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

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

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*Excellent Interview-Extremely Informative & Lively
This is Constance Parenti for the Souni College Oral History Project, on August 9, 1973, at Eagle River, Michigan. We are at the home of Mrs. Edith Yokie, who will be recounting (her experiences) growing up in Hurontown, Michigan.

Mrs. Yokie, let's start with your maternal grandfather who arrived here first. I understand you wrote down some of your memories for your grandson. Do you want to read or talk from those first?

Yes. He wanted to know how we lived years ago without electricity, etc., and so I wrote down some of the things. This is a part of them:

In October, 1857 Thomas Trathen, my grandfather, came to America from Cornwall England. He came in a sailing vessel, which took six weeks to cross the Atlantic. He landed in New York and came part of the way by train. Then he traveled from the Soo by boat, landing in Eagle Harbor. He walked from Eagle Harbor to Hurontown, a distance of about fifty miles. There he had a job waiting for him in the old Huron Mine.

My grandmother, Jane Adams Trathen, came in August, 1858. She came by boat to Marquette and from there to Houghton by stagecoach. They settled in Hurontown and built a house where my mother was born in 1869.

In those early days the Portage, Frue and Huron mines were operating. Some of the early settlers took up homesteads, and one I recall vividly was called Staley, but there were many more.

There were many people coming from foreign countries to work in the copper mines. There were Irish, German, Italian, Polish, Swedes, Finnish, Croatians, and English. The English were mostly from Cornwall and were called "Cousin Jacks." This was because they had been under the British flag, the Union Jack.

Huron was quite a town in the early days and there were many of the old families whose names can no longer be remembered—but I remember

There were many Sullivan families and several with the same first names. So they all had nicknames to distinguish them. There was Mike Sullivan, Mikey-Big Dan, Red Mike and Mike Also, who people sometimes forgot that his name was Sullivan. Then there was Dennis Sullivan, Denny Ten Cents and Denny the Half-way, who lived half way between Hurontown and Houghton. There was Timothy Sullivan and Tim the Glory, Johnene Sullivan and Johnene Peg. He had a sister named Mary Ann and she was always called Mary Ann Peg. There was Jack Sullivan and Jack the Plasterer.

Some of the old timers had a band. It was known as the Silver Cornet Band. The leader was called Schmidt. When they would get together to practice, his son, who played piccolo, would always say, "What shall we play now, Father?" The old man would squak him in German, and then say in broken English, "We will now play number drei und (zwanzig) (23), "When The Leaves Begin To Fall." Jim Trathen played cornet and so did John Moon.

Sh-h-h-(To grandson who entered room. The sound of the wall clock can be heard ticking throughout).

One night Tim Driscoll had a little too much to drink at the saloon. He took a short cut home and got lost. Someone came along and heard him talking to himself saying, "A man lost, and a good man too." They helped him find his way home.

There were many small "locations" near the mines so no one had to walk very far to work. In the location and the Old Huron or Vinegar Point, as we called it, the houses were scattered. The Company rented the houses to the miners for one dollar a room.

About the turn of the century the Isle Royal Mining Company, which had taken over the Old Huron Company, built three rows of ten houses each near the Number Two shaft. This was known as Silver City because the houses were painted light grey.

There were several farms beyond Silver City on what we called the Farm Road. There lived the Jesticas, Harrys, Lehtis and others. There was another road south of this one, and we called it Paradise Road. It ran out past the Pilgrim River to Paradise Valley.
Sidney Trathen taught school there for a few years. This was about 1897. He walked from Hurontown every day. It was about four miles, and in the winter the snow was quite deep and the going slow, so sometimes he would be a little late. Then when the snow was gone and the weather nice he would be early. An elderly German gentleman was the janitor. He would get the fire going in the pot belly stove early in the morning so the school was warm when the children came. One day when Mr. Trathen was early the janitor said to him, "You used to be behind before, now you are so early at late." A few years later the school was closed and the pupils taken to Hurontown and Houghton to school. Mr. Trathen then taught at the Arcadian location on top of Quincy Hill. He walked there from Hurontown every day.

There was a location just east of the Number One shaft too. It was known as Number One location. There were a few farms near there too. People living there were Johnsons, Makies, Alsons, Rimpine, Antilla, and others. What is known as Dodgeville today was called "The Dodge" at that time.

There was an old abandoned house near the road at the Dodge. We would walk out that way on a summer afternoon. The old house had a piece of paper in an upstairs window. It looked like someone looking out. Everyone said it was a haunted house so we kept clear of it on the other side of the road. It was located where Chopp's Bowling Alley was later built.

The young people made their own fun. In winter we went sledding, skating, skiing, and snowshoeing. We had surprise parties and taffy pulls. Everyone got a little bit sticky, but all enjoyed it. In summer it was swimming in the Huron Dam, Hafen's creek or the Pilgrim River. We had marshmallow roasts and picnics, and sometimes stole cherries from Mike Dyer's orchard. When the Dam froze over we skated on it, but had to be careful as the ice was being harvested.

The men had big saws and could (would) cut a big square chunk of ice, then take it to the ice house. They cut ice every day until the ice house was full. The ice was covered in sawdust to keep it from melting. Then in summer it was sold to people and stores for their ice boxes. Frank Meyers sold ice for many years. The sign on the wagon was "Huron Dam Ice." We were never allowed to say "damn," so we always said, "There's the Dam Wagon!" and got away with it.

