FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978
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Cabbage Grown profusely
Subject: "History of the Froberg Area of the Sturgeon River Valley"

Respondent: Emil Pelto

Comments:

I: It's October 1, 1974, we're sitting here in Emil Pelto's trailer which sits just off the Froberg road next to the Sturgeon River in Pelkie. It's a very cool fall day, we had our first snowfall already, and we're going to sit here and talk about Emil and his life. Who was your father, Emil?

R: August Pelto.

I: Was he from Finland?

R: Yeah, yeah.

I: Where in Finland was he from?

R: Verikarvia.

I: Where is that?

R: I think that's a city or is that a... it's probably a close to the middle part of the...

I: What did your dad do for a living in Finland before he came here.

R: Well, he came here quite young, he was about 18, I think, but when he was a youngster he used to haul... hauling stuff with a horse and sleigh... down town

I: He was the equivalent of a trucker.

R: Yeah.

I: Was the only thing they had at that time... what about his father, what did his father do for a living?

R: I don't know much about him... my father never spoke of things in Finland, I don't know why... Martti, neighbor across the river there, he used to come and visit and they'd spend all evening talking about Finland... I liked to listen to them... but he never mentioned about his father that I can remember of.

I: Why did he come here... big decision to move to another country.

R: Well, I think, come to think of it, his father wasn't living 'cause Grandma came to this country some time afterward and Ed Pelto, his brother, ten years later... you know, after my father.

I: Well, when did your father come here then? About?
R: Well, you put that map down.

I: So he was born in 1869 and he came here in 1887. Where did he come first when he first came to the United States?

R: He came to Canada...worked on building a railroad there and driving spikes into ties.

I: Where was this in Canada, do you recall?

R: I don't know, I don't know where...he used to tell about he had a pretty good trick, very few people probably could do it because he used to be able to jump out of a barrel, a tar barrel, straight out...he used to tell about that.

I: Jump out of it...you mean, as kind of a feat, something he could...

R: Yeah, well, there isn't much chance, you know, to jump, he gotta jump straight up out of it.

I: He was in pretty good shape at the time?

R: I guess so, he always was in good shape...he was a strong man.

I: Well, when he came here where did he come first...I mean, to the United States.

R: As far as I know Ishpeming, he worked in the mine in Ishpeming.

I: Do you have any idea when this was...how old he was?

R: Well, probably...right around twenty.

I: So it must have been about 1889 to about 1890 when he was in Ishpeming working in the iron mine. Do you recall the name of the mine he used to work in?

R:

I: How long was he there?

R: Well, then in...oh, 1901 he moved to Alston to homestead.

I: Was he married at the time then?

R: Yeah, they had six children...five children, one of them was born there...more than one...wait a minute, there wasn't six when they went there because they had...they had eight when they left there...and they were there six years...they are all two years apart, so...so they had five when they went there.

I: When did your father marry then? When he was over in this country?

R: Yeah.

I: In Canada?
R: No, I think in Ishpeming.

I: What was your mother's name?

R: Maria...her sur.

I: Maiden name.

R: Maiden name was Lamppi.

I: Where was she from?

R: Well, they used to tell Korteni, I think that was the place where she was from, Korteni.

I: Did she ever tell you about her family life there? What her father did?

R: No...I know less of her family than my father's mother came to this country...she lived to be a little over ninety years old and...

I: Must have really been something to move into the woods, as you said the last time with a big family like that, right smack in the middle of the woods...can you recall anything?

R: I never did...I didn't live there...I was born here.

I: Do you ever recall them talking about what it was like living way back in there?

R: Well, yeah...they had cleared quite an area there and lot of that stuff they had to burn, you know, good logs, good trees, in order to make a clearing.

I: What kind of wood was in that spot?

R: Hardwood maple, real beautiful hard maple...Waisanen boys always tell of how good timber there was there, tall, straight...

I: Like how thick were some of them?

R: Oh, they were big, virgin timber.

I: I've never seen virgin hardwood.

R: Well, they were, they grow up to two feet, I suppose.

I: Two feet! Do you see them like that anymore?

R: There's not very many...and he made cordwood, too, there was a good demand for cordwood in Ishpeming and all the cities around and people used to heat with wood and the mines used a lot of cordwood.

I: And in Houghton and Hancock all the miners heated with wood at the time...he made cordwood off the wood that was on his land?
Well, not really because he bought a forty close to the railroad... because that was behind the Otter and there was an awful hill to go down and up again... couldn't hardly haul cordwood out of there.

Burning all that beautiful timber, must have made some fire... did he ever talk about clearing it... must have been rough, what did he have when he first went in there as far as equipment and tools are concerned?

Well, I don't imagine he had anything but a horse and probably some grubshoes and...

Couple axes... crosscut saw?

Yeah... the Township gave him and Juntunen, the neighbor there, contract to build a bridge across the Otter and they sawed the plank with a hand plank saw, you know...

Hand plank saw?

Yeah, you go up and down like this, see...

I've never seen one of those.

... you saw the planks by hand, I got the saw over there yet... in the tool shed.

I'll have to see that sometime, I've never heard of that... they made a bridge in the Otter then?

Yeah, they first made a cribbing, couple cribbings, then they put stringers across... and sawed the plank for the...

Actual surface stuff, eh?

For the deck.

Who was this Juntunen?

He was another homesteader there... there was about... there was about five homesteaders there.

They all had four forties?

I imagine so... they built the school there, a one-room school, there was about four kids in there, I guess, one year, first year... two of our boys and couple of Juntunen girls.

What was that about your dad's house?

