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)

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Suomi College
Oral History Program

Impressions in June

Elizabeth Vivian
Interviewed by
Betty M. Berry
on
June 30, 1973
Suomi College

Oral History Program

INTERVIEW BETWEEN:

INTERVIEWEE: Elizabeth Vivian

INTERVIEWER: Betty M. Berry

SUBJECT: Impressions in June

DATED: June 30, 1973

B: This is Betty Berry. I am taping Elizabeth Vivian in Houghton about a recent trip to England. Why did you go at the end of May?

E: I left for England at this time because it was a very important week at Cambridge University. (interruption) and it was the most convenient time to visit distant members of my family whom I had not met personally. Then England is beautiful in the spring, and since I had seen various parts of England in June, July and August, I thought spring in Cornwall and Warwickshire would be a beautiful and picturesque time. The flowers were in full bloom; I have never seen so many roses at one time in full bloom. They were gorgeous. The rhododendrons were out. The hedges in Cornwall were very, very colorful. It is one season of the year to visit England. Generally, the weather is quite favorable, I was fortunate because the weather was unusually clear. The last two weeks I did not have to wear a coat whatsoever. I was in summer clothes one hundred percent. I was disappointed, however, in Camburey, because it was quite dark and misty. Naturally I wanted to take quite a number of pictures of the old section of Camburn since my Grandfather Vivian had lived there as a youth. Also a large number of the Vivian family lived in Camburn because they were associated with the mining operations there.

B: Camburn is in Cornwall?

E: Yes. I spent a week traveling in Cornwall. Our headquarters were the Brookdale Hotel in Truro. The hotel is very, very English, and for that reason we stayed there. The Truro Cathedral is very Beautiful. It is used today for services. In the memorial section of the Cathedral there is part of the Vivian lineage. This deals with the Vivian family members who were connected with the Battle of Waterloo. Also in Truro there is a Cornish section in the library. This library contains a large number of references to the old Cornwall families. I found many references to my family. We enjoyed the stories of the family a great deal. The early history of Cornwall is connected very closely to the Vivian family. We discovered that a large number of the early settlers in Cornwall were murderers, pirates, smugglers,
From Truro we went to St. Agnes, one of the most picturesque small villages in Cornwall. It is built on a hill overlooking the sea. As you stand on the top looking at the sea, you can imagine that you are on the top of Quincy Hill overlooking Lake Superior. On the hillside are the deserted mine shafts that suggested the history of St. Agnes. The shafts are very similar in appearance to the abandoned shafts in the Copper Country.

There was one section there that is very interesting. It is called the "stippey-Stackey Row" of cottages. There are twelve houses connected going down the hillside and as you look at the cottages you imagine that you are walking down the stairs. The gardens in front of each section were very, very colorful. At the top of the hill in St. Agnes we met an very old couple who had retired there. They were in their late seventies. The gardens which they had created out of a rock pile were an inspiration. Each section was different. We discovered that the root garden was a vegetable garden. In front of their home they had at least twenty-four calla lilies in full bloom. They enjoyed gardening and they certainly had the English green thumb.

We also visited the Elllogan parish. The Vivians did live there for some time. The church was very, very picturesque. While there we met the wife of one of the church wardens who invited us in for tea. She was very elderly. As a hobby she took an old inn and converted it into a home. It was very, very interesting.

In Cambourne we went to the Vivian pub, but the Vivian coat-of-arms had been knocked down by a lorry the previous week. The owner was not present, and we couldn't find the coat-of-arms. I wanted to take a picture of the coat-of-arms which I had seen on my previous visit to Cornwall but had not been able to snap because of the weather. Cambourne is a very depressed area. It is not as picturesque as many of the other Cornish towns. You can see the relics of mining.

There is a new school of mines there; on the top of the hill. It is one of the best in the world and is growing very, very fast. We spent one night in an English village, Doddy Crosspear. We had to go there by car. It is completely isolated. It was fun. This village has not changed much for years. A large number of cottages there have been bought by retired persons who have modernized them. The furnishings are very, very colorful. I noticed a vast change in the use of color between my visits in 1960 and 1973. It was fun being in Cornwall. I learned to appreciate the background of my family. Also I found the people there very friendly, very willing to talk. They also have a sense of humor.

After a stay in Cambourne, I went back to Cambridge. There I was able to participate in various activities of college life. I visited the Pepys Museum which contains his library. I was astonished at the collection of the various books and maps. It is a remarkable collection. I understand Pepys philosophy, and you might say, his background much better. He was certainly a keen scholar.

I also attended services at King's College on a Sunday morning. It was a privilege to hear their choir. The choir boys marched to the chapel, dressed in their striped trousers, black coats and top hats.
The singing certainly inspired one. You caught the sense of precedence of history as far as King's College is concerned. I also attended the Evensong service of St. John's chapel. Here because Ron was a Fellow of the college, I was able to sit with the members in a high back stall with a light in front. The King's College choir is as skilled and artistic as that of King's College. In some respects it is different because of the range of music.

Also I was able to attend the "sing" on the Cam River at Christ's College, a part of the spring commencement exercises. Five punts were tied together on the river. There were lights attached. The glee club sang for several hours, and finally the punts drifted down the river with the music echoing. It was a very interesting, as a large number of the college students were out and you did catch the spirit of Christ's College. Each college is different and has its own traditions.