On New Year's Day, about 1883, or thereabouts, the dam broke. It washed away several houses in the West end of Hurontown and West Houghton. There were a number of people drowned. The roar of the water could be heard for miles. The dam was rebuilt, as it was the source of water for the Huron mine. Many years later it was drained for safety reasons, as the mine was no longer using it.

In those days, the road from Houghton to the Range towns ran through Hurontown. It came up the Bridge Hill and through the main street to the school. Then it turned right and ran down past the dam and "Frog Pool Grove,"
and up the hill to Atlantic. Then continued on in much the same route as today.

In the spring break-up the teamsters who drove the delivery wagons and sleighs had a hard time. The hills would be bare of snow, while the roads on the level and through the woods would still be deep in snow. So, the teamsters would haul the sleigh up empty, and leave it at the top of the hill, where there was still snow. Then go back and bring up the wagon, which was loaded. When they got to where the sleigh was, they had to transfer the load to the sleigh and deliver it to the Range towns or other locations. When they got back to the wagon they put the grocery baskets on the wagon and transferred the horses to the wagon and went back to the store.

P: They did a lot more grocery delivery in those days?

Y: Everybody. Nobody went to a grocery store in those days. The order man came one day and took your order and the next day he brought your order and put it on your kitchen table. You did not have to wait in line at a-

P: At a check-out counter?

Y: At a check-out counter.

Sometimes this exchange of loads had to be done for several days, until all the roads were bare. Some of the big loads were pulled by four horses. The wagons and sleighs had big brakes on them, to hold the wagon back going downhill.

The first fire house was on the Atlantic Road, just back of the school. It had a little steam engine and a two-wheel cart with a hose on it. The engine pumped water from wells and ditches. When that house burned down a new Fire Hall was built on Main Street. Charlie Mayworm once had a shoe store on the same site. The new building had a big hall on the second floor. It was used for concerts, plays and dances. The firemen had dances there often to raise money to keep up expenses. There was also a large dining room and kitchen on the first floor. There were many banquets and church suppers served there. There were also living quarters for the caretakers. Clarence Walters, his wife and children lived there for a long time. They were very hard working, pleasant people. That building burned too, and the present one was built. But it never became the social center the old one was.

Hennes' store was where, later on, Mutter's saloon stood. Kroll's had a store across the street from the church. Dave Dillon had a saloon on Main Street which later became Fink's. Casper's saloon was across the street from the fire hall. It became Shorty Urche's later on. John Stone had a livery stable on the corner near the Fire Hall. There was a tall building next to it, which we called Nick Sifert's Hotel.

John Rule also had a livery stable on one of the back streets in the
West side of Houghton. Wojack's saloon was on the last block going north on Main Street. It was called "First and Last Chance." It was the first chance coming into town and the last chance going out (laughter). Moon's store was across Main street from Mutter's saloon. We bought penny candy there. We could get a little tin fry pan with some marshmallow eggs in it and a tin spoon for a penny. Also jawbreakers. Liebetrau's Meat Market was across the street from the Fire Hall. Champion's Store was on the North end of Main Street on the West side and across the street was Hannon's Cigar Factory.

The slaughter house was out West of town on the Atlantic Road. There they slaughtered cattle to supply several butcher shops in the surrounding towns. Ernest Liebetrau owned one in Hurontown. It had sawdust sprinkled on the floor. Whenever we were sent there for meat, he would give us a frankfurter to eat on the way home. Saturday, we always bought a dried salt codfish; took it home and put it to soak all night, and then had it for breakfast. That's what's known as "Cousin Jack's Turkey". Soup bones were free and there was always a big piece of suet with any roast.

There was a barber shop next to Mutter's saloon. For a few years a colored man called Smith ran it. When he left, Reuben Berryman took over,

There was no church in Hurontown. A group of people got together and decided to organize a church. They organized a Methodist church, and for a while held services in an old building, which had once been a saloon. They did not have a resident minister. They shared a minister who served some other parishes as well. About 1870, they built a church building, which is still standing. All the members helped with the building. One of these was my grandfather. When the building was complete, it had twenty lamps and two chandeliers—all kerosene.

My grandfather sent one of his sons to fill the lamps each week. Then early Sunday morning, one of the boys would go and light the fire in the two stoves. They were box stoves and would hold a long stick of cordwood. The church was comfortable by ten-thirty when the service started. On Saturday afternoons, my mother and her sister were sent to clean out and dust the church. These chores were part of the family's weekly donation to the church.

One of the stoves, by chance was sold to Henry Ford for his museum and it is still there in Greenfield Village.

P: Oh, that's interesting.

Y: It was several years before the membership grew enough to have a resident minister. When they finally had a full time minister, the church board had to see to it he was paid a salary. They got the idea to ask the mining company to cooperate with them on a plan. The members who worked at the mine would sign up at the office to have a certain amount taken out of their pay each month. This to be paid to the minister by check from the company. In this way the minister received a check each month. The members
who worked at the mine would sign up at the office to have a certain amount
taken out of their pay each month. This to be paid to the minister by check
from the company. In this way the minister received a check each month.
The members who did not work at the mine gave their donations to the
church treasurer, so we were able to keep a full-time minister. Several
years later a parsonage was built.

