FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978
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INTERVIEW WITH

INTERVIEWEE: Judge Charles Willman, retired

INTERVIEWER: Heino A. "Hap" Puotinen

DATE: August 9, 1973

H Going to the format of this interview, the first part, Part I, the family background, we would like to check into your family background and commencing with that then the first member of the family to settle in the Lake Superior region and here are the possibilities: before 1875 or before 1900, just a rough date, when do you recall that the first member of your family —

C: About 1900

H: About 1900. Well, about the turn

C: Between 1900 and 1905, I think, I'm not sure

H: Well, OK, that sets that date. My first relative to move here was my grandparent, parent, or what?

C: Oh, my father

H: Your father. Your father was your first relative to move into this area. Your family originally settled in Lake Superior region because and here are the possibilities but I don't know if it's necessary to list all these, just ask you why do you think your father moved here.

C: Because of the work in the mines; at that time it was mining and he worked in the mines.

H: Did he have any aspirations of owning his own farm or anything like that? Or primarily interested in mining?

C: Seems to me he did own a small farm

H: Most of them did

C: But he didn't keep it very long

H: During your lifetime, Charlie, in how many different places have you resided?

C: I was born in Rockland; as a child, we moved to Greenland, and from Greenland we moved to Mass, and from Mass we moved to Ontonagon. So that's 4.

H: 4 and yet they're all within the same county.

C: Ya.

H: Now here we have some of this family tree information if the details of the dates have a tendency to hamstring a person too much, we can dispensed with that part of it but your address then is Greenland Road, Ontonagon County, and your birthdate is what?

C: Birthdate-August 3, 1908

H: Did you or do you have brothers and sisters?

C I have one sister
H: And your father's birthplace was where?
C: Finland.

H: You don't recall the birthdate though, I 'spose
C: No, I don't remember

H: Likewise your mother's birthplace was where?
C: Finland

H: And we'll again skip the birthdate. We already have your birthdate and birthplace, now, the birthdate and birthplace of your spouse.

C: She was born in 1905 or '06 (I'll ask her); she was born in Finland.

H: And you have how many children?
C: 2 boys

H: 2 boys. The name and birthplace of each of them
C: Royce was born in 1930 and John was born in 1936.

H: Both born in Ontonagon County, I 'spose.

C: Royce was born in Ontonagon and John was born in Hancock. in the hospital.

H: I see. So much for that. Here we go into the category on personal skills. You're requested here--this format was made to be handed out and this happens to be the only copy I have of it, so it states: please circle the number which indicates the highest grade of formal education for the family members listed below. You and your wife are both high school graduates?

C: I had high school and my wife finished graduate school. She had 4 years of college and then she worked for her master's. I don't know would that be 1 or 2 years. beyond college. Anyway she has a master's degree.

H: Ya. Very fine. Your father had no formal education in this country?
C: Not in this country.

H: He probably went to the usual grammar, equivalent of junior high or high school in Finland, which is possible. And your mother, probably

C: Same thing.

H: Now then, your children, are they both college graduates?

C:

H: On the following chart describe the variety of personal skills which may reflect family interests, ethnic customs or informal means of education. Please check the skills which your parents may have possessed and in the space following, specify whenever possible the nature of that skill. Did your father have, to your knowledge, any special skill? Either in the trades or in the arts or sciences or anything like that?

C: He was a cement contractor. He made basements and sidewalks and laid brick and carpenter work and all this.
H: Did your father develop the ability to speak more than one language besides Finnish?

C: Yes, he spoke Finnish, Swedish, English was kind of broken but he could speak it; he spoke Russian; I think there were 5 different languages that he spoke.

H: How do you account for that? Through contact with these different nationalities in the community and on the job?

C: No, while he was in Finland.

H: Oh, while he was in Finland he already

C: He learned all these in Finland.

H: I see. Did he develop leadership ability, to your knowledge, in the old country or since his arrival in this country?

C: No, I don't have no idea.

H: Now we have crafts, skills; you already said he was a successful building, mason, contractor; how was he with regard to the arts, music, poetry, painting, and so forth? Did he show any interest in it or ability in it?

C: No, not too much, no.

H: And with regard to sports, I imagine it would be hard to find a person from Finland who didn't at least take up skiing.

C: Yes, we had skis at home all the time when I was young.

H: But there was no--you never had any involvement in team sports or anything like that.

C: No.

H: Now, do you recall either on the part of your father or your mother, any/home remedies that they might have had? And here's another question in there--did your mother ever have occasion to provide services of a mid-wife to a neighbor?

C: None, that I can remember.

H: I've run across a number of people that the mother in turn has provided mid-wife services to her neighbors, and may have partaken of the services herself. Home cookery--do you favor any special ethnic foods or specialties that your parents may have brought from Finland?

C: Viiliat, for one thing. I love it.

H: Do you happen to have any now?

C: Not right now. The starter went bad on us, a week or so ago.

H: We're in about the same fix at home; I myself can't go it, when we have it at the table, I have to leave. The same thing with buttermilk, I don't know why, I think I relate that to having carried along these portable milk bottles as a kid before I was weaned off the bottle and then it soured in there,--instant reaction--it took me a long time to be able to eat cottage cheese. But now I can eat that, but the rest of it, absolutely not. Here do you recall either your father or mother having any unusual skills or anything? This might strike you as funny. You probably noticed when you read it--moonshining, fortune telling,

C: No, No, -- fortune telling -- my mother did used to use cards.

H: And also you probably might recall that every New Year's evening, they used to "valsa"--
they melt lead or tin or its alloy, when that was poured into cold water, it would form a beautiful figure of some kind and then some were quite adept at reading fortunes of all kinds; that was part of the New Year's

C: That was standard, I can remember those very well

H: Do you recall anything else?

C: Well, my mother used to use cards to tell fortunes

H: How about reading tea leaves? I've never seen that amongst Finnish people.

C: No, we never had tea.

H: I saw it done at a home of a lady who ran an employment office in Illinois. Now, along with this examination of skills, we'll discuss that same aspect with regard to your sons. Do either of your sons speak more than one language?

C: The youngest son just speaks English. But the oldest one, of course, took up foreign languages in college—French, and Spanish, and Finnish, too; he speaks Finnish.

H: About your older son, I remember him having been active in the theatre

C: He still is

H: What was his master's degree in?

C: In English. Humanities. He taught English at Northern Michigan University.

H: That's Royce?

C: That's Royce

H: And the other son, John? What is his speciality in college?

C: Sports. But Royce still takes part in plays in Marquette; he appears in 2 or 3 of those plays, they have a Little Theatre.

H: Now, then, with regard to the boys: take Royce first—leadership ability—now he has conducted certain theatrical presentations here

C: Yes, he's a leader

H: He's a skilled stage manager and a director

C: director, producer, actor

H: and

C: He used to do a lot of painting. We have many of his paintings here.

H: And John, what are his talents,

C: He paints different type of paintings

Have either of them gone for this 'way' out, where the average person has to be told what the subject is?

C: There's one. There's an example of one right there. Abstract. That's one of Royce's paintings. The painting is whatever it represents for you.
H: Have either of the boys taken an active part in social organizations as leaders or just active members?