Then there is the Wren Library. It is one of the more beautiful structures of Sir Christopher Wren. Also in Cambridge there is the Kettle Cottage which is under the direction of Mr. Bad the former director of the Tate Museum in London. He is restoring the cottage, and his artistic manner was very impressive. Little do we think of taking a bowl of stones and using that as a centerpiece. But he had a collection of small white pebbles such as we might find on the shores of Lake Superior in a very large, colorful bowl in the center of the table. He has collected art works from various parts of the world and has arranged them in a series of rooms. He is interested in promoting music, and practically every Sunday a group of students will assemble there, and there will be concerts given by promising artists. This means a great deal to the students of Cambridge.

Then outside of Cambridge at Colton, there is a rose garden. The walk from Cambridge takes about three-quarters of an hour, or if you stroll along through the fields about an hour. The students will stroll through the walking paths and have tea and then come back to Cambridge. As you return you can see the tops of the library in particular. There are many activities in Cambridge.

You have the market in the center where the people go each day to buy there vegetables and their fruits. I found the prices there quite high. You buy a pint of strawberries, that would be approximately a quarter of a quart, for approximately twelve to thirteen pence. A penny would be approximately two cents in our money, although the value of the money does vary as far as the American dollar. But the berries were unusually large and very, very delicious.

The town is very quaint in some areas. There are signs of progress. There is a new business section being constructed. The Botanical Gardens there are outstanding. They have different walks throughout the gardens. There were quite a few rock gardens illustrating the rock plants from different sections of the world. They have a winter garden which is very colorful in the fall of the year. The pansies and iris were in full bloom. I noticed that they used the purple and yellow pansies as well as irises in their beds. They had a beautiful pond in their section. Throughout the gardens there would be chairs and you would see a large number of elderly people sitting in the sun. Some older women were there with their knitting. On the grass would be the students. Some of them were studying as at this time the final exams were being held.
E: Of course the university system is different. The exams are held in
the spring, but the students are given summer assignments. A large
number of them were heading for Spain where they would rent cottages
and they would spend the summer reading. They are expected to do a
great deal during the summer holiday, as they say. Very few English
students find it convenient to work because of their heavy scholastic
load. The students there are the same, however, they are very friendly,
they are willing to talk, and they do like their fun. In the Spring of
the year they spend a lot of time punting on the Cam. It is not unusual
to see them drifting down the river as they are reading. The students
often have their ale outside of the building and discuss points of interest
to them. I had lunch in the Graduate Building which was very interest-
tingly constructed. It was made of concrete throughout, but it looked
like wood. As you would run your fingers over the concrete you could
feel the grain. The steps were made of lead. It was one of the new
buildings that fit in with the landscape as well as with the very old
buildings. From the dining area we overlooked the Cam, and we could
also see Darwin's home where he studied for some time.
The experiences in Cambridge were interesting, and I found the people
there very, very kind.

B: Did the students have long hair, did they wear their capes?

E: Yes. On Sundays the students who attended service did wear their capes.
In fact I saw a very interesting dress, or costume, or whatever you
want to call it. The girl was very, very tall. She had blue jeans on
with extremely high-heeled shoes. Over this she wore her gown, and to
cap the outfit she had on a very large straw hat decorated with flowers
and streamers.
It was an odd costume. A large number of the students do have long hair.
I saw a great many of them in blue jeans, and of course, blue jeans are
very expensive there. I was told that they are hard to find there is
such a demand for them. Many of the students have friends or relatives
send them blue jeans from the States
But their manners, customs, are those of college students. I did find that
those with whom I talked were very interested in their studies, and that
they did spend a great deal of time studying. They do more on their own
A large number of them are not required to go to classes. They will do
their reading and then be quizzed by their tutor, and they will pass
their comprehensives. I think that is the term to use. Every thing
depends upon their exam, and of course, their diplomas are different
from ours. We receive a diploma with the name of the course and a
few with distinction or with high honors. But their diploma states
the level on which they passed their exam. So perhaps their diplomas do
carry more of their story. A large number of students are on campus for
career in the educational department. He did not know at the time where he would be stationed.
But at the present time he works with people coming into the field, and
he is co-ordinating programs in science. So many of the people who do
work in the educational field do not have the specific training in
E: education that we have. They will stress the academic field. But more stress is being placed on the teaching profession, to get their degree in their specialty and then take a year of educational training. Up until this time, many of the teachers have not had what we would say were college degrees.

After Cambridge I went to Leigh-on-the-Sea and Southend. This is approximately an hour's train ride from London. It is a resort area, very, very beautiful. It is a quiet spot on the sea, but it is growing very rapidly. Every spring people flock to Southend for their holiday. You have the promenade with all kinds of eating places plus entertainment. And of course, people will spend hours on the beach sun-bathing. From Southend I took a day trip to Brighton. I wanted to see Brighton because of stories I had heard about it. It is another sea resort with a promenade. The day I was there there were five large bus-fulls of elderly citizens there. Many of them were in wheel-chairs, and they were being pushed along the promenade.

In Brighton, there is the Royal Pavillion connected with the Regency period of English history. The Pavillion was used as a home for the English monarohs, especially at the time of the war with Napoleon in the early eighteen hundreds. The kitchen was very interesting to me because on three walls, there was hanging all kinds of copper cooking utensils. Even the hood of the stove was made of copper. They were skillets, fish pans, of all kinds; it was fun to see the assortment.