FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978
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The quality of this tape recording is very very bad. I wouldn't recommend duplication of it.

Mike 4/4/03
SUOMI COLLEGE LOCAL ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Copper Country Railroads

INTERVIEW BETWEEN:

INTERVIEWEE: Edmund Joseph Raymond

INTERVIEWER: Eero H. Ranta

SUBJECT: Copper Country Railroads

DATED: July 2, 1973

EHR: This is an interview with Edmund Raymond with local oral history program at Suomi College on Copper Country railroads. Mr. Raymond is retired railroad worker living at 844 Summit Street in Hancock. Interviewer Eero Ranta dated July 2, 1973, 5:15 PM.

EHR: What year were born Mr. Raymond?

EJR: 1898 November 15 Republic Michigan, moved to Hancock 1911 and went to school in Hancock, and got my first job when I was 18 years old on bridge building gang at Copper Range Railroad.

What area were you working at?

No, it was just a short line railroad just about 50-60 miles long. Bridge building gangs were everywhere about 40 men worked at one time in the bridge gang.

How about winter time?

Winter time was same. Dock work, if no dock work it made a lot of difference, then you were layed off. But I was pretty lucky, fortunate, I was in different gang, you see there were mostly two gangs in the bridge gang: we used to call bull gang, I was working mostly with the carpenter gang. The carpenter gang worked also in the winter time, but then again there was some layoff too. You see when the copper range took over the Mohawk run in 1920 anyhow, Ja, so some of the things you cannot remember.

But you worked mostly as a carpenter?

Ja, helper... you get to be a carpenter with all the repair work and training on the job.
There was much railroading...

There was about 21 runs they claim, last 15 years no more than three and then one ten years ago, and the one is gone (ha, ha...)

I suppose there were many different companies that had railroads?

**EJR:** Around Copper Country ja, but St. Paul is connected with Copper Range that's where the freight comes from Mckeeower. Then outside of that St. Paul was the main one for Copper Range and South Shore.

How about Soo line, was it operating here then or did it come later?

It was south shore as long as I know and then Soo line took it iver, same company anyhow.

**EHR:** How about these mining companies, did they have their own RRs or was it all Copper Range?

**EJR:** No, private... Private, but C&H was no carrier and Quincy was no carrier local short line RRs

**EHR:** When you had to ship something out was it Copper Range or South shore that took over. When you had to ship copper to NewYork or...?

**EJR:** Well Copper Range or South Shore would ship it out Copper Range never had many cars as a whole, had about twenty, cars would go about six months you wouldn't know nothing about them and then they came home for repairs or something.

**EJR:** They had a machine shop there.

**EJR:** Oh ja jees had a nice machine shop there one time

**EHR:** Where was that located?

**EJR:** Right down by VanNordens

**EHR:** The building is still there

**EJR:** I thought the building would be turned off now and straighten the highway, they wanted to at one time, so I don't know. I think it'll go thru somewhere. But you take these big companies they like the state they cannot get just what they want, they want the money; see Quincy you know, when they were approached to sell some property small piece, $3000. and that was long time ago. If I had it they'd say hell with you give you nothing, $50. may be, the big companies it is the same thing when they put highways. Hancock street you see, there was a tool house for the section men but they never touch that not until recently.
EJR: But if I had it they'd give you what they want. (he, he, ha)

EHR: How about these logers that were building roads into the woods to get the logs out... were they private or...?

Private oh... ja! sure.

EHR: The logging companies were doing this themselves?

EJR: Logging companies, hell, you see I was up there one time living out in the bush, we were along Toivola, we were damn there six or ten weeks or two months. Jees they were logging there... that who the hell was logging there... Fenegor I guess. We had to put in some culverts... they hired some Copper Range men and the chief engineer he died about couple... some years ago. Well he surveyed it to ship logs to the mill. There was about three places where we had to put in culverts. Then they had a extra crew that time put in the tracks and fill in you know. See there was no god damn... well all you had then was team of horses and some scrapers, you know, call them scrapers them days. Jees that was a hot summer, too in the bush you know, no such thing as fresh air in the bush. Sitting in the edge of the bush in the shade but in the bush the hell there is no breeze. Me and somebody else were there 15 years later cannot remember who... god damn he said look! couldn't see the tracks any more all grown in.

EHR: The logging companies hired the Copper Range men?

EJR: Ja, Ja...

EHR: Did they also use Copper Range engines and cars or did they have their own?

EJR: Oh ja hell they had, steam engines.

EHR: Copper Range had? logging companies would rent them from Copper Range?

Ja most of them were junk I guess. Ja what the hell was that last one running, I don't know if that made any money, what the hell running down in Keweenaw Calumet-Lake Linden for turists

Ja, ja I don't know if that was the last one left.