C: He's been active in different things (John); he moves around quite a bit so he doesn't get too settled anywhere.

H: We've already discussed Royce's crafts, skills, construction of sets and so forth for theatrical productions, calls for certain woodworking skills as well as the artistic talents and so forth, in that line, did John go for anything like that? Theatrical skills of any kind, or writing or anything?

C: No.

H: What did you say that his specialty was?

C: Sports. Football, baseball.

H: Coaching?

C: Since he's been out of school and out of the service he's been coaching youngsters in towns wherever he's lived, he coaches football and baseball.

H: Here's a category for him—sports: track and field, team sports, outdoor sports. He coaches youngsters in individual sports as well as team sports.

C: Team sports.

H: Team sports mostly. Now here's something that often brings up interesting contributions to the ethnic part and that's medical, home remedies and so forth. Do you recall your folks ever use remedies that they brought from the old country? Did they have occasion—you've heard of Mrs. Juntunen, the famous Juntusen muumii, made that salve that was supposed to have been quite a cure-all for infections.

C: Seems to me we always had some of that on hand.

H: That woman, Mrs. Juntunen, passed on, but her children were supposed to kept the dispensing of that home remedy active but I don't hear any more about it. It was with regard to you, the ethnic foods and my reaction to several of them that you mention, what about your boys, do they eat that yogurt, like this viilia? Or do they

C: No, they don't.

H: They shy away from it. Both of my boys eat it. They love it.

C: Of course they've been away from home so much, they wouldn't have a chance to get it.

H: Ya. Have either of them shown any tendency—well, it almost speaks for itself about being inventive if you're in the arts like Royce is, that is.

C: Designing.

H: Designing sets—that is a phase or form of inventing. That takes care of that. I was ___ which you have listed in the previous question. Which one if any, did you learn directly from your parents? Of the skills? I don't see any relationship to what you have listed here, but with regard to the skills, but there is a link between here and there nevertheless but it will show in other places. Of the skills listed, which ones have you acquired on your own? Or from persons other than your parents? Your own particular skills, I was wondering where we should read this into here. You spent how many years in the field of probate court; did you start in as a clerk in a probate court?
C: No, I was elected. 34 years of service.

H: Could you tell us—was your own volition, apply for

C: We lived in Greenland Township, we lived in Mass, and some of my friends asked me if I would run for Justice of the Peace for Greenland Township. I was 21 years old. When I voted that time, I voted for myself the first vote I cast, I voted for myself and I was elected Justice of the Peace. That would have been in 1930. Then in 1936 my friends again got to me to run for Probate Judge, for the county. So we got a nominating petition out, and filled them all out, and so I got on the ballot and I ran and I was elected.

H: At that time and until very recent years, it wasn't necessary to have any legal training what is the state today?

C: No. Now it requires a lawyer

H: With regard to your service as a probate judge, you have met with the people of your community under conditions that the average people don't meet them; there's hardship of some sort involved; it's a case of either death or some property of transfer, then again with the youngsters, those who are not tried in regular court, they're referred to you as a probate judge for disposition of their cases, so therefore, you met the young people under adverse conditions from the youngsters' viewpoint anyway, and I wonder what it must have—you must have liked that type of work and the demands it placed on you and what you were able to do the young people through the years in that work, what are your comments on that?

C: I certainly did like the work; I enjoyed working with the youngsters and I felt that I did a pretty good job with them; I tried to understand them and most of them understood me, I guess, but being in the courthouse, I had a lot of dealings with a lot of Finnish people; the older people came to the welfare office or any of the other offices and they weren't able to speak any English, so they always called upon me to interpret so I was a big help to a lot of people while I was there. They all appreciated it and I was happy that I was there, too, to help them out. In the later years that I was there, Hap, I wasn't called on to interpreting any more. So those older Finnish people had all passed on. There was no more calls for interpreting, the last 6 or 7 years that I was in office. Quite a change.

H: So what do you think of this system of having a probate judge take over and try to iron out the problems with the youngsters before they get too serious? Have you been successful in rehabilitating quite a few of these?

C: Oh, yes.

H: And how many years were you as a probate judge?

C: 34 years.

H: You must have numerous instances where these one-time problem children have grown up and started to play the game according to the rules, and settled down, become reliable members of the community, and then I wonder if any of these have remembered you in the years—have any of them come over to you, and said "thank you"?

C: Oh, yes. Yes, they have. A number of them. Yes, they remember and they appreciated what I had done if you weren't too harsh on them. Some of these kids get into trouble and the first thing you hear on the street, why doesn't he do something? why doesn't he send them away? The first time, you can't do that, and I didn't.

H: One recent development I notice from reading the papers, maybe not in a local paper, but I read about the fact that they're trying—they made it possible for a youngest er to
go back and have early convictions erased off the record. **Totally as if it had never been there.**

C: Right.

H: And you agree that's a good thing?

C: Oh, yes, anything that a person does when they're say, 12 or 13 or 14 years of age, should have no bearing on their life when they're 21 or 25 or 28.

W: OK, is there anything else that you would like to add that might be of interest to us about your experiences. Thirty-four years as probate judge.

C: There's so many I 'spose. Of course as judge I was authorized, under law, to perform wedding ceremonies; I had quite a few of those; married a lot of people.

H: I've never given that aspect a thought.

C: The most important people that I married was (I don't know if you're familiar with the Green Bay Packers) Ray Nitschke.

H: I'm just barely familiar with the name.

C: He married a girl from Ewen, and he came up to my court and I performed the ceremony. Some 6 or 7 years ago.

H: In disposition of property, things got pretty hectic, you had times in that, didn't you? Amongst the heirs?

C: Oh, yes, it seemed like the smaller the estate, the more squabbling. If they estate amounted to something, they all got along beautifully, but small estates, the brothers and sisters they fight.

H: OK, let's continue here then. These particular skills which let to the probate judgeship and continuing that, you learned on your own--did you enroll in any correspondence course?

C:

H: It was strictly right there on the job that you learned.

C: Right.

H: Which of your personal skills have you taught directly to any of your children or other members of your family?

C: We didn't cover any of my skills, we just covered my children, my 2 sons. As far as my skills go, I'm a woodworker; in fact, one time there, 1948 or '45, I had 7 men working, woodworking, making toys. We had quite an outlet for toys but lacked capital to really go into it.

H: I see there's something like that been going on in Iron River and Amasa in recent years. So you have that skill in woodworking and oh, one thing that there isn't any specific category here of an avocation, but I happen to know, is it the correct term, but your interest and activity in things historical;

(interruption) (noisy')

I happen to know that your interested and have been practically a founder of the Historical Society located in ONtonagon County and I don't know what part you've had in the museum in Rockland, that's a separate thing entirely from the ONtonagon one.
H: And then you're president or past president of the Michigan Archiological Association?

C: I'm president of the Upper Peninsula chapter of the Michigan Archiological Society.

H: And now, I wonder if you had any particular interest shown in either of those museums by the young people of the area. Like Iron River, they over that lumber camp and dismantled it and moved it to Caspian.