Oh, they used to tell how well-made it was, hewed from big logs, they were probably eight foot and a half in diameter... and they were hewed both sides...

It was one of those dovetail corner buildings, right?
R: Yeah...they used that for...when they logged there, Hillier logged there, well, they used that but then some hunters burned it down.

I: That's a shame...it was probably still in pretty good shape, too, wasn't it?

R: Oh, I imagine so...I never did see it

I: Back to the kind of community they had there, did they have any road into there?

R: Well, not very much of a road...they did have some kind of a road, yeah, they had a road there because they built that bridge in.

I: Where did this road go, where according to today's landmarks?

R: Well, do you know where the North Laird, that hill is that you go up from Waiaanen's up...and then there's a four-road crossing there...you turn north on that four-road, turn to the right when you're going up there.

I: I've never gone that way...does that road go all the way to the homesteads today?

R: Yeah, you can go there that way...but you can go around the other way, too, from Horoscope, you know, from...

I: Oh, what they call the Prisoners' Road?

R: Horoscope Road and then there's some branches off and I guess they're old logging roads...but the way you traveled to Alston was...well, I'm not sure now if it did go to that corner because...it might have gone little bit farther west.

I: So five families were in there and they had very poor roads...they could drive wagons in and out of there, though, eh?

R: Oh, you know that's the only thing there was in those days.

I: That was about one of the most isolated homesteads around here, right?

R: I think so.

I: I mean, it seems whenever people in the Pelkie area even today think of homesteads they think of that homestead when actually this whole area was homesteaded at one time but if you say, "Where are the homesteads?", they will point in the area where your father's homestead was so evidently that was one of the later homesteads in a very isolated area. Do you recall any stories your dad used to tell about things that happened back in there?

R: No, I don't know, maybe it was too rough a life and he didn't want to talk about it, maybe...at least he never told me...I don't know why he didn't...my brother John would know because he went school there even at that one-room school... 'cause everybody has left there.

I: Autio country?
R: Autio.
I: Autio...and what's the translation of that means abandoned?
R: Deserted...or nobody living, no in evidence.
I: When did your dad move out of there?
R: 1907.
I: Did all the other families move out at the same time?
R: I think so, yeah...pretty much the same time.
I: Were there any tragedies back in there that forced them out?
R: No, I don't think so.

I: I heard that they had some problem in getting a road in there...they thought they might at one time get a good road in there and for some reason they were unable and they were forced to abandon it for that reason...the Otter River hill was the big obstacle to remaining there, it was very difficult to get in and out at certain times of the year in the spring and in the winter and it was virtually impossible in those times and perhaps at any time during the course of the year to haul needed supplies in there.

R: Yeah, that's the thing.
I: So they came out here to the Sturgeon country around 1907, right?
R: Yeah.
I: And your dad started to farm?
R: Yeah, he...they raised a lot of cabbage here in those days....right after that, and maybe even before that because Olsen and Lundin lived here and I think they were already raising cabbage then.

I: What was this Olsen man like?
R: What was he like? He was a Norwegian...he was quite a hustler, too, he used to work at the Mill in Baraga and he'd walk home morning and evening, he'd walk back and forth morning and evening...that's about nine miles from here...just along a trail, no road hardly...and he'd carry groceries home...I don't know how he could, you know, working at a mill all day.

I: How long is that walk from where he lives?
R: Well, along the road now it's about nine miles.
I: One way...that means he hoofed it probably about twenty miles, maybe not quite as much.
R: Almost that.
I: Along probably little more than a trail?

R: Just about...not much more than that.

I: Do you walking on any of those trails when you were young? Or were there all roads in here?

R: Roads of a fashion...I remember like going toward Baraga, you had to go through that swamp and that was a...I remember when we hauled cabbage across there the wagons were right up to the hubs in that mud.

I: Did you have to abandon the cabbage?

R: No, they hauled the cabbage to the cars, loaded them on cars...we had a picture of that Froberg siding when there was teams lined up alongside of boxcars, they were loading the boxcars with cabbage.

I: Do you still have that picture?

R: I think Kaino's got it now.

I: I'll try to get it from him...how many acres did your dad start off with here?

R: Four forties, 160 acres.

I: How much was he planting at the time...cabbage?

R: About...turning around five acres, something like that.

I: Do you recall anything about the marketing strategy at the time, where was it being sold?

R: Yeah, that was something that marketing in those days...wish it was like that now...the wholesalers from the Copper Country they'd gather, they'd call up all the people to a certain house and they brought goodies with them, grapes and all kinds of fruits...kids really enjoyed that...and they'd sit down and arrive at a price, you know, for the fall's cabbage crop...that was pretty nice of them...they don't do that now.

I: Wholesalers would come out here, eh?

R: That was Godfrey and Sons...the ones that used to do that.

I: Where were they located?

R: Hancock, I think.

I: So he'd come out and he'd treat you to a fruit party of goodies and of course that also kind of got him on the good side of you, too, so he probably got a better price...I imagine they did quite well coming out here.

R: I suppose they had to but they paid pretty fair price, too.
I: What was cabbage going for at the time, do you recall?

R: Quite often when Godfrey was buying it was somewhere around $20.

I: For?

R: A ton.

I: How many cabbage to a ton? On the average?

R: Well, 2,000 pounds...that'd be about...oh, about...maybe 800 or something like that.

I: Cabbage generally weighs then about 2 1/2 pounds?

R: I suppose, yeah...well, lot of times it's 5 pounds even.

I: Average cabbage is about?

R: According to the number that you plant, well, that's about all you get out of it is 2 1/2 pounds.