The company hired a doctor, and he was paid the same way. Each married
man was charged a dollar a month. Single men fifty cents. This was
taken out of their pay, and the doctor got a check each month. The doctor
had an office at the mine, and he had office hours morning and evening.
Anyone could go to see the doctor if he were sick. He would dispense
pills or medicine, whatever was necessary. This was all free.

P: Did they have visiting nurses then?

Y: No. There was no visiting nurse. The doctor came when they needed him.

He had shelves full of bottles containing pills and medicines. If he
gave us cough medicine or any other kind, when it was used up we washed
the bottles and returned them to the doctor's office. The doctor had a
horse and buggy at his disposal at the company barn. He made house calls
in all winds and weather whenever needed. Sometimes he had a hard time
with a patient who didn't understand English.

The mining company built a big boarding house, but it couldn't accom-
modate all the men. So, many families took in a couple of boarders. Some
who couldn't speak English would try to board with an English family for
awhile so as to learn the language quicker. The miners worked a twelve
hour shift from six to six. In the winter time they never saw daylight
except on Sundays. Later on it was shortened to ten hours, seven to five,
and four o'clock on Saturdays. The men carried their lunch in round tin
pails. The pail had two sections. In the top was the food and the bottom
had tea or coffee.

There was a building at the mine called the "dry." Here the men changed
into their digging clothes. When the day's work was over, they changed
back into their street clothes and washed up before going home. The
digging clothes were like overalls. The material was called "drilling".
The pants and jacket were made of this. The shirt was blue chambray.
They all wore long underwear. They wore hobnail boots. They wore one
pair of socks and one pair of "nips" in the boots. The nips were a tri-
angular piece of woolen cloth. They put their foot in it and folded the
three corners over the toe and instep. They wore hard hats and underneath
a skull cap. These were made of cotton and you had to make them at home;
you couldn't buy them.

P: The nips interested me.

Y: Yes.
P: Do you suppose they used help cushion their feet, or absorb moisture?
Y: Well, it was so the toes wouldn't go through so quickly.
P: I see.
Y: It was the three-cornered thing and you turned the corner up over your toe and it gave more room for your foot to move and kept your foot warm and still they didn't, like an ordinary stocking or hose, your toe would go through.
P: Did they have the hard-toed shoes do you know? Or were they regular leather?
Y: They didn't have the hard-toes like they have today. No.

The first miners used candles for light. They had a candle holder with a sharp point on it, so it could be stuck into a timber where they were working. They also had a candle holder on their hats. Later they got "sunshine" lamps. These were metal with a spout and wick. It also had a hook to be hung on their hats. It had a hollow space in the middle with a lid on it. The space was filled with "sunshine" and then the wick was lit; it would burn a long time. There was a barrel of "sunshine" outside the supply office. We kids would go there and swipe a chunk of it. It was like paraffin, but much oilier. We would chew it and spit out the oil until the oily taste was gone. Then we'd chew it. Then the men got carbide lamps. They hooked onto the hats too, but gave a much brighter light. They filled them with carbide and added a little water and lit it. Today they use electric lamps with batteries.

The mining captains wore white digging clothes. I don't know if it was a matter of prestige or just so the men could see the boss coming, but they always wore white ones. There was no compensation in those days. If a man was killed in the mine there was no help financially for his family. The widow usually had to do day work for any family who could afford to hire her. The mining company would give her a load of pulley blocks for fuel ones in awhile, when they changed the pulley blocks. They were wasted away and they were oily and they were very good for fuel. If she lived in a company house she would get free rent for about a year.

Every house had a well for water. The wells had a wooden box built over them. Each had a long slim pole with a crook on the end to hold the pail. They would put the pail on the pole and lower it into the water and pull it up. This was very unpleasant in the wintertime. In summer everyone had a rain barrel. We used that water for shampooing or anything that required soft water. Every family had a wet sink in the kitchen. Some had a pump connected to their well. Others didn't and the water pails stood in the sink. Usually, each sink had a wash basin and soap dish. On the wall near the sink, or on the back of a door, hung a roller towel. It was usually made of linen, about five feet long, and double. It was
put on the roller and could be pulled down so everyone had a clean spot to
wipe on. There was a comb case and mirror hanging close to the sink too.

Every house had a pantry where the food and dishes were kept. There
was always a flour barrel. When we got a sack of flour it was dumped into
the barrel right away. The flour came in ninety-eight and forty-nine
pound cloth sacks. There were no ten and five pound sacks like there are
today. This was equal to one half and one quarter of a barrel. The
sacks were washed and used to make underwear, pillow cases, dish towels,
and other things.

Each house had a wood and coal range. Most of them had a warming oven
to keep things warm after cooking and to warm plates in cold weather.
Some of the stoves had a reservoir to heat water. It was usually the
boys' job to see that the reservoir was full. Most of the time wood was
used for fuel, but on cold winter nights coal was put on the fire to hold
it overnight.