C: We've never had anything like that here.

H: For your information, let me supply you with this information you might find of use later on.

(End of tape)

H: This group of youngsters; there's 400 in that club in Iron River under the direction of Harold Bernhardt (I believe you know Harold) and they raised $1,000 by dances, cake sales and stuff like that, to go to work on this lumber camp which was given to the Historical Society, or to the Junior Historical Society, and then they--by raising $1,000 on their own, they qualified for $1,000 additional as a grant from Keep America Beautiful (whatever it is, administration or organization) and so they had $2,000 to work on that project which covered it nicely I think and so that's just one possibility where young people might be attracted; now, any young people interested in archiological finds and historical matters, they can be directed to you for consultation?

C: Yes, yes. Very happy to

H: Just what have you delved into in the Archiological business? Have you been delving into this evidences of copper mining by the Indians, 5,000 years ago or something like that?

C: Well, we've done some of that but our biggest project was over in Baraga County where we dug a mound, burial mound; the reason we dug it was the man who owned the property was in the process of building a road through his property, and with a bulldozer, he leveled off a mound and I guess the first trip he made through it with a bulldozer, a skull rolled out and he stopped and informed us of this and invited us to come in and dig it out which we did. We worked at it for a couple years, amateurs, of course, so we got people from Kalamazoo from Western Michigan University from their archiological department, they came up here and they spent 2 years digging and they found a tremendous amount of artifacts.

H: In the line of recent events, do you anticipate any repercussions from the Indians over disturbing their mounds, or do you expect that you could find them in the future cooperative providing that they would get the custody of whatever remains are found.

C: We didn't have any problems at the time that this was done, although, toward the end, I think they did, they came in and they curtailed part of this.

H: So in addition to your historical society activity, and being a historian, have you done or considered doing any writing on your experiences in history of the area and also with regard to your archiological experiences?

C: Yes, I've considered writing some times; I have a lot of materials that I could use when I do get ready to write.

H: Are you acquainted with the Upper Peninsula Writer's Conference?

C: No

H: I happen to be a member of that and have been for several years and people get the impression that because it's upper Peninsula writers that I hesitated in signing up as a
I figured member because/I don't consider myself exactly a writer, I said I dabble at it, well, this society takes writers of all classifications, beginners, and there's old-timers there, Harley Sachs from the staff of MTU, he's conducting the meetings this year at Houghton Tech. And he's a very skilled writer and they always have skilled writers on the agenda and you can send samples of your work into—that's Upper Peninsula Writer's workshop and they will evaluate them and then you can tell whether to continue or whether—they'll definitely let the person know whether there's any hope for a person as a writer or whether a person should drop it. But it doesn't take much to get an encouragement from him, I'll tell you, they have had good to say about my doings for which I'm grateful, although I don't know if—they refer to me as a poet but I'll tell you a guy who is really a poet has got an article in the Nonesuch News, that's Wilhart Niemi from Mass.

C: Oh, yes, he's good.

H: There's a man with talent! You read that and get ahold of the Nonesuch News, it'll also be in the Herald. It has to do with Watergate. He has a knack of coming up right to the knitty-and-gritty of the moment, of this day and age and so forth. Please list any other persons in the community who may have possessed some of the special skills listed in the question above. Well, you have been associated with a number of people in the historical society, etc., and oh yes, along with that you might want to comment more on that shop you had or little plant for construction of toys, now, how did you dispose of those? Were they put into local markets for disposal or did you have local

C: Local stores and I'd make a trip every couple weeks to Iron Mountain, Houghton, and Escanaba and even Green Bay. I had one of my items at Butler Brothers in Chicago, they wanted 50,000 of them; I couldn't produce them, they were little logging trucks, all made of wood

H: And now somebody in Iron River has been doing that for the last 10 years that I know of; they have little trains and logging trucks and very highly polished hardwood, varnished; now here are some questions on ethnic identity. America has been sometimes described as being a melting pot of many nationalities and their respective cultures. In this section of survey, we are interested in finding out to what degree you, your parents, and your children have preserved an interest in the language, culture, folkways, and so forth of your own ethnic group. These are weighted answers like No. 3 is active, No. 2 is occasionally active and no. 1 non-active. Now for example, would you say that your parents were interested in social, fraternal organizations, much, some or hardly at all?

C: Hardly at all, I would say. As far as I can remember.

H: Did any of this historical interest in things historical, rub off on you from your father?

C: No.

H: Is there any (excuse me if my memory is failing me), but did you mention about Royce being musically talented at all?

C: He loves music; he doesn't play any instruments but he loves opera

H: As an actor he has occasion to sing

C: He sings a little, his singing isn't too good; he loves good music, he has a lot of good records

H: With regard to religion, your folks came from protestant Finland and they were members
undoubtedly of Lutheran Church which was known as the Suomi Synod Church, or were they not so interested in things religious?

C: No, my father wasn't, because when he was in Finland, he practically lived in the church; his parents made him go to church, he was in church everyday, I guess, he sang in the choir; he had lead tenor in the church choir; he spent so much time in church that when he came over to this country, he made up his mind he wasn't going to go to church any more, and he didn't.

H: Well, with other aspects, too, I've heard many say that that was a church and state together and the Bishop came around to crack the whip over the people; and a lot of people resented the church for that.

C:

H: So then, charitable organizations—was your father or your mother active in certain fund drives

C: No, not that I can remember

H: Any other group activities that you think would be applicable/either of your parents? Now we go into your own interests with regard to different associations and ethnic origins and so forth—would you say that you were actively interested in social, fraternal organizations? Would you construe that to mean Kaleva Lodge, or Eagles or, those are social, fraternal.

C: Ya. I belong to Lions, I was a charter member of the Ontonagon Lions

H: Then you would be listed as being active, very definitely active in social, fraternal organizations. Historical—we already covered that and your own interest in music—just music appreciation or have you played instruments?

C: I play a piano with one finger, by ear.

H: Your own religious aspirations—you are a member of a local

C: Yes, Siloa Church

H: Siloa Lutheran Church. If it isn't being too personal, you can refuse to answer this next question, having been interested in religion and having gone from faith to another, total rejection of it, did your father of a later date find a more charitable attitude toward the church in this country then? As far as you know.

C: As far as I know, he didn't. When he was buried, when he died, we had him in the church for the funeral service.

H: Some more on ethnic organizations: did your parents encourage you to be active in ethnic organizations; what would there have been of ethnic? One that comes to my mind because I'm a member of it, is Kaleva Lodge and Lions which you're a member is not necessarily ethnic organization, it's fraternal, there is no great—when you get into certain other ethnic communities they have their—often, church picnics but they're regular carnivals, like the Slovish picnics, and the Polish picnics, and so forth; the Finns used

C: We used to have picnics every summer, I don't know how many of 'em during the summer

H: Even without being members of any specific organizations

C: Ye
H: People just decided they wanted a picnic

C: Yes, they really picnicked

H: Ya, and they had for the men and the older boys, shooting galleries and so forth
And the typical ethnic foods were served. This is a "yes" or "no"--I have encouraged
my children to participate in various ethnic organizations and their activities.
Maybe they have not had occasion but I am sure, supposing Royce would have an opportunity
to put on a play or theatrical production of ethnic origin, well, he certainly wouldn't
have shied away from it

C: No. Well, he did, those productions that he had in Ontonagon

H: Those were Suomi singers

C: Yes, but he started, in one of his productions he had one of--portions of it, was just
Finland; Finnish customs and all that

H: So there is a tie in there

C: Oh, yes, very definitely; and he's very much interested too in Finnish.