I: You have to plant a lot of cabbage just to grow a few, right? I mean, a lot of them die out or don't quite make it?

R: Yeah, there goes about close to 10,000 to an acre...Dad used to plant 50-60,000 cabbage...they planted them by hand, too...boy, those old time planters they...you know, with a hand planter and another one dropping the plant...some of them would plant 10,000 plants in a day.

I: Sure were moving.

R: 'Course they had somebody hauling, bringing the plants to them and bringing the water, they couldn't go after plants themselves...to get that many of them.

I: Generally one person was digging the hole?

R: No, they had a planter you probably never seen a cabbage planter...it's about 2 feet, 2 1/2 feet high...with a compartment for water and a tube in front there for where you dropped the plant...and on the handle there's a little nipple, knob that you press for water...and then a clip that you open the jaws...when you raise it up so the plant would get left there...so you press that planter in the ground and you squeeze the water...and then raise it up...and 10,000 plants in a day, well, that's quite an accomplishment.

I: How do you do it now?

R: We have a tractor-drawn planter where two people sit down and there's a wheel that goes around with clips on it and you put the plants in that clip, in those clips, and it drops, it automatically releases some water at the proper time some the plant is down there.

I: So this was cabbage country...did he also have a dairy herd?
R: Yeah, they had...not a big one in those early days...about ten cows, maybe...and later on we had...well...in Dad's time we didn't have very big of a herd, about 17, maybe...then later on I had about 33, as many as 33, that's the most I had...milking cows.

I: When was this...first, that your father died? When did your father die?

R: 1945.

I: And then you took over the farm?

R: Yeah.

I: And you got up to about 33, that's a pretty big herd, isn't it?

R: Well, yeah, that isn't in today's standards but...in those days that was about...

I: About as much as a man could handle.

R: About as much as.

I: Were you at your limits on it...I mean, were you right at the point where you had a big operation and that was it?

R: Well, that's all the barn would probably...well, even then you had to arrange around for...quite a bit for hay and feed...takes a lot of pasture and hay for that many cows...then you got your young stock. I had about 72 head altogether.

I: Quite an operation...well, that railroad, going back again in time now, really helped out this area, it made it possible for the marketing of, transporting of, cabbage.

R: Oh, yeah.

I: And were there also some potatoes grown out here, weren't there?

R: Yeah, we raised...we raised quite a few potatoes...we had that warehouse...farmers organized an association...called it the Sturgeon Valley Truckgrowers...and the Government during WPA days they built that warehouse there...and one end was for potatoes and the other end was for cabbage....I think 13 acres was the most we had of potatoes at one time.

I: Did you ever work in that warehouse?

R: Did I ever work? Oh, yeah.

I: What jobs did a man have to do who was working there? Were you paid by someone?

R: No, no, you rented a bin and then...you rented the bins and...the association would rent bins to the farmers...the only work there was there was like on your own produce, grading potatoes and bagging cabbage and stuff like that...you had to...generally you had to trim the cabbage quite a bit when it stood in there for awhile...I remember one year we got $7 a ton shipped to Chicago.
I: That's a lot of work, isn't it? For that $7 a ton.

R: Sure was.

I: Well, what about this association that ran this cabbage thing? Was it just, the association was a group of farmers?

R: Yeah.

I: Who started that thing?

R: Well, I guess the...sparkplugs probably were Olaf Olsen and Otto Lundin...some of these farmers around here.

I: What was Lundin's first name?

R: Otto.

I: Otto...what kind of a man was he...you told me about Olsen.

R: Well, he was a...he was a second generation of Lundin's already...his father before him was a great vegetable raiser...I think they made...my father said he made a lot of money on that farm raising vegetables.

I: Where was the Lundin farm according to today's property ownership?

R: Where was it?

I: Where would it be now, yeah.

R: Well, it's a mile east and then a mile north where that corner over there...where you turn up towards the Bellaire hill...there's a road that goes north...go up to the river there...there used to be an iron bridge there, it still is there but the deck is...maybe no deck on there now.

I: Oh, yeah, I was back there once with Don Shirley, we were duck hunting up back there.

R: They had a beautiful house there right along the river bank there.

I: They must have been one of the first ones in this area?

R: Yeah.

I: Well, what was Otto Lundin like?

R: Well, he was...he was real...he was the supervisor of the township for quite a few years and on the school board and...he raised...then when he moved away from the river he went up on the Bellaire hill there and he was pretty strong in heavy in potatoes...raising potatoes...and then he put up a...a freezer plant.

I: A freezer plant?
R: Yeah...in Baraga...lockers.

I: He was quite an operator, eh?

R: He had one, some of the first cars around here, too...he had the Maxwell, couple Maxwells...he used to give the boys a ride, they'd go to the Grange Hall...there used to be dances there...they had to push that Maxwell up the Bellaire hill...then when they'd get up on the hill he would say that, "Jump on, boys"...I wouldn't mind having that Maxwell right now, today.

I: It'd be quite a car...what's so special about the soil here that it really grows cabbage and grows just about anything...Sturgeon Valley seems to be pretty good soil.

R: It is...I suppose it built up, you know, from the silt here...and the river has built it up with silt...it seems that things that grow here are better flavor than...maybe I just think so...but they're sweet, everything is sweet, you know, cabbage and carrots, rutabagas...some place you raise rutabagas and they are bitter but here they're sweet.

I: The water table's not very deep down, is it?

R: No, it's only...well, I suppose five, six feet but in the olden days all they did for water was drive a pipe about 12 feet in the ground.

