Today my feeling about life is that it is short, so let's make the most of it. I believe a better world is possible.

In this area we need more entertainment and more people to enjoy it.

Visitors who come here should enjoy it.

My prediction for the future of this area is that it will continue to grow.

Collecting these memories about bygone days is a way to compare with today.
Suomi salutes the people who make this area great

Mother
a. Beulah Olha
b. Housewife

c. 

Father
a. Earl Nye
b. Farmer

c. Stenographer

Child
a. Patricia
b. Green Bay

c. Housewife

Mother
a. Antich Nye
b. Finland

c. Housewife

Child
a. 

b. 

c. 

Name of Person

Charles O'Brien

Note:
- Child a: Married
- Child b: Married
- Child c: Married