H: Do you feel that interest in ethnic identity is dying out among children, among your
children and people of their age?

C: Well, I suppose to a degree

H: There is a ground wave, some kind of a swell arising now trying to return back to this
interest, origins, and teaching it in school. Public schools have not placed sufficient
emphasis on the contribution of ethnic groups, do you agree to that? That public
schools should place more emphasis?

C: Yes, yes, it should.

H: Churches--do you believe churches should place greater emphasis on preserving the
language and customs of ethnic-minded members?

C: Ya, I do

H: I happen to belong to a lodge that in the past has been conducting their services in
Finnish and now besides the attrition of membership due to death, they're losing members
because some of the older ones aren't too well versed in English, so when they changed
the services to English from Finnish, some of them have dropped out. I talked to a lady
yesterday, who dropped out for that reason. So they would find it very difficult to find
sufficient interest to teach any ethnic--teach any foreign language nowadays. The schools
teach them and we're fortunate that they've had Finnish classes in the area by the adult
education. Interest in ethnic customs is nostalgic and will have little bearing on the
future history and education of people in this area. Do you feel that that's a true
statement? That ethnic customs will have little bearing on the future history? And
Education. I myself think it won't have much impact on it.

C: No, no

H: It's sufficient if they tolerate it. Regardless of what my own personal feeling is

C: Yes.

H: Which of the following aspects of your personal life do you feel have been greatly in-
fluenced by your ethnic background? Here is 1, 2, or 3. Have your personal habits,
with eating, drinking, and dress, have they been influenced greatly by your ethnic background?

C: No

H: What about celebration of holidays and special events? What kind of a tie-in between your ethnic origin in those interests?

C: No

H: Social and political attitudes? You have mentioned with regard to your duty as a judge you had occasion to serve as interpreter for these, so there's a tie-in there. Reading newspapers and books; do you find a great deal of interest in ethnic publications?

C: No

H: Here's one thing that you're going to give "A" for effort on and that is interest in music, drama, poetry, and art.

C Yes

H: Do you remember any specific ethnic customs carried on by your parents to recognize the significance of the following events in your family? If so, please identify them briefly. Births and baptism--any special rites or considerations

C: Not that I can remember

H: Child rearing and discipline--would you say that your folks brought with them from the old country, a discipline that's much tighter than what we're experiencing today?

C: Oh, yes, because those days when a child did something bad he was taken to the woodshed. Paddled.

H: And the father was the ruler of the household and when he spoke that was it.

C: That was it!

H: Courtship and marriage. Anything special that you might add?

C: No.

H: Religious festivals? There hasn't been any great ones around here. National holidays? We discussed that a little earlier, summer picnics; I believe in a large measure that community picnic was a carry-over from the parents experiencing something like that in the old country.

C: Yes. Juhamnus was one of the picnics. Fourth of July.

H: Ya. Sickness and death. I'll ask you a couple questions on this: what were your parents' opinions with regard to bleeding, cupping; kuppari, did they

C: I don't remember if I ever heard them talk about it or

H: And of course it's too early to get much information on it, but people in the country are already becoming interested in accupuncture, I've heard of several claims of healing in Oregon Country.

C: So have I.
Dr. Kuitunen from Ironwood is supposed to be the practitioner.

H: Which of the customs mentioned above have you continued to observe in your family tradition? Community picnic, at least that.
C: He is.
H: How would you relate your parents' ability to adjust to local community situations in the following areas in the same weighted answers again?
C: They didn't; of course, she died when she was quite young, she was only 38 when she died, and my father spoke broken; little difficulty I 'spose.
H: Did your father experience any great difficulty in finding employment, and into that you could possibly read, his being of ethnic origin, did that affect his ability to find employment?
C: I don't believe so.
H: I wouldn't imagine that they had any difficulty, did they both become naturalized citizens?
C: Yes
H: They were interested, most naturalized people are more faithful to vote than a person who is born in
C: That's right.
H: How would you rate your ability to adjust to local community situations in the following areas: learning the English language, that was just second nature to a person born in this country; your own ability to get along with other nationalities; now as a probate judge, you have plenty of experience in that,
C: Yes, got along with all of 'em
H: You know a fellow who I like to read and who finds every time I come out with a new book, why, I get a comment, or I send him one or somebody else does, and that's Judge Voelker; there's a fellow who writes in 7 languages, not fluently but he can tell you jokes in Polish and Italian and Swedish and Finnish and all that, German, so he has great rapport with all nationalities for that. Has everything always been rosy for you, Charlie, well, you already did mention involvement in that toy factory, so there has been personal set backs.
C: Oh, yes. Little bit.
H: But nothing of drastic consequences.
C: No, no
H: Political involvement—your political involvement has always been happy I would take it
C: Ya
H: And now here are: how would you say that the local community adapted to the following events in the area? Local copper and iron strikes? Do you think that most of the
people worked together to overcome the hardships or did they---were they indifferent to it or did they have a great deal of conflicting opinion?

C: There were conflicting opinion, of course, if you weren't connected with the mine of course,

H: Ya. There is a tendency amongst the---even families of the miners, every strike that goes on here some say that the merchants put the women up to this, that get your husband back to work, but that boils over, that occurs only for that strike period, of course, in a community that has several different unions, you run into this more frequently rather than if there was one union, so you see quite a turmoil at times at the end of the contract. Do you recall any particular stir in this community regarding involvement in World War I?

C: No

H: Did a majority of the people seem to think that our country says, we fight Germany, we fight Germany?

C: No, I don't remember anything like that.

H: There were some in World War I and World War II, I heard that myself in World War II protesting against U.S. involvement, the German-American Bund did that in Lake Forest protesting American involvement and wanted to see Hitler win. And the Great Depression. What recollections do you have about the great depression? That was the time that you had your toy-making venture, wasn't it?

C: No. Depression was 1930.

H: This was after the depression?

C: Ya. I worked during the '30's. I was occupied all the time.

H: Charlie, how would you rate the future of the local area? And here are the different items that could affect it. Do you believe that tourism is our best economic hope in this area? You would have to weigh tourism against the mines.

C: Tourism is a big factor.

H: Supplement the mines.

C: Ya, just a supplement, of course, the tourist industry is a big industry, especially now with all year, skiing and snowmobiling

H: That's something we'd all like to have the answer to. Will mining be the most important local industry in the future?

C: I think so.

H: Do you think that the interest in ethnic conditions will decrease or increase?

C: Increase.

H: Do you think more people will settle here? I think there is a trend among people who are retiring.

C: Retiring.

H: They want to buy a plot of land and get away from the city, like the riots and that

C: That's true.
H: To finish on the lighter side, how would you answer these questions on wit and wisdom amongst local residents? We're trying to find out here.