In the living room we had a big base burner stove. It had doors with
is inglass windows in them. It usually had a lot of nickel trimming on it.
There was a small place in the back where a small tea kettle sat. So,
there was always hot water for tea. When it was very cold we dressed
and undressed by the stove. Every fall the stove was put up and every
spring it was taken down and my mother said the only time her and my father
had an argument was when the stove was either going up or coming down
laughter

Kerosene lamps were the light we had. Every house had a lamp shelf.
Usually they had a lamp for each room. The girls were given the chore of
cleaning the lamp chimneys and trimming the wicks; also filling the
lamps.

Washing clothes was a big job. Usually the water was brought in from
the well or pumped the night before wash day. The water was heated on
the stove in a wash boiler, then dumped into a wooden wash tub. The
clothes were rubbed on a washboard with strong bar soap. Queen Anne or
American Family were most popular. After the white clothes were washed
in clean water in the wash boiler they were boiled. Then they were rinsed
in one tub and then put into another rinse water with bluing in it. Some
people had hand wringers, which clamped onto the tub, but many had to wring
the clothes by hand. We hung them out summer and winter. In the winter
the clothes would freeze stiff. When supper was over we brought them in
and hung them up in the kitchen to dry while we slept. No water was
wasted. After the washing was done, the kitchen floor was scrubbed. Then
the water was dumped on the garden.

Ironing was done with old cast irons, sad irons. They were put on the
stove to heat. Ironing took most of the day, and as the fire had to be
kept going hard all day, we usually had soup for supper. It could simmer
on the back of the stove while the irons were heating up. On cold winter
nights, we often took a hot iron, wrapped in some old underwear, to bed with us to keep our feet warm.

There were no bathrooms in those days. Every house had a privy or outhouse. Each family had a chamber set for each bedroom. It consisted of a washstand, big washbowl, large pitcher for cold water and smaller pitcher for hot water, and a soap dish. The washstand had a rack across the back for towels. There also was a chamber or slop jar for night use. There were no bath tubs, so the wooden wash tub was put near the stove on Saturday night and the children all had a bath in front of the stove, from the youngest to the oldest. Everyone had a bath.

The boys wore long black stockings and knee pants. The girls wore long black stockings too. So, it took a great deal of time to sort the stockings and put them in pairs after they were washed. Everyone in our family had his own special marking. One had one color and one another so they knew whose stockings they were.

Each summer the mining company hired two men to clean out the outhouses. They had a big wagon, with a box tank on it. The men had a bucket on a pole. They dipped out the contents and dumped it into the tank. Then took it out into the woods and buried it. The smell was horrible, and everyone knew when the "honey cart", as we called it, was coming. The driver had a funny name, and we couldn't pronounce it, so we called him "Tee-la-la" and the name always stuck.

Everybody had a garden and grew their vegetables. In the fall the basements were full. There were bins of potatoes and turnips, carrots and parsnips and cabbages. Cabbages hung from rafters by their roots. Eggs were preserved in what was known as "water glass" in a big crock. We always had a barrel or two of apples, usually one of russets. When we got a barrel of apples it was carefully opened and emptied on the kitchen floor. We all sat around in a circle with a clean cloth and wiped each apple and looked for spots. Then they were put in the dish pan and carried downstairs and put back in the barrel.

We had no refrigeration so in warm weather everything was kept in the cellar. The Sunday roast was cooked on Saturday and put in the cellar; then just heated up on Sunday. No one worked on Sunday. The vegetables for Sunday dinner were all pared and readied on Saturday. There was a trap door to the cellar. It was a job to lift it. Before and after every meal the food was got out and then put away again.

Everyone had red and black currant bushes in their yard. So we had jelly and preserves from these. We picked wild strawberries, raspberries and blackberries and preserved them too. Most families had a few chickens and a cow. Milk was sold to those who didn't have a cow. Five Cents would buy a five-pound lard pail full. In the summer when the flies were bad, we sprinkled "cow-ease" on the cows to keep off the flies.

Most people had a flower garden too: bleeding heart, primroses, mignonette
and forget-me-nots.

P: Oh, that's nice to hear! You seldom hear those; bleeding heart and mignonette and those names any more.

Y: I was able to get seed this year for mignonette for my own yard for the first time in years.

P: That smells so good.

Y: When the potatoes started to flower the potato bugs would be all over them. The kids had to pick the bugs off. We had a tin can with a little kerosene in it. We knocked the bugs into the can. When the bugs were extra bad the plants would be sprinkled with water mixed with paris green, a poison. When we got tired of picking potato bugs we would get some bull rushes and soak them in kerosene. When it got dark, we would light them for torches.

We never went to the grocery store in those days. The groceries were brought to us. There was an order man from Henne's or Ried's. He took the order one day and it was delivered next day. Flour came in barrels and cloth sacks. When the snow was deep and the driver couldn't get close to a house he would roll the barrel of flour over the snow to the back door. We bought crackers in large wooden boxes, like egg crates. The crackers were larger and thicker than they are today. Many of the groceries came in wooden boxes, starch and tea and so many things. We had no mail boxes or post office, so we had to go to Houghton post office for mail.