SIDE TWO

R: No, it would rust...like in a barn, especially...our water in the house wasn't too bad, my father used to brag about it...it was really, really good when you pumped for a while and it was cold, it seemed to be colder than the, from the deep well.

I: That 12 foot water?

R: We got a well now that's 272 feet and it's only 45 degree water.

I: What about frosts in this area? It's especially bad for that, isn't it?

R: Well, not really, it isn't as bad as in Pelkie...like that one frost that killed things in Pelkie we still had green potatoes until this last one, you know, the other Monday, went down to the 20s.

I: What is it? It has nothing to do with being very close to the river...that warms up the...

R: It might be...there's sloughs around here...rivers and...

I: The water temperature kind of hovers out and keeps the area immediately around it.

R: I imagine, I imagine it does...probably fog rises up from there and stuff like that...dew.
I: It's also good in a draught, right? I mean, you grow things here along.

R: Yeah, when it's dry that's when the oats really you get a good crop of oats here...in dry season.

I: 'Cause you get a heavy dew here, right, in the summer and that helps a lot.

R: Yeah, like with cabbage, even, that dew collects on those leaves and comes down the leaves to the row.

I: Helps it along...O.K., after these Godfrey Brothers were buying the cabbage here who started buying it after them...or who also became involved in...

R: Well, Cohodas got into the produce business and...he was altogether a different kind of an operator...'course I don't suppose I should say anything.

I: Sure, tell your experiences, we're after historical truths, I've heard it before anyway about Cohodas.

R: Well, his line always was he can get it from Wisconsin if we don't want to sell it at a certain price...at his price...which he does, that's competition, I suppose that's the way business is done nowadays.

I: Did you ever call his bluff on it?

R: Oh, I don't remember....I guess they did sometimes...hold out and then he'd come up with his price.

I: But as you recall you remember a lot of grumbling about it, eh?

R: Yeah, they...they didn't...there was not very much love for Cohodas

I: He wouldn't have won an election here eh?

R: Hardly.

I: Except maybe watchkeeper of the most mosquito-infested slough, eh?

R: But I suppose for consumers he was a good man, you know, he gets a lot of produce...and anyway farmers around here couldn't have furnished year-around, you know, although in those days they...

I: Wait, what's this about year-round, you have special advantages if you can furnish cabbage year-round?

R: Well, yeah, you would have to do that...wouldn't be very good if you just had cabbage for a couple months.

I: Oh, that's so you can get some sort of regular deal on with the seller, eh? You know, like say I'll supply all your cabbage.

R: Yeah...you'd have to have a good storage place to keep your cabbage stay good...furnish...furnish most of the year, have it way late in the spring anyway.
I: That was the idea of the warehouse, right...I mean, they were unloading stuff out of there in the winter, weren't they?

R: Yeah.

I: I bet that there was a lot of food in that warehouse.

R: Yeah...well, farmers...pretty hard to organize them, you know, they...maybe one would say that, "Well, I've developed a market throughout the years" and he wouldn't want to go in with the rest of them...he'd...they tried to organize so that all the sales would go through the organization...but there were a few that held out, you know, didn't want to lose their old customers...so it didn't work out very good.

I: The idea was to minimize the competition between...

R: Between farmers, yeah...like when everybody had cabbage, well, then one would go and say, "Well, I'll give you cabbage for this so-and-so price"...then another one would come along and say, "Well, I'll furnish it a little bit cheaper, stuff like that.

I: As you recall...

R: Broke up the organization.

I: Now you're talking about all the way back to 1907 or so, I mean, in the early 19s, pre-1920 days, they were selling cabbage out of here, right?

R: Well, yeah, that warehouse didn't come in until in the 30s when WPA was.

I: But you were selling cabbage before then?

R: Yeah, that's when they really sold cabbage...more than later...'cause there were people living in the Copper Country, those miners, I don't know what nationality they really were...

I: Croations.

R: Yeah, they made barrels of sauerkraut, big families then...

I: It was a very important part of their diet.

R: They sold cabbage by the carloads out there.

I: And Godfrey and Sons bought all this stuff from you?

R: Yeah, they handled it.

I: No one else did, I mean, were there any farmers hauling their own in...wagon-loads in?

R: No, no, not then.
I: It was just too far....

R: There wasn't any trucks then...nobody had trucks...and that railroad...they operated different than they do now, too, 'cause they'd stop a whole train just...you could flag them down for to ship a milk can...a can of cream, a five-gallon can of cream, maybe.

I: Lots of luck doing that today, eh, on the train...well, if the farmers were competing against one another when did they form the association?

R: That must have been in the 1930s 'cause WPA, isn't that when WPA was run, yeah...they built that warehouse...they organized an association right away.

I: Oh, at that time?

R: After the warehouse was built.

I: I see...were there ever resentments among the farmers here over competition, economic competition...I'm not asking for specific names but just talking about the emotional climate in general.

R: No, it never caused any...that you could notice, you know, any hard feelings...I suppose there was some...as far as I can recall there wasn't any enemies or...

I: No, not enemies, but were there some slightly more than mild dislikes?

R: Well, maybe deep down.

I: But it was generally suppressed...

R: Everybody probably understood that in order to sell your cabbage you had to...market at maybe a little lower price than your neighbor.

I: They all understood that...would they still visit one another and be friends with one another, though?

R: Yeah.

I: I mean, do you ever recall visiting breaking down...over...

R: No, no, I don't think so.

I: Did the cabbage farmers used to help one another out?