(end of tape)
January 16, 1975

Mr. Charles Willman
Ontonagon, Michigan

Dear Charles:

Thank you very much for your cordial letter and the copy of your excellent article on "Ontonagon County in the Civil War." We are pleased to have it for our archives, and I am taking the liberty of making an additional xerox copy for Nick Faller who was our studio guest last Wednesday for Heritage Line. Given his keen interest in the Civil War, he will appreciate reading the fine article which you have prepared.

Again, many thanks for your assistance in this program and other heritage efforts. Best wishes to you and Mrs. Willman.

Sincerely,

Artik Puotinen

Handwritten note: "Please xerox this article. X for Nick Faller. Original goes in our Off. files under Charles Willman. Thanks."
Dr. Arthur Puettinen  
Suomi College  
Hancock, Michigan

Dear Art:

 Heard only part of the Heritage Line program on Wednesday - thought the enclosed paper I wrote on "Ontonagon County in the Civil War" might be of interest and possibly serve as reference material.

Sorry I did not have any covers left - perhaps you can take care of this there. Did not have time to look for one as my wife and I are leaving for California tomorrow.

Sincerely yours,

Charles Willman
ONTONAGON COUNTY IN THE CIVIL WAR
by Charles Willman

FOREWORD

It is not generally known to what extent remote areas such as the Ontonagon Country were affected by the Civil War. For this reason the following account, relating to the western portion of the Upper Peninsula during this conflict, is being offered as a contribution at the beginning of this centennial commemoration, and as a small tribute to those who served.

The keynote here is copper.

Copper had been discovered and was being mined in the Ontonagon region only a few short years prior to the Civil War; and, it all started with the "Ontonagon Boulder".

This famous "Boulder" - over three thousand pounds of pure copper, found lying in the Ontonagon River several miles upstream from its mouth, now resting in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., drew attention to this area (known in Europe as early as 1660), leading to the discovery of the copper deposits and the mining developments which followed.

To this writer it seems reasonable to believe that settlement of this area would have been delayed for many years had it not been for the "Boulder" - and there would have been no story to tell of this historic period.

But, the "Boulder" was there - and its discovery timed perfectly to provide the war effort with this essential mineral. Could it be that the Creator arranged it that way?

But that is another story. 

March 1961

Charles Willman
"ONTAGON COUNTY IN THE CIVIL WAR"

News that the differences between the North and the South had erupted into war reached the Lake Superior port town of Ontonagon, Michigan, by one of the early boat arrivals soon after navigation opened in the spring of 1861 – water being the sole means of commerce and travel to and from this remote area on the south shore of the Lake, almost completely isolated during the winter months.

It is understandable then that a boat arrival, especially in the spring was cause for excitement – the entire population, dropping all activities, including church services, gathering at the dock, eager to greet and converse with travellers from the outside world, extending warm hands in friendship with most cordial hospitality, a trait very much in evidence among the people of this community to this day.

Mails arriving irregularly during the winter months from Green Bay by dog team (Peter White to Marquette in the 1850’s and Joel Millard to Ontonagon in the 60’s) and from Wausau, Wisconsin by foot carrier Luke Welch – age 16 and his father James Welch) or by stage (Edward Sales & Samuel P. Bell), kept the inhabitants informed on developments of the strife between the states and the election campaign, which they followed with avid interest. For these were a patriotic and loyal people, vitally concerned and hopeful to the last that the South would concede without bringing about a bloody conflict.

Here, from the time the first settlers arrived in 1843, the 4th of July was celebrated with genuine fervor – the event diligently commemorated with a degree of hilarity but also that touch of propriety befitting the occasion. When the gatherings were small in the early years it was a day for a special feast, with toasting, singing and reading of the Declaration of Independence. The tempo changed of course when the crowds grew larger.
resolution that "a State has the right to secede from the Union" did not get a single vote!

And here the people were highly offended when the area was slighted or ignored in statistical reports, or otherwise, and were quick to retort in newspaper columns. One such instance occurred when the Detroit Tribune, in Dec. 1859, published a list of Michigan cities and towns with population over 250, according to "Howes' Michigan Gazetteer" - But not one town in the Upper Peninsula was mentioned! And there were several! Marquette, Eagle Harbor, Eagle River, Houghton, Ontonagon with population over 900, and Rockland (Webster & Rosendale) 2500.

George D. Emerson, co-editor of the Lake Superior Miner (est. 1855 by Carson & Bradford) with J. W. Crozer, was indignant as he queried in his columns, "Who is this man Howes'? Is he unacquainted with the fact Michigan has an appendage called the Upper Peninsula?" "Will someone enlighten us, ere we separate the Upper from the Lower Peninsula?", he added. (Mr. Emerson entered the service under the enrollment plan in 1862. In 1861 he was occupying the chair of Mining at the State Geological School of Missouri).

Instances such as this (recognized only at tax collection time by the state tax department - according to Mr. Emerson) led the people of Upper Peninsula to file a petition with the State legislative bodies in 1868, presenting a strong case why they should be permitted to separate from the State of Michigan to form a new State of "Superior".

Yes, these were a spirited people, struggling to establish themselves in this new area, which they believed to contain great mineral wealth (and it was quite true, for in 1961 it has been determined that copper deposits here are almost endless), ever optimistic of a bright future for this wilderness frontier - with dreams that this would one day be a copper
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known to him who governs all, but we are ready for the call and eager to
advance. We may tell you a tale sometime. For the present, good-bye"
He had much to tell and would have told it well, but he was among those
killed in a battle a few days later.

Menadue left surviving him his widow Hannah, and children, James, Jane
and Isabel. Hannah later married Richard Matthews of Greenland.

The first actual recruiting was done during August and September 1861
when 94 men enlisted, 84 of whom were assigned to Co. A. of the 16th Inf.
Mich. Reg. under Capt. Thomas S. Barry of Detroit. Many more are believed
to have enlisted earlier at other points (Port Huron, Detroit, etc.) for
whom the county received no credit. In this group were five married men
Charles Abele, Caspar Gordon, Patrick Pullery, Charles Leary and Charles
Uberoth.

Killed in action at Chickahominy, Va., June 27, 1862 from this unit were
Henry Weiss, Henry Bolm, Charles Bester, Ormand Bechard, George Hartman
and Mathias Stark. Two others died of wounds and 3 were discharged for
disability. (Note German names - almost 100 of the total volunteers were
of German descent).

Some of the engagements the 16th participated in were: Yorktown - April
4 to May 4, 1862; Bull Run - Aug. 30, 62; Gettysburg - July 1-2-3, 1863;
Wilderness - May 5-7, 1864; Spottsylvania - May 18, 64; Cold Harbor
June 7, 1864; Petersburg - June 18, 64; Weldon R.R. - Aug. 19-20-21, 64;
Appomatox Court House - April 9, 1865

During this first period of enlistments in 1861 there was no extra re-
muneration as an inducement to volunteer - soldiers’ pay of $11 per month
only. Bounties were not provided until the following year.
On Aug. 5, 1862, Daniel Plummer, of Rockland, former supervisor (1855-56) from Pewabic Township (area west of the Ontonagon River extending to the Wisconsin State line) and County Sheriff 1857 thru 1860, petitioned the board of supervisors for a bounty to be paid to volunteers in a company he was organizing, consisting of 89 men - 66 from Rockland and 23 from Ontonagon.