There were often accidents in the mine. Sometimes falling rock would kill a miner, or the blasting powder didn't go off as it should and would go off without warning. About 1915 there was a flood in the Number One shaft. While the miners were blasting out rock, they broke into an underground lake. Water rushed into the shaft with such force, it took three men who were in its path. They were washed to the bottom of the shaft and drowned. Four other men escaped by climbing back into the stope higher up on the rocks. At first it was thought that all were drowned. Then the mining captain thought it possible that some of the men could climb up in the back of the stope. The pumps were kept running night and day to pump out the water. Five days later, when the water got down to the level where they thought the men were, the captain and two other men went down. They had a small raft which they had built, and one man lay down on it so as to get into the low place where the stope opened. There, way back high up on the rocks, were the four men. They didn't know what day it was. All this time they had no light. The rescue men had thermos bottles with drinking water and hot soup. The men were taken up one at a time and taken to the doctor's office for examination. All seemed to be in fairly good condition so were taken home. The families of these men didn't know if they were alive or not until they were brought home. One of the men was to have been married the day after the flood.
happened. The bodies of the other men were found several days later after all the water was pumped out.

Hurontown had a chimney sweep; he was called Spearman. He would stand on the roof and drop a gunny sack with a weight in it down the chimney and pull it up again. He did this several times singing all the while. He always wore a stovepipe hat. He worked every day somewhere and was always singing. You could always hear him somewhere. (Interuption by grandson)

Then the Englishmen would tell us of the chimney sweeps in England. This was in the seventeenth century. They used small boys to climb through the flues. The buildings in the big cities were large and many families lived in one building so there were many flues. Some of them ran horizontally between the floors. The flues were two feet square, but extended from one end of the building to the other. The boys carried what was known as a "besom", which is a short broom. The men who hired these boys were known as custodians of the flues. They were paid one guinea a year and part of the proceeds from the soot. Soot was sold for a shilling a bushel and was used for fertilizer for parsley, carrots, etc. It was considered good luck to meet a chimney sweep. How anyone could be so happy and singing while doing such dirty work always puzzled me.

When a couple would get married all the kids in town would have a shivaree. What fun! We used cowbells, tin cans with stones in them, or anything that would make a noise. The groom always saw to it that we got a treat. Some of the foreign people would hire a two-seater surrey and have an accordion player sit with the driver. They would drive all around town with the music playing, so that everyone could see the bride.

The mine had a whistle which blew at six o'clock in the morning to get the men up and again at seven o'clock when work started. Then it blew at twelve noon and again at one. Then at five o'clock when the work stopped. When there was a fire it would blow and everyone looked to see where it was. If anyone was missing and they assumed they were lost, they would blow the whistle and try to find them; then round up some men to go in pairs to look for the lost person. They would agree to signals, and if one group found the lost person, the whistle was blown to let the others know.

There used to be a peddler with a big black pack on his back. He would go from house to house. If you wanted to look at his wares you would invite him in. He would open his pack flat on the floor. I don't know how he could carry so much merchandise in that pack. He had shoe laces, tablecloths, towels, lace buttons, and material for dresses and all sorts of things.

There was also a scissors grinder who came around once a year. He had a bell and would walk along ringing it. If you had a scissors or knife to be sharpened, you took it out to him. He had a little frame with a grindstone on it. It had a foot pedal to turn the wheel. He carried it
on his back.

There was an old man who came around with a horse and wagon, and he'd buy up old rubber or copper. Sometimes the kids would sell a good pair of rubbers to get a dime. There was an organ grinder with a monkey who came about once every summer.

Hurontown school had four rooms: two down and two up. We started school at the age of seven. There was no kindergarten; we started in first grade. The small children were in the two lower rooms. When school started each morning, the children all sang this same old song:

"Father, we thank thee for the night,
And for the pleasant morning light.
For rest, and food and loving care,
And all that makes the world so fair.
Help us to do the things we should,
To be to others kind and good.
In all we do in work or play,
To grow more loving every day."

The toilets were outside the main building, but were connected by two long covered halls. There was one for boys and one for girls. When any pupil wanted to go to the toilet, he had to raise his hand to get permission from the teacher. You held up one finger for one thing and two for the other. Why such a rule? I don't know.

If you misbehaved, the teacher would call you up in front of the room and tell you to hold out your hand. Then she would slap you with a ruler. On April first the kids would play April fool jokes on each other. Then in the afternoon, they would try and pin a piece of rag or something on someone without you knowing it. This was called a "tail pipe". We had some song books which were called "Knapsacks."

As the mining progressed, the company opened three new shafts. Numbers Four, Five, and Six. There never was a number three; I don't know why. When these new shafts opened, the company had to build a railroad to move the ore to the mill. They contracted to have the railroad built. The contractor and his men arrived with six teams of mules. He lived at the boarding house, and we got to know him. We watched those mules working for hours a day. They would drag a heavy iron bar over the ground to level it so the tracks could be laid. They were there for months. We knew one of the bosses, and one day we talked him into taking us for a sleigh ride with the mules. He agreed and one evening he hitched two teams of mules to a big sleigh full of straw. There were about fourteen of us. He took us to Atlantic. On the way back the sleigh tipped over, and we all fell out in the snow. But we all had a good time.