R: Well, I guess they all had their...it had to be planted and all the work had to be done at a certain time so they were all busy on their own, I guess...I remember my brothers did do quite a bit of planting for others...like there was an old bachelor that lived out there...I don't know was he old but later on he was old anyway...by Lundin's, down where Lundin's lived...my brothers used to plant for him.

I: What was this guy's name, do you recall?
R: They used to call him Alphonse, Alphonski... I don't know was that his first name or was that his last name.

I: What if an early frost came and wiped out a bunch of guys' cabbages would the other farmers get together and help them?

R: Only once that happened that they froze after they were planted... that was the year that my brother Waino went in the service... first World War... I remember they had a going-away party for him that night and there was a real heavy frost and the cabbage froze.

I: When the cabbage froze that was serious business in those days, wasn't it?

R: Well, yeah, you were done for that year... your plants were gone.

I: And you couldn't afford another crop, eh?

R: No... I suppose nowadays you could order plants from South but not in those days.

I: Where did you get your plants in those days?

R: They grew them themselves.

I: Where? Did they have greenhouses?

R: No, early cabbage was raised... they made what they call coldframe... it was made a wooden frame with window glass on top, you know, like storm windows.

I: And the sun shines in and warms it up, eh?

R: For early cabbage, but the late cabbage is planted right out in the field, open... on May 12, about May 12 it should be drilled in, you know, seeded... cabbage...

I: Both early and late cabbage?

R: The late cabbage, early cabbage you put in earlier... so your plants would be ready to transplant... oh, first part of June, I suppose.

I: And they were already started pretty well out then?

R: Yeah, they'd have to be about six weeks old.

I: So you're already in April starting them, eh... April 15 or so... imagine the cattle like eating those cabbage... I bet you fed more than one cow on cabbage. Does your milk taste like sauerkraut after you do that?

R: Well, like when the cabbage is cut in the fall they turned the cows into there to eat the leaves... at first, first couple days you could taste that but then... maybe you got used to it or something.

I: I imagine that's very good for the cows, isn't it?

R: Oh, they really milked.
I: It contains a lot of nutrients the cows need?

R: Yeah...succulent feed.

I: Where did you go to school?

R: We had a little one-room school house here about a half a mile, not quite half a mile, west, across the road from where my brother Charlie's house is there.

I: And that was called the Froberg School?

R: Pelto's School.

I: Pelto's School? Was there also a Froberg School?

R: No...there was a Bellaire School up on the hill up there.

I: Who were some of your classmates, do you recall?

R: Oh, Eskola, Eileen Eskola and Ida Eskola and Adrian Heinonen...that school was, probably was as many as fifty kids there sometimes...one teacher, one room...eight grades.

I: Who were some of your teachers...do you recall, starting with the earliest year?

R: Well, Milga Heikkinen, Theresa Scrantany and Ida Simula...Irene McMillan...

I: Any more?

R: I don't think I had any more than that.

I: That's pretty good...when did this Pelto's School start?

R: Gee, I don't know...can't remember...well, I was four years old when I started school...and that would have been in 1913...probably around 1910 or something like that.

I: Did you have your own...

R: When my brothers first, when they first moved to down here on the homestead, my brothers and sisters they used to walk, have to walk, up to the Bellaire hill school, it's about a mile and a half...more than a mile and a half.

I: Were a lot of French people living up on Bellaire hill?

R: Yeah, they were all mostly French up there then.

I: Were there any problems in those old days with the French and the Finnish getting along together?

R: Not really, no...few of them used to...there was some that...one, especially, that would take things.
I: Like the tools you'd leave in the woods.

R: Yeah.

I: Yeah, I heard about that...but did those people speak French?

R: Yeah.

I: They were speaking French at that time and people here were speaking Finnish? So there wasn't too much understanding, was there?

R: Well, those Frenchmen they spoke English, too...I think, yeah, they all did. young Frenchmen and Finns, they used to fight some quite a bit...they'd meet over there at the siding, at the Froberg siding, and fight.

I: Where's Froberg siding?

R: That's where the warehouse was right here...you know, where that road goes to Hamer...

I: I know where it is...they'd get together and have it out there?

R: Yeah, sometimes they'd get into scraps.

I: Pretty big ones, I mean, were a lot of guys there?

R: No, just between a couple, you know...between some Finnish kid and a French kid.

I: Do you remember any of those scraps?

R: I wasn't much of a fighter...I was scared of those French kids.

I: Who used to scrap with them?

R: Carl Liimatainen did quite a bit of that.

I: Carl was a goodscrapper with the French? Who among the French used to scrap with Carl?

R: Well, Leo LeClaire was about the, probably the...

I: Toughest guy around there?

R: Toughest guy yeah.

I: But Carl was a good second?

R: Yeah, most likely, because Carl was quite a bit smaller...Carl wasn't scared of him, though...but I was...boy, when I was at the, I'd be at the siding and I'd see them coming down the hill, boy, I didn't like it.

I: If they would have got you, would they have done you in?
R: I don't know...I don't think so, it was just a...probably not used to meeting different people.

I: You'd get a flood out here sometimes in the spring, wouldn't you?

R: Oh, yeah.

I: I mean they were worse than they are now, right?

R: Yeah...one year, even, a whole mess of logs came into our field...my dad skid them into the river, the company, lumber company paid him for skidding them back into the river.

I: A lot of farmers weren't quite so, shall we say, honest or helpful toward the lumber companies in those days, I know many a sauna was built from logs that came to the foot of the Sturgeon in the springtime.

R: There's still one log down the river down there that came up on the sandbar, it's real well-preserved and you, the scalers' marks even are clear on the end of the log.