At this meeting the board allowed $20 for each recruit and provided that payment be met from the Court House Building Fund, which amounted to $6,000. This county building had been held in abeyance since 1860 because of the unsettled internal affairs of the nation and was not constructed until 1886. In the meantime office space for county officers was rented in the basement of the Bigelow Hotel and the basement of the Presbyterian Church, and, District Court was held in the Firemen's Hall.

At later meetings, as the war progressed and the need for more troops increased, the bounty was raised to $40, then to $146 and in 1864 to $440, the board borrowing funds to meet payment.

Capt. Daniel Plummer resigned his commission on April 20, 1864, leaving the army after serving 2 years. Apparently felt he deserved a promotion which was not granted. This is only surmise, based on Menadue's expression of his feelings regarding the resignation, saying in his letter to Mr. Crozer, "We do not think he was fairly dealt with after commanding the Regiment through the campaign in Tennessee".

In his call for more troops in 1862, as further inducement President Lincoln set a bounty of $50, and in 1863 the War Dept. allowed $15 to agents for each recruit secured and the bounty was raised to $302 for enlistment and $402 for re-enlistment. Meanwhile the State Legislature (1863) authorized a $50 bounty and in 1864 it was raised to $100 for one
year enlistment, $200 for two years and $300 for three years.

Although an enrollment had been made, preparatory to a draft, by act of Congress requiring the registration of all males eligible for military duty between the ages of 18 and 45, drafting of troops was not necessary in the Upper Peninsula.

Running low on recruit material during a period in 1864, the board of supervisors unanimously agreed to accept the offer of one Capt. Phillips for transfer of 20 men from Marquette Co., where they were not needed. If these men were actually received into the army they would each have received $400 bounty from Ontonagon Co., $100 from the State for each year of enlistment and $302 from the War Dept. And, Capt. Phillips too would have received his agents fee of $15. But it is not known at this point if these bounties were paid to this group - county records for the period Oct. 13, 1864 thru 1880 were destroyed in an attempt to cover up irregularities in manipulation of funds.

The enrollment record for 1862 had 531 men listed from Rockland, 164 from Ontonagon and 76 from Pewabic, Greenland and Algonquin Townships, for a total of 771 eligible for military duty. In 1863 there were 843 including one colored - a William Hill, age 43 and single. He was a mulatto and claimed to have been free born in Fredericksburg, Va. in 1817. Hill operated a shoe repair shop in Ontonagon and was a member of the first volunteer Fire Dept. in 1855. He is remembered for his many kindesses to needy families. Died here in 1907.

During the enrollment in 1863, Houghton Co. had 962 registered, Keweenaw 157 (2 colored) and Marquette-Schoolcraft 611 (2 colored).

Another colored man, Noel Johnson, a negro slave escaping into Ohio from Missouri, was brought here by Cyrus Mendenhall, a prospector, in 1848.
Mendenhall paid $250 to the estate of Wm. S. Pemberton of Missouri for Johnson's freedom to enable him to sell his rights in mineral lands to the Mass Mining Co. for which he received $10,000. Johnson died here in 1853 leaving his widow and two children.

In the order for recruitment of the 27th Regiment, it was directed that six companies be raised in the Lake Superior counties, but only three were filled. They were Co's. A., B. and C. Co. A. was headed by Capt. Daniel Plummer, 1st. Lt. Charles Waite, a school teacher from Rockland, and 2nd Lt. Daniel G. Cash, son of one of the very first settlers in Ontonagon.


These three companies rendezvoused for training at Port Huron, being transferred to Ypsilanti on Feb. 1863 when the 27th and 28th regiments were combined. The completed regiment, the 27th, was mustered into service with eight companies on April 10, 1863.

Some of the engagements the 27th participated in were: Siege of Vicksburg, Miss. - June 22 to July 4, 1863; Jackson, Miss - July 1 to 1863; Siege of Knoxville, Tenn. - Nov. 17 to Dec. 5, 1863; Wilderness, Va. - May 5, 6, 7, 1864; Spottsylvania, Va. - May 10, 11, 12, 1864; North Anna, Va. - May 24, 25, 1864; Cold Harbor, Va. - June 7, 1864; Weldon R.R., Va. - Aug. 19-20, 1864; Capture of Petersburg, Va. April 3, 1865

The 27th Inf. Mich. Regiment contained 2029 men. Six officers and 122 were killed in action, 2 officers and 84 men died of wounds, 4 officers 199 men died of disease. The regiment was cited by Congress for the
loss of one-third of its men.

Samuel Moody, a member of the officers who died (June 20, 1864) of wounds received in battle at Wilderness and Cold Harbor. In the action at Cold Harbor 89 men from this regiment were killed or wounded, Lt. Charles Miller of Rockland being one of them.

Daniel G. Cash, who joined this unit as a 2nd. Lt., was promoted to rank of Major by the time he was discharged on 7-26-65. He was wounded in battle at Wilderness and Cold Harbor, captured at Ream's Station but escaped to rejoin his regiment and wounded again at Petersburg, Va. After the war he settled in Duluth, Minn. where he became a prominent lawyer.

Sgt. James A. Crozer, son of the editor of the L.S. Miner and a printer by trade, was wounded at Wilderness and discharged for disability on 10-20-64. Crozer founded the Tribune at Escanaba, Mich, in 1869 and later bought and published the Herald at Menominee, Mich. He represented Menominee County in the state legislature in 1885 and was Commandant of the State Soldiers' Home at Grand Rapids 1897-98.

Corp. Arno Jaenig - wounded at Spottsylvania - returned to Ontonagon but moved to Houghton sometime after he married Adelaide Loranger on 1-23-69. Their children were - Frank, Walter, Mrs. John Vivian, Mrs. Erick Anderson, Mrs. Harvey Cornelier, Mrs. Benjamin Wieder, May and Belle. Jaenig served as Houghton Co. Register of Deeds 1892-93 and died at Laurium, Mich, 8-10-1914.

Sgt. Stephen Loranger, brother of Mrs. A. Jaenig, was wounded at Wilderness and discharged for disability 1-6-65. He was one of the very few who returned to Ontonagon to stay - served as County Treasurer 1867 to 1876 and again from 1883 to 1887 and 1897 thru 1900, and as Probate Judge in 1880.
Louis Vasseur, of French and Indian Blood, born in Canada, was 22 years of age when he enlisted at the beginning of the war and served to the end as a sharpshooter, part of the time under Capt. Nelson Trucsky. He was wounded and discharged for disabilities 2..-65 on small pension. His wife and 2 children preceded him in death, which occurred in June. Among his effects, stashed away in his family Bible was a receipted bill for coffin handles and coffin screws amounting to 30¢ (purchased from Alfred Meads) which appeared to have been the total cost for burial of his mother in 1876.