When the new shafts opened, more men came to work. So more houses were needed. The company built three rows of houses near the number five shaft.
This became Dodgeville. There was a small school built for young children, but from the fourth grade on they had to go to Houghton. There was an old sleigh fixed up for a school bus. It was drawn by two horses. When the snow was gone it was put on wheels. It was not the comfortable conveyance the kids have today.

Charlie Bruneau drove the first bus. Later on Charles Little and others drove it. Hurontown children had to walk to Houghton school from the fourth grade on. About 1905 the township built a wooden sidewalk from Houghton to Hurontown. That was real class. We walked home for lunch every day. It was a mile and a half each way, but we had an hour and a half for lunch. Usually we ate an apple for dessert on the way back to school. The result is very visible each spring now, when it's apple blossom time. All along where the wooden sidewalk was are a lot of apple trees from the discarded cores.

P: Oh—Johnny Appleseed wasn't the only one!

Y: No, he certainly wasn't.

P: That's a nice thing

Y: There are still a lot of apple trees there.

We had some coasters made from barrel staves. We had so many barrels that we made skis out of 'em—made everything; we had some we called donkeys. They had barrel staves for the bottom and then the little seat on them. You could stand up on them or sit down and hold the rope tied to the front or we could sit on them and slide down the snowbanks. When it got near spring, there were always long icicles hanging from the roofs. It was a lot of fun to break them off, because the snowbanks were high enough you could reach 'em. In March the boys would go out in the woods sapping. They hung pails on the trees to catch the sap. Then bring it home and boil it for hours. It wasn't very good maple syrup.

Funerals in the winter time were terrible. No matter how deep the snow, the bodies had to be buried. The mourners rode in closed sleighs called 'hacks'. They were furnished with buffalo robes to keep warm. When anyone had a contagious disease, they took them to the pest house, usually in a hack. Many times people contracted the disease from riding in the same hack with the same buffalo robes, which were never cleaned.

For dress the men wore shirts with just a collar band. The collars and cuffs were separate. The shirts were laundered at home, but the collars and cuffs were taken to the Chinese Laundry in Houghton. There they were starched very, very stiff. The cuffs hooked on to the sleeves, and the collars had a button that went through the shirt band and the collar in front and back. Sometimes the collar button got lost, so there was always a few extras on the dresser. Most of the men wore derby hats. The Cousin Jacks called them "Billy Cocks."
P:  Never heard that.

Y:  Well, there name for a derby hat was a Billy Cock

In the wintertime the roads were never plowed. They rolled them with a big roller pulled by four horses. If you happened to meet the roller on the road, you had to get out into the snow until it went by. The sleighs and cutters made ruts in the road. We walked in these. There were also baby cutters. These were much like a baby buggy, but narrower. They were lined in plush. The runners would fit into the rut on one side of the road. You would see families with a child or two in the cutter and another standing on the runner being pushed along. When a sleigh went by, we took a ride on the back runner. Sometimes the driver would chase us off. And one day my brother got onto the back of a farmer's sleigh (shuckle) and the farmer turned around and said, "Hung off!" (laughter)

The boys built a big bobled. In the evenings we would go for a ride. We started on the mine hill and would go all the way through Harontown, down the Bridge Street hill and halfway across the bridge. One of the bigger boys would steer. It held six kids. Then, we all helped pull it back up the hill. There were no streetcars or traffic in those days so it was all right.

Christmas was always a gala time. No one had much money to spend, but there was always fun. A group of Cornish people would go caroling from house to house. Everybody had fruitcake and pop or wine to treat them. Christmas trees were so easy to get. You just walked into the woods and cut one. Instead of lights we had little candles clamped on the tree branches. These were only lit for a short time, and then only when an adult was standing by in case of fire.

The Cornish miners wouldn't work the day after Christmas. They called it "Morrow Upon Christmas Day." The week between Christmas and New Years everyone called on his neighbors to see the tree, lights, etc.. Usually you were treated to fruit cake and tea. The young girls always tried to get twelve different pieces of fruit cake. That meant twelve happy months in the year.

We always had some nuts in our stocking, and there was always a bowl full on the table. It was fun to crack nuts. If you happened to get two kernels in one shell, you yelled, "Philapin!" Why? I don't know, but that's what we did. It was supposed to be good luck.

(Clock strikes 5 o'clock)

P:  Is it that late? (whisper)

Y:  It's four o'clock.

Note: We had to leave interview to rescue washing from clothesline due to sudden thunder shower.

Y:  We always had a New Years Eve party at our house. My mother would
bake a cake with a dime, a button, a ring and almond nut in it. The one who found the button would be an old maid, the almond would bring you luck, the dime riches, and the ring the next bride. Then, at the stroke of twelve, we would have a grand march. From the living room, down the long hall to the kitchen, to the dining room and back to the living room. Everyone singing. We then would call someone we knew on the phone and say, "Is this one-nine-one-four?", meaning 1914. They would say no and we would say "It is, Happy New Year!" On New Years Day, the first one who would say "Happy New Year ten cents," would get a new shiny dime from Dad. The tree was always left up until school started again.

P: Did you put your tree up long before Christmas the way they do now?

Y: No, No. The trees never got put up until the day before Christmas Eve they put the tree up—to let it settle and then it was decorated Christmas eve.

P: And then the big surprise for the Kids!

Y: Ya—

P: Now they seem to get the trees up right after Thanksgiving.