I: Whose log is it?

R: I don't know, I think...it must be that...what was that lumber company in Chassell that...

I: Worcester?

R: Worcester, yeah...'cause there's a three, like a three-leaf clover on that scalers' mark and then a 12...12 must mean the length of it...

I: I could find out...do you think I could get a photograph of that? Would you take me where it is?

R: Yeah, I can do that.

I: Not right now, but sometime...do you remember guys coming down on a river drive?

R: Yeah, those were exciting days when the log drive came down...they used to pitch their tent even here right here where our house...for many days...they used to treat us kids to especially hard-boiled eggs, boy, they ate a lot of hard-boiled eggs, those log drivers...they had a tent, a cook tent, you know, and a cook along with them...for to drive down there...sometimes the logs would jam up and kind of exciting...when the logs would jam, well, that's what would make a big flood then, all that water would...

I: Oh, I imagine.

R: ...break up and

I: Just like a beaver dam...blocked the river, in a sense.
R: Boy, they were quite some guys, those log drivers...I heard that the first thing in the morning they'd duck themselves, get all wet.

I: They figured they would anyway, might as well not endure the agony slowly but get it over with.

R: I suppose the water don't feel so cold when your clothes are wet...and your skin gets used to it.

I: They were just wearing woolens, though, right...like you got on now, woolen underwear, maybe, and then a woolen shirt?

R: Oh, yeah.

I: Do you remember any of them? Did you have any friends among them?

R: No.

I: Do you remember any log-jams that they had to bust around here?

R: Yeah, I remember some log-jams.

I: How did they usually bust them?

R: Well, there would generally be a key log that would be...if you got a hold of that, found that, why, start moving...there's an awful lot of power in that water when it starts backing up...I remember a few years ago when that river cut right here on Kamarainen's land...it cut across it and a narrow, long point and...and then there was some, it wasn't very wide yet, and there was some trees there and the ice jammed up there...and I thought that ice would never move until it melted out...but it didn't take long when the water started rising and there was a big crash and the ice started moving, boy, that was...some of those cakes would come up on land, you know, and they'd plow the earth just like a bulldozer...then cakes.

I: Lot of force in that spring thaw and high water, you know.

R: Sure is...we used to go to school along the fence wires.

I: To Pelkie?

R: To Pelto School here...it's only a half a mile from here...I remember when my brother came home from the service, from the first World War, it was flood time and there used to be a crib, they called it a crib, over here on the, where that dike is now...Olsen's made a crib there...out of logs and rocks...we'd cross that at flood time and I remember when my brother came home...he had to come across there, too, that was quite a day when he came home...uniform on...seemed to be quite a hero to us kids.

I: Did the early farmers used to fish the river?

R: Well, mostly in the spring they'd catch suckers...Liimatainen's used to catch a lot of fish, they'd bottle them...I think they...big part of their food came from the river.
I: Would they throw nets?

R: Yeah, and suckers in the spring.

I: Wouldn't they get more than suckers?

R: Not at that time...I don't know why it is but fish seem to...when the suckers there you get suckers, then in the winter, of course, you get lawyers...those suckers, even, they go at different times, different types of suckers...have their own time.

I: Lot of the old Finns used to net them and eat them.

R: Oh, they ate them, yeah, they're good.

I: You've had sucker before?

R: Why, sure, we used to eat quite a bit of sucker...my father used to smoke quite a bit of them...when you put them in bottles and cook them for about four hours they're as good as salmon...all those bones are soft.

I: That's the basic problem with them, the bones, they're all clean water fish, Lake Superior sucker, ultimately, you know.

R: One time my father got pinched for netting, driving a net in the river...there was log drivers going through then, too, and...there was the one...I think he was the son of the saloon keeper in Pelkie...he had squealed on...he had seen my father's net there, he had squealed down there to Conservation...game warden came out and...he had come and asked my father to come and help him pull that net out...well, then he, my father had to go to L'Anse to the judge and they fined him, but then after it was over with, why, the judge gave him back his money.

I: All he was doing was netting suckers, eh? When was this, about what year?

R: Oh, probably 1915 or '14, '13, something like that.

I: There've been a lot of deer around the Sturgeon area, too, haven't there? At one time?

R: Oh, yeah, partridge, too, 'course there was partridge everywhere...I remember when I was a boy the partridge used to sit on tree branches, you know, a whole string of partridge sitting on a tree branch.

I: You very seldom see that now, eh?

R: No, you don't.

I: I've heard of that but I've never seen it.

R: Yeah, wasn't any trick to go out and get partridge for a booyaw...boy, that was good...you ever eat that?
R: You put some cabbage in it and potatoes and
I: It looks like a "mojaka", doesn't it?
R: Yeah, that's right.
I: Only it's with partridge meat...I imagine there used to be some pretty big
derp herds out there in those cabbage fields at night, right?
R: Yeah, they'd come and feed on cabbage at night.
I: If a man was a bit of a violator in those times it seems like it would have
been absolutely nothing, just go out in the cabbage field with a light and
wait for the deer to come.
R: Yeah, they did that, too...some people, especially...sometimes they'd even
have a platform on a tree...watch for...
I: Unsuspecting deer to stroll through with a mouth full of cabbage...there's a
pretty big swamp back there...ever been lost in it?
R: I've been turned around in there, yeah...boy, it's funny when you get lost you,
when you come out you don't know where you are...everything looks so strange...
directions are all wrong.
I: Did anyone years ago get lost back in there?
R: Not really, I don't think...not that I know of.
I: But that's a pretty big swamp area around here.