And the list of killed and wounded continues: Killed - Sgt. Alexander Long, John Falk, Joseph Dampgen (son of Nicholas Dampgen whose bill for hauling the cannon was rejected), Alexander Henry, John Hackett, Peter Dentz, all of Rockland, and P. Henry, Thos. Gorman, Henry Smith of Ontonagon. Wounded - Christopher McRae, John Death, Jr., Mathias Brambert, Henry Place, Robert Lane, John Rock, Peter Felkner, Stephen Pell, Michael Ducleaux, Jacob Heldt, Wm. A. Greenfield, James Patterson, Christopher Burns, Eben L. Johnson, George Miles, Herman A. Hadrick, Peter Cusick, Charles Waite, Fred Myers, C.W. Houghton and Wm. B. Wright, to name a few.

Twenty-five of these wounded returnees recorded their discharges with the County Clerk, apparently to qualify for benefits under the Soldiers' Relief Act, which provided $15 per month for disabled soldiers, and in case of death payment to continue to their families for one year. Ontonagon County expended $4,747.02 under this act; Houghton Co. $8,419.00; Keweenaw $3,620 and Marquette $7,989.16.

This record book of discharges also contains that of Augustus Schaffer, a private in Co. L. 4th Reg. of Artillery under Capt. Thomas Williams. Schaffer enlisted for 5 years on 10-11-49 and was discharged at Fort
Mackinac on 10-11-54. Shortly after arriving at Ontonagon in 1854 he began farming - the farm remaining and still occupied by his descendants. A grandson, Norman Schaffer, died here on Jan. 8, 1961.

Others among those with distinguished service records were: William Freeman, who entered service as a private and was mustered out a Captain. He died of the fever during the war. His widow, Frances Brown of Greenland, later married Job Dowd who leave a long list of descendants.

Raine A. Hadwick of Rockland rose from a private to Brevet Major; Charles Waite from a Lieutenant to Brevet Brig. General; William B. Wright, Eagle Harbor, reached Lt. Col. rank; Frederick Myers became a Major; James Moynaham, Copper Harbor, from Sgt. to Capt. and John Berry, Ontonagon, Sgt. to 1st Lieutenant.

The men and boys from this area who have been mentioned, and many others whose names are not available, compiled a record not only to their own credit but to the glory of the region. They were part of the Michigan forces who drew the praise of Adj. Gen. John Robertson, saying in one of his reports, "The troops from the State of Michigan have gained a prominent position in the armies of the Nation. They have done their duty faithfully and fearlessly, and borne the brunt of many well fought battles —".

And Gov. Austin Blair, in his message to the legislature in 1863, said, "Their battle cry is 'Michigan, Remember Michigan', and Michigan must remember them! I hope you will in some appropriate way, place upon the enduring records of the State your appreciation of the valor and patriotic devotion of these brave men —". Resolutions to this effect were adopted and carried out by the legislature.

But nothing has been done locally to remember this episode in the early
History of this Ontonagon Country - and it does not seem right that attention should be focused upon it only during centennial years. Now, during this centennial commemoration, would appear to be an appropriate time to take steps for preserving this record by the erection of a memorial to the memory of these men in the new Museum building planned for construction in Ontonagon in the very near future.

It is interesting to note that 25 returning veterans recorded discharges and about the same number of descendants of Civil War soldiers (not including children and grandchildren of those named) have been located and living in Ontonagon County (at this writing), listed as follows:


Mrs. P. A. Erickson - granddaughter of Stephen Loranger.

Donald, Jack and William Miles - grandsons of George Miles.

George DuCleaux, Ewen, grandson, and Mrs. Gus Erickson, Rockland, great-granddaughter of Michael DuCleaux.

William, Thomas and Harry Ross - grandsons of George Gotschenberger.

Mary and Lorraine Hedrick, and Mrs. Elmer Drier - great-granddaughters of George Gotschenberger, and grandnieces of Wm. A. Hadrick.

Mrs. William Daniels and Norman Ham, children, and Earl Hamm, Lawrence Hamm and Mrs. George Heinz, grandchildren of Theodore Ham who served in the Union Army from Iowa and was wounded at Gettysburg. (Mrs. Daniels recalls that the family lived with Mrs. J. K. Paul when they arrived here).

Mary and Bertha McCanna - daughters of John McCanna and granddaughters of Henry McCanna - father and son, serving in the same unit with a contingent from New York.

Mrs. Edward J. Carlson - granddaughter of G. William Abrahamson who served in Company K - 84th Regiment Illinois Volunteer Infantry. Mrs. Carlson is the wife of the pastor of Siloam Lutheran Church, Ontonagon.
Mrs. Charles Hebert - granddaughter of Charles Forest who lived in the Lac Vieux Desert area in Wisconsin and served from that State. Forest met his death by freezing while walking from Wisconsin to Rockland and buried in Rockland.

Arthur J. Walker - great-grandson, Shelley Fraser, grandson and Mrs. Marvin Takala, great-great-granddaughter of Alfred Fraser of Ionia. Fraser was killed in action during the burning of Georgetown. Arthur J. Walker is also the great-great-grandson of Sheldon Curtiss of Saranac who served in Co. M. 6th Mich. Cavalry, part of Custer's Cavalry Brigade.

T. L. Chamberlain - grandson of Elias Lillie - volunteered on Lincoln's first call, enlisting from Ionia County. Died in Andersonville Prison. In private life had been a school teacher in the daytime and gave vocal lessons in the evening.

* * * * * * * * *

For part of the time during these war years the district (Houghton and Ontonagon Counties) was represented in the legislative bodies of the State by Ontonagon men. Joseph Coulter of Algonquin township (now Bohemia) served as State Senator in 1861. Mr. Coulter was the supervisor from Algonquin township from 1854 thru 1860, Supt. of the Douglas Houghton Mine during this same period and had a mine operating which bore his name.

During these early copper mining years, it was the superintendents of the mines who were elected as supervisors - apparently because of their high standing in the community and also being men of influence and ability. And able men were scarce - at times being called upon to serve two offices - such as Daniel Pittman who was County Clerk and also Justice of the Peace at the same time in 1856, issuing marriage licenses and performing the ceremony too.


To the House of Representatives Ontonagon sent Abner Sherman; a lawyer, to serve from 1853 to 1858 and again in 1863.
Only three others from Ontonagon County have represented the district as Senators since Mr. Coulter. They were - William Willard, Jr., 1869-70; James Mercer 1883; and Willis F Sawyer 1893.

In the House of Representatives, in addition to Abner Sherman, Ontonagon Co. has had John Greenfield - 1859; George C. Jones - 1865; Luther G. Emerson (Rockland) - 1867; William Harris (Rockland) - 1873-74; James Mercer - 1881-82; James K. Jamison - 1935-36; Isadore A. Weza - 1937-39; and William C. Stenson (Greenland - 1941.

John B. Bennett is the only Ontonagon man to have attained a seat in Congress. He was first elected in 1942 and served during 1943 and 44, and has held that office continually since 1947, having been re-elected in 1960.