Y: Ya—can't get 'em up early enough. It's not like it used to be!

Fourth of July was the big event of the year. Everything was decorated with flags and bunting. They'd get it all decorated up and every once in awhile it would rain during the night and the next day you couldn't tell what color the bunting was.

Now you don't see bunting anymore. It was red and white—like cheesecloth—colored red and white. The miners who worked the night shift got off at midnight. They would slip a few sticks of dynamite in their lunch pails, then set them off on the way home. All night long there would be explosions like giant firecrackers. One Fourth, early in the morning before we got up my brothers put off a big firecracker in a flour barrel outside our bedroom door. It sure made a big noise, and we got up in a hurry. They were always playing tricks!

And we always had a pickled ham for the Fourth and a case of Cockrans pop. Usually in the morning there was a Callithumpian Parade. They put up booths all along the Main Street to sell refreshments, balloons, and all sorts of things—hangin' all over. The miners always had a hammer and drill contest on the big rock behind the school. They'd be there for hours in the afternoon seeing which ones could drill the fastest.

P: Oh, that's interesting. What was the hammer thing?

Y: Well, that's what they do in the mine—a sledge hammer and a drill.
P: Oh, I see—work together.

Y: That's the way they drill in the mine, so they would have this contest to see who could drive the drill the fastest. They would have several teams and time them and see who could do it the quickest. There was always Cornish wrestling, or as they called it "catch as catch can." They had some sort of a wrestling jacket on and they used to wrestle. There were several kinds of races for children and adults: climbing the greasy pole, catching the greased pig, and other contests. In the evening there was a band concert. There was an Island Royal Band. Jim Kenern was the leader. The favorite tune was "The Star Spangled Banner." There was a small building at the mine where they met to practice. They played for picnics and other social events. There were a few fireworks at night, roman candles and skyrockets. If we went up to Hannon Hill we could see the fireworks from Hancock.

Huron town had a constable, in case of trouble. His name was Jim Mahar. He would walk up and down Main Street and he was a big burly-looking fella, always carrying a billy club. The boys were always playing pranks on him. They would gather at one end of town and make a big disturbance and he'd come swinging his club up the street and they'd run around on the backstreet and go down the other end and when he got up the end where they were they'd go down and make the noise on the other end and they had him going crazy. When they saw Jim hurrying towards them, they would sneak down a backstreet to the opposite end of town and start all over again. On Halloween, they would really get him upset. Once a group of boys tied Old Man Moon's gate to the school flagpole and hoisted it up to the top. They would tip over outhouses and any mischief they could think of. They made tick-tacks from empty spools of thread that made a loud noise. They would take the spool and nick it—make little nicks on the edge of it and put a string around it and then had a stick through it about the size of a pencil and pull the string and the wheel would go "r-r-r-r!"—and scare the life out of whoever was in the house. This was a tick-tack. But they never did anything real bad, but they did all sorts of tricks. We never did soap anyone's windows—or anything like that.

P: We couldn't afford the soap in those days. (chuckle)

Y: Yes, there was nothing like that! They did lots of tricks. Now they just unhitched the gate and pulled it up on top; it wasn't broken or anything. They wouldn't do anything to break anything up.

A group of young men formed a club. This was about 1909. They called it the Excelsior Club; rented a small building near Champion's Store. They raised the money to furnish it and spent most of their time there. The membership consisted of Roy and Bill Champion, Bill and Bert Colenso, Emmet Hannon, Ernest Liebetrut, Charles Little, Bill and Herbert Trathen,
Jack and Bill Lawler, Tom Heather, Claud and Bill Voght, and several others. They had a wonderful time—this club—and did all sorts of things to help people out.

Usually on Thursday or Friday the fish peddler would come driving around from one location to another. You could buy fresh trout, whitefish and herring. He had a big wooden box with ice in it on the back of his wagon. He had a horn which he blew as he went by. Those who wanted fish would take a pan and go out to the wagon and pick one out. It was—always fresh fish.

Hurontown had a baseball team. Barley Wagner was manager for years. They also had a family team made up of the Sibilsky boys. Their dad Theodore, was their manager. They were very good players. Every ball ground was always alive with boys playing catch or practicing. Every location had a place to play ball. The Italians used to play Bocce Ball. It was played with balls that resembled bowling balls.

There were no clothing stores in Hurontown, so we went to Houghton to shop. There was a store called the Raquet Store. It was a variety store near the bridge. Then there was Ike Miller’s, Levine’s, Lang’s dry goods and Kirby’s five and ten, that later sold out to Woolworths. There was no Woolworth’s in those days. They were Kirbys. We used to go to Houghton on Saturday afternoon to the Lyric theater. Admission price was five cents. During the time they had to change film, Will Hall used to sing illustrated songs. One I remember was, "I’m Tying the Leaves So They Won’t Come Down So Nellie Won’t Go Away." (laughter)

Hurontown had a lovely picnic ground. It was called Frog Pool Grove and was on the Atlantic Road near the Huron Dam. The firemen had their annual picnic there, also the church Sunday school, and different societies. There was a band stand and a stand for selling refreshments. There were picnic tables beneath the trees. It was a beautiful spot. Once, we had a Sunday school picnic at the Canal. We had to be down on Henness dock at nine o’clock in the morning and my mother, with all the children, baked pasties before we left—and she was down on the dock with all of us at nine o’clock! And we had a mile and a half to walk, too, to get there. We boarded the old steamer the Plow Boy. We got to the canal about eleven o’clock; came back at four and then walked home.