PART TWO

I: What would these men do at night? Did you ever go over there and visit them
in their tents?
R: No...there was two of them...one year they stayed in our bathhouse for quite a
while...they were a couple of good-looking, I don't know, they must have been
Frenchmen...some of the girls were a little bit interested in them.
I: Your sisters, you mean?
R: I remember one wore a red jacket and the other one wore a green jacket and they
used to call him, "Green Jacket".
I: Had original names for them, eh? Were most of them Frenchmen that were these
river drivers or were there Finns also?
R: I think they were mostly Frenchmen...some of the Frenchmen they were really
light on their feet and they could handle a canoe like nobody else.
I: They were really artists with it, eh?

R: That cant hook, handling a cant hook, that used to be quite a... well, it was an art, I guess.

I: Darn right.

R: Especially when they were loading logs, you know, loading cars...decks, rolling them off the decks.

I: What's the knack on that?

R: Well, you probably have to be quick for one thing.

I: You mean you gotta jump and move... or else you got a log come down crushing your legs.

R: Well, yeah... then a rolling log you have to stop it, you gotta get that hook into it.

I: I bet more than one man has lost his life unloading logs.

R: Oh, yeah... that's probably the most dangerous part of logging.

I: Because they'd all start to roll and come off at once and just knock you down and crush you, eh?

R: Well, that wasn't any picnic, either, breaking a jam.

I: You saw one broken before, a couple broken?

R: I used to see them when there was a jam they'd be, they'd get right out on the logs on the river there... well, they'd dynamite it, too, to break it up.

I: I mean, a man goes out there and dynamites it he's playing the dangerous job, isn't he?

R: Well, I guess he is.

I: Were the rivers just filled with logs... those days... I mean, were they everywhere?

R: Well, they'd deck them on the banks in the winter... up above... and they'd roll them through.

I: And they did it far up there, too, on the Sturgeon, all the way up to the... well, past where the dam now is, even?

R: Yeah... you wondered how they ever got those big pine trees into the river.

I: With oxen.

R: They took them out of bad places sometimes... we had a hunting camp up there
half way up the back part of the dam... boy, there was some pot-holes out there, I don't know how in the world they ever got them logs... pine stumps in there.

I: They probably knew their business... I imagine more than one horse and oxen, too, was ruined in the process.

R: I think they used oxen more than horses in them pine days, anyway.

I: The did... oxen were really powerful animals.

R: Yeah, they must be... there was an ox yoke here from the people that lived here before we came, my dad came here.

I: Who did live here before?

R: Fisher, his name was... I was going to say Pete Fisher but it wasn't Pete because Pete was a... Andy Fisher.

I: Yes, I've heard that name before... what was his nationality?

R: I don't know.

I: Did you have your own ball teams out here in Froberg? Was there a Froberg team... hockey teams or...

R: Hockey teams we used to have... they didn't really play much baseball, of course in Pelkie they had a team... hockey teams, though, they used to clear the ice from the slough and have hockey games.

I: I understand big gangs of kids would work together and really end up putting a lot of work into maintaining a rink and playing some hockey.

R: Oh, yeah... once, even, we... there was an old log camp about down there down the river where Froberg used to live... a bunch of us kids got them logs over here, brought them here on the slough and made a skating shack out of them.

I: There was a man here named Froberg then, right?

R: Yeah.

I: What was his name? Was it Earl Froberg?

R: I don't know what the old man's name was... there was some boys, there was a boy by the name of Earl... they live in Keweenaw Bay now, the boys do... the family... well, there... there's quite a few of those boys there.

I: Where was the Froberg farm?

R: It's about 2 1/2 miles down river from here, it was... Lundin's is half way to that place... they were down river, down, lower down.

I: So the place was named after him, he must have been one of the first in here, then.
R: Probably...he had a clearing there with a log house and my aunt and her hus-
band, her family, they bought that place and they, they lived there for many 
years...that was quite a place to live, too, there was hardly any road in there. 
I remember once, even, their horse died because...coming through, it was a 
flood water and wading through the water...he got paralyzed and...Oscar Puckinen 
lived down there by...in the corner there where Bill Tahtinen's place is... 
they got that horse into his driveway...they tried to take care of it for a 
while but they had to get rid of it.

I: Quite a place to live in those days, my.

R: Yeah, my aunt, Lehtinen's, maybe you know Matt Lehtinen?

I: Living right next to Alfred there now.

R: He was down there.

I: Were there some local Socialists or Communists here in the area?

R: Yeah, there were.

I: What sort of Finns were they up to? Were they trying to organize politically? 
You don't have to mention any names, you know, I'm just sort of...what they 
were doing.

R: Well, I don't know really too much about their activities except that they did 
build a hall there in Pelkie, right on the Pelkie road.

I: Were there many of them from this area?

R: Right in this area there were only about three families...but then in surround-
ing areas...

I: But they got along O. K. with the non-Communists or more church-oriented Finns 
here?

R: Well, they didn't mix much but they didn't have any trouble...there used to be, 
used to call him...can't think of that word...

I: There were some agitators at the time?

R: Yeah, they'd go around try to spread their...their, whatever it was...

I: Tried to get people to their line of thinking and to their cause, eh? What 
about church? Where was the church influence here? Did people go to the Kyro 
church?

R: A few families went to the Kyro church...my father...our family and Marttila's 
and Heinonen's and...there were quite a few that were Apostolic.

I: Where did you go to church at the time, your family?

R: Pelkie.
I: And that's the church that's next to...

R: Mrs. Pelto.

I: Ilmi Pelto's place.