Augustus Coburn of Ontonagon had the distinction of being one of the six presidential electors from Michigan in 1860 to cast his vote for Abraham Lincoln. John H. Constock was chosen as an elector in 1892, and James Burtenshaw of Greenland served as a delegate to the 1867 Constitutional Convention. The Constitution as revised by this Convention was rejected by the voters.

Mr. Coburn was the first Ontonagon County Treasurer (1854) and later served as a supervisor, harbor commissioner and in various other capacities. He and Abner Sherman lost their lives when the steamer "Sunbeam" sank in Lake Superior on August 23, 1863. His widow and children moved to Corydon, Indiana, from where the family originated, a short time after the disaster.

* * * * * * * *

Harbor improvement was affected just as building of the Court House
had been curtailed because of the war. The Harbor, a natural at the mouth of the Ontonagon River, kept filling in with sediment preventing vessels from entering - and it was costly to load and unload with small boats. Much work had been done building piers, dredging, etc. - mostly by Charles T. Harvey who completed building the Soo Locks in 1855 - but much more was necessary to keep this lifeline in effective operation for import of provisions and supplies and export of copper.

In petitioning Congress for aid on the Harbor project, which they had refrained from doing earlier for patriotic reasons during the war, pointed out with pride that they had done so much on their own before asking for Government aid, stating that over $100,000 had been expended by mining companies, vessel owners, private individuals and the County.

Now, with the war ended and lake traffic increased very extensively, they felt the harbor was no longer a local problem entirely, but was deserving of Government attention and help, an absolute necessity for completion of the project.

In this petition they also pointed with pride to what had been done here during the war for aid of wounded soldiers, offering the following copy of proceedings from a meeting held at Washington, March 1865:

"At a meeting of the "Michigan Soldiers' Relief Association" of Washington, held this evening at the rooms of the President, the object of coming together at this time was stated, to take suitable action in response to the donation from the citizens of Ontonagon County, to this association, amounting to $6,017.43, to be expended for the benefit of the sick and wounded soldiers." After reading the communications accompanying the money, Dr. H. J. Alvord presented the following resolution: "RESOLVED, That we challenge the Union to produce another instance in which a laboring population of only 5,500 souls have contributed for the relief of disabled soldiers, an amount so munificent as have the people of Ontonagon, Mich."

This generous contribution was raised at a dinner and ball held on Washington's Birthday, Feb. 22, 1865, in the famous Bigelow House -

-16-
grand hotel of the whole Lake Superior region, five stories high, built in 1850 at a cost of $28,000.

It was in this hotel that the gentlemen financiers from the east gathered and met with prospectors and explorers for planning and making their mining deals; where public meetings were held; where county officers were quartered and Carson & Bradford printed the first issue of the Lake Superior Miner in August 1855.

This center of such varied activities, the finest hotel north of Chicago in its day, was destroyed on Aug. 25, 1896; when a fire broke out in a swamp west of the village during a high wind, wiping out the entire town, taking with it many other historic landmarks and relics of the past, and miraculously only one life.

The fatality in this conflagration was Mrs. Albertine Pirk, an invalid 67 years of age. Mrs. Pirk, a widow, died in her living quarters on the site now owned by Milton Hegg and occupied by the Michigan Employment Service at 540 River St. Two grandchildren, Mrs. Stanley Mannan and Walter Geist, and a number of great-grandchildren, descendents of Louis Geist and Paul Geist, deceased, are still living in Ontonagon.

* * * * * * *
Ontonagon rose from these ashes so long ago - yet many of the problems and conditions prevalent 100 years ago are very similar to those present in 1961.

Harbor improvement is one of the important topics of the day, and actively promoted - as are roads and transportation; copper mining is flourishing once again - with only one mine operating instead of 100; dreadful thoughts of war are present and boys are enlisting or being drafted into the Armed Forces; there are always drives to raise funds for many worthwhile and benevolent purposes (Red Cross, Polio, etc.); and there are those who dream too!

And this is a changing world?

* * * * * * *

(Inserted in the Congressional Record, dated June 14, 1961, by Hon. John B. Bennett)
Notes:

1 - Thomas Stripe first visited Ontonagon in 1846 with Charles Ongie (Mineral Range Railroad employee 1899), both as employees of the Hudson Bay Fur Co. Stripe did not remain here at that time but returned to the Soo where he lived for three years and again headed for Ontonagon, residing here until his death October 31, 1899.

In the winter of 1855, when the people were faced with starvation because a supply boat did not arrive in the fall, he was among a group who went to Eagle Harbor by dog team (a rugged and hazardous trip) for supplies. Flour they brought back sold for $25 per barrel. In 1862 he was appointed Light House Keeper, a job he held for 22 years. He left surviving him three sons, Edward, Thomas, Jr. and Cornelius, and three daughters, Mrs. John Fuller, Dora Stripe and Mrs. William Burgeon. (From obituary in the Ontonagon Herald, dated Nov. 4, 1899.) Grandchildren still living in the area are Lawrence, Archie, Donald, Miss Leah Stripe, Mrs. Fred Dunham, Mrs. Clarence Trimberger and Mrs. Gerald DeHut, Sr.

2 - Nicholas Voelker, grandson of Justice John D. Voelker, owned and operated the Ontonagon Brewery in 1859, manufacturing a "fine line for present use and stock ales." He moved to Presque Isle with his family in 1866. Justice Voelker is the author of "Anatomy of a Murder", "Small Town D.A.", "Danny and the Boys", and "Trout Madness".

3 - Samuel Moody was a well known sea captain on Lake Superior - at one time captained the Siskowit. In 1850 he was a Road Commissioner and Justice of the Peace in Marquette Township, Marquette County, and apparently served in some capacity at the Cleveland Mine as he spent a summer and winter there. When he moved to Houghton is not known.

The Julia Palmer, a small side wheel steamer 125 feet in length, with Samuel Moody as the Captain, brought Fanny Cash, wife of Daniel S. Cash, and their 2 children, Agnes and Daniel G., to Ontonagon in the late fall of 1847. The steamer left Sault Ste. Marie on October 24, 1847 and arrived on November 14, after a stormy voyage. It is believed their son, William Cash, was the first white male child born in Ontonagon, on December 6, 1848.

4 - William B. Wright served in the Black Hawk War at age 18, later in the Indian War of Florida. In 1846 he was in charge of Fort Wilkins as Ordnance Sergeant. After the Civil War he operated the Phoenix Hotel at Eagle River and was Sheriff of Keweenaw County in 1880.
Sources of information:

Material from collection of Ontonagon County Historical Society.

County Records - Supervisor's Proceedings 1853 thru 1864; Probate Court; Marriage records, etc.

Lake Superior Miners - scattered issues - 1856 thru 1868 - Ontonagon County Historical Society. (Many of these were contributed by Marquette County Historical Society).

Historic Michigan - Vol. III - George N. Fuller.

Michigan Manuals - 1907 and 1957-58.

"This Ontonagon Country", "Ontonagon Families up to the Civil War" and "Mining Ventures of this Ontonagon Country" - James K. Jamison.

History of Upper Peninsula - Western Historical Co., A. T. Andreas, Prop. 1883.


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