Did they burn coal or wood?

Oh Crist, all coal now... You know, master mechanic he was damn near thirty years, a cousin jack, they made him quit or fired him. He had trouble with his heart, you know so Janes went up to the house to see him, his wife says he is gone to work. Janes called up the Copper Range, old Sammy, well Charly Sincock he was not the manager... I cannot remember but any how... called him and said send that man home that he aint fit to work. So sam then had to quit... three more years to be master mechanic.
EJR: Crist old mighty he wanted to be in thirty years well he lived about four years after. Dr. Janes said go home... he had to quit. He said when he was a kid his father was a master mechanic in the Mohawk Mining Co. you see, well Sam was high school kid, may be still going to school. At this time they were just putting in coal he said fireman, well fresh guy fireman, Sam told me he’d stoke up with coal I mean with wood so it took quite while for that well like night shift wasn’t using much steam. When they were putting in coal there so the green fireman with coal never heard the “pop” ha, ha, ha, he said using coal he never heard god damn thing go pop. Never heard that thing pop at all ha, ha, Jesus Crist I got a chuckle out of that, took the pop out.

EHR: How long did you work for the railroads before you went to Detroit?

EJR: For four years

EHR: How long were you in Detroit?

EJR: Oh hell about a year.

EHR: And you came back here to the Copper Country

EJR: Ja, ja back on the railroads. Ja I guess... I used to listen to the steamwhistles.

Tere were many steamwhistles here years ago?

Oh, many, many all the mines machine shops, few in Houghton, too.

EHR: What time did they go off, in the morning seven o’clock?

EJR: Well as rule six o’clock and seven o’clock and noon and at night. Same thing with Copper Range, but it was not sharp whistle like Hancock Mining Co. and other mines Jesus Crist, that would wake you up. Ja, I was a kid god darn, when you are a kid you are more wrecless, I asked my dad if I can go up there. He said, sure; but you couldn’t do that today because on the count of the insurance, there is always some catch to it. Well if you got hurt it was your own fault, they’d say we didn’t make you to do it; so god damn it hell, Brainstrom a big wheel, Chist I must of been there four hours he didn’t say anything.

EHR: Do you remember the 1913 strike?

All about rumors, I was about 15 years old, went up there. Sunday morning, it was a nice day soldiers were there, they had tents tere around shaft house number two, it was here in Hancock.
In that time you didn't see many soldiers, god damn we kids went to see the soldiers. I don't know what the hell was that, militia, they still got that, hey.

How long was the strike?

EJR: Oh, Crist, I don't remember oh at least a year. Tere was a lot of dirty stuff, shooting..., gangsters, bums, once in the while few people got shot.

Do you remember the Italian Hall incident?

EJR: Ja, I do remember something. I remember a girl she was there, five years old.

What happened exactly?

Well, it was gangsters hired by the company. Somebody purposely yelled out: 'Fire', they cannot put a finger on the man, but they had seen a man walking away. Somebody from outside opened the doors and yelled out! Fire' and then closed the doors, many people died in that, but by jees I don't know how many.

EHR: When did that strike start, in the fall?

EJR: No, it was spring or some god damn thing, ja I remember it was a nice weather; I remember me and Fred Summers ja it was a nice day.

You went and worked in Detroit for a while, did you work for Ford?

EJR: No, I worked for General Motors for about a year and came back, I came back on the railroads. I was working around mass I got injured I was lifting a timber and I slipped and fell, Felix called out and said watch out I rolled down the bank and hit an old railroad tie.

EHR: How long did you work as a carpenter?

EJR: Oh three different times, worked for Archie Verwille for a while but I liked better on the railroads, oh good jobs. Old bachelor that old bucker hell I don't know what he was but a smart old bastard though, good marksman, a good sectionman too, he would shoot a deer or rabit any time.

EHR: When did you get your first car?

EJR: Ooh I don't know 22 or 23... that was model-T, we used to drive only in summer time, roads were closed in winter time. This our neighbour Carlson used to rent out garages in winter, he used to get $5.00 dollars a month. Beer was 90 cents a case of 12 quart bottles and in taven you paid a nicle a glass, ja we used to get a case for Christmas.
EJR: There were few breweries around here, couple in Hancock, one in Calumet, Lake Linden and Houghton. Bosch started in Lake Linden, where Bosch is now it used to be a German brewery, they were doing pretty good, I don't know what happened, but Bosch took it over.

This concludes the interview with Ed Raymond. After I asked him if he remembered any train robberies around here, he said he didn't remember, but a couple freight cars had arrived at Copper Range depot where two seals were broken. This had resulted into a court case, but he could not remember exactly what had really happened.

Mr. Raymond suffered a stroke about three weeks ago and is unable to talk now.