R: Then they broke up in about '32 and they...my father and some of the others they built a new church.

I: Down there by Ruona's place now...that was in 1932...when again was the first Apostolic church there, meaning the one next to Mrs. Pelto, in there, there's a date right on it...do you recall that?

R: Well, it must have been...I don't remember.

I: I can get that...who were some of the speakers that would come and speak at that church that you remember...or that you have heard used to come there.

R: Heideman and Maatila.

I: This is Arthur Leopold Heideman.

R: Yeah, at first...they even used to go to the homestead, Arthur Heideman...and Paul was just a young man then and he used to go along with him...in fact, they do quite a bit of hunting out there, partridge...

I: The old man, though, would do the talking, right?

R: Yeah.

I: Speaking...did you ever go hear Heideman speak, the old man?

R: Oh, yeah.

I: What did he speak like, what kind of a...

R: Well, the same as they speak nowadays, I guess...you probably are familiar with Apostolic preaching.

I: But I mean what made the man so, I don't want to say, well, popular? I mean, was he an exceptional speaker?

R: Yeah, he was...he had his own...mannerisms...style.

I: What were they to your recollection?

R: Oh, I don't really...I was pretty young at that time.

I: Did you go to confirmation school in that old church there?

R: 

I: Who was in your confirmation class?
R: There was Adrian Heinonen and Elsie Lytkainen...Esther Carlson and Carl Carlson from Elo...Senia...

I: Senia Uusitalo?

R: No, no...Keippel, Lyle Keippel...there was 13 of us.

I: That church was a pretty big concern at that time, wasn't it? By that I mean there were a lot of people going there.

R: Oh, yeah, in those days there was lot more people...like now there's only the church members that go to church, but in those days other people would come to church...they don't do that anymore, do they...very few, very seldom.

I: Yeah, I mean the Apostolic church was more of a wide-spread thing then, right? I mean there are fewer Apostolics today, practicing Apostolics today.

R: I don't know.

I: That one church is closed in Pelkie and it's now turned into an apartment building.

R: Yeah, but that branch of the Apostolic they're really doing a lot of work now with that Barney.

I: Well, how come they stopped using that church in Pelkie?

R: I guess they run out of members, I don't know.

I: Who would know the answer to that question? Why they just stopped using their church in Pelkie.

R: Oh, I don't know, maybe you could talk to Waino Hakola.

I: And also John Lappala would be a member to ask concerning that...so in 1932 there was a split within the Apostolic church...as I understand it, after talking in the interviews, sort of reconstruction of discussions, is that there was a disagreement as to what was most important as a means of obtaining salvation, whether it was through divine grace and forgiveness of sins, or whether it was through good works and deeds and following the Commandment...Heideman was a proponent of the view that it was through grace that one found salvation because after a person experienced grace and forgiveness and the freedom of sin that he would no longer go out and do and break the Commandments...so it was kind of a "which came first, the chicken or the egg" thing, and it resulted in the splitting of the church and you said your father, then, and others built the later Apostolic church...and this was in 1932 and the church bears that cornerstone mark today. What other families built that church, that you recall?

R: Well, there was Marttila's and Heinonen and around Pelkie there was Tepsa's and Parkila and Niemisto's and Pulkki's and Kakkonen's and Kuivinen...Kuivanen, Andrew Mattson's and Oja's, Matt Oja, his father was on the other side.
I: What people stayed with the original Heideman church, what families stayed there, as you recall?

R: Well, yeah, Matt Laho was with our church and John was on the other side, stayed with the old church...went along with the other group.

I: Lappala, you mean?

R: Laho, John Laho...and even families would split up like Mr. Tepsa was with the other church and Mrs. was with Heideman.

I: Were there other families that were split?

R: I think Oja's...Mrs. was one of them and Mamma Oja was of the other.

I: With the Heideman.

R: I think Mamma Oja was with the...

I: Newer one, eh?

R: The old...the one that kept the church.

I: Oh, that was Heideman's, right? It was the Heideman crew that stayed with the original church.

R: No, no.

I: Oh, it was the Heideman crew that built the new church?

R: Yeah.

I: Who would come to speak then to the older church...if it was no longer Heideman speaking there, who would?

R: Mastila was the head man.

I: And what was his first name?

R: I don't remember.

I: And then afterwards who spoke there?

R: Michaelson and Karvonen...Michaelson was the head man...

I: Do you know what name the people using the first and the oldest church in Pelkie took on?

R: It was the Apostolic Lutheran Church but they had some kind of an organization that you'd call "Kirkokunta".

I: What is the literal translation of that mean...church...what's "kunta"?
R: Organization or association.

I: What would that do?

R: I really don't understand that...what was the function of that.

I: Who followed Heideman then? When did Heideman quit coming here to Pelkie?

R: Oh, he came as long as his health held out...Paul Heideman...it's about...somewhere around...about early 60s that he started failing...he had to give up.

I: And then afterwards who spoke in the newer church?

R: Torola and Storm and Tulkki.

I: And very recently in the newer church there has again been a split...I talked to you about this before...this was more recent, this was in 1973 that the split came, right...last year.

R: Yeah.

I: And this was the one over the preacher from Ishpeming, his name again is...

R: Petaisto.

I: Petaisto, yeah.

R: Well, that was...there wasn't really, yeah, there was a split in Ishpeming, especially, over Petaisto.

I: It was concerning whether he had made an appropriate confession and whether he had made an appropriate "paramus" in Finland, right? Some said he really didn't and others said he did.

R: Yeah, it was something like that...I don't know if I want to go into it because.