P: Big day!

Y: Today nobody walks anywhere.

P: You wonder about the mothers and these picnics—in those days. All that preparation! Getting the clothing ready.

Y:—and everybody wore starched clothing.

In the spring when the snow melted, the wooden sidewalk to school was
bars. But the roads we had to walk before we got to it were all mud.
We had to wear rubber boots, but when we got to the sidewalk we would hide
the rubbers under it and put them on again when we came home again so
Mother wouldn't know that we had done that.

There were no bakeries in Hurontown or up that way. Everyone made their
own bread, both white and graham. When the potatoes were cooked for
supper, the water was drained off and saved to make a sponge for bread.
The sponge would be put on the top of the warming oven until morning
then used to mix the bread. When we came home from school, the house
smelled of fresh baked bread, and how we used to beg for the crust, because
the crust off a warm loaf is really something. Later on the Star Bakery
had a wagon with a big box on it with shelves. The shelves were full of
loaves of bread and the driver rang a bell as he drove by. The bread was
not wrapped as it is today. The stores all sold penny candy and blood-
berry gum. Markham's Candy Kitchen in Houghton made bluebell bars and nougats,
which were very delicious and nobody's ever found out how to make these
nougats. The Markhams still have the recipe.

When the Calumet and Hécla Company took over the management of the
Isle Royal Company there were some changes made. Some of their carpenters
and other workers, were sent to the Isle Royal to work. Sometimes they
sent the C & H Band to play concerts for the miners and their families.
There was a bandstand built built on the old Huron Hill known as Vinegar
Point. Mostly, the concerts were in the evenings, but sometimes on Sunday
afternoon. When they played at Dodgeville, the Isle Royal train with
several flat cars, would take the people from Hurontown to Dodgeville to
hear the concert.

P: Those concerts—someone else told me about the T seem to have been
very popular.

Y: Everything was band concerts in those days—Everybody enjoyed band concerts.
It was a lot of fun to climb on the flat cars and ride, because we were
just kids (chuckles).

Yeah—that's some of the best part. Don't you think the children liked
some of the things that went with the things.

Y: Oh, ye indeed!

P: As much or more than the actual concert?

Y: Indeed. Going on the train was more "w" than the concert was.

In July, 1913, some representatives of the Independent Workers of the
World, the I.W.W., came to the Copper Country. They wanted to start a
union. They formed a union and advised the miners to go on strike. The
men were divided on this. But the men who wanted to strike made a lot of
trouble for the men who wanted to work. They called them scabs. The
Strikers would march around the mine every day throwing rotten eggs and tomatoes or anything they had at the miners. The company had some strikebreakers brought in. They were called "Madall Men" and they were from New York or somewhere 'cause they were "hard boiled" anyhow. Things got worse and the governor called out the National Guard. Several companies of them were camped in a field near the Number Five shaft in Dodgeville. The officials of the mine had to go from one shaft to another to see that things were all okay. They were shot at several times. They'd shoot at their cars if they went to see what was going on. The National Guard posted a guard all around the mine and on some of the officials' houses every night.

Things went from bad to worse. Several of the miners were killed at Painesdale. They were shot through the window of the boarding house. There was one man shot on the board sidewalk between Hurontown and Houghton. Next morning, we kids going to school had to walk past the big bloodstain on the sidewalk. The strike lasted about a year. The result was many families moved away to find work. The Copper Country seemed to go downhill from then on. Most of the families who left went to Detroit to work. So much so that eventually they had a Hurontown reunion there. There were so many families from Hurontown living there that they could have a reunion.

World War I took so many of the Hurontown young men. Some of them went with the National Guard at the beginning of the war. Some were drafted later. Many families had two or three boys in service. Several of the boys never came back. The school children had liberty bond drives. They bought war stamps and saved them. We helped where we could. Food was rationed, especially flour and sugar, but we had it good compared to some countries. Armistice Day was a happy time.

Hurontown changed with the times, and people modernized their homes. Radio came about 1920, and the first sets were the cat's whiskers type and everybody thought they really had something.

But this is the way I remember Hurontown.

P: That's marvelous.

I'm always more interested in the children's things than in the others, because that area interests me so much—although all of this is fascinating. Do you remember some of the other things you did when you were children—the clothes you wore? You told about some of them—

Y: Oh, yes—when we went to school we wore pinafores—we usually had one woolen dress for cold weather, and we wore little white pinafores over them and we changed the pinafore every day or two, but we didn't have clothes like they have today. They have a dress for every day of the week. We had one dress for Sundays and we had one dress for school. When we came from school we put on the old one we had last year to save our school clothes.
P: Then you had such good insulation from the underwear layers that the dress didn't get as dirty from the inside.

Y: Yes—and we all had to wear long underwear in the winter time. It was very cold and you had to walk so far.

P: You told me a cute story about the mud pies you used to make.

Y: Oh we used to make mud pies! Mother scolded us about making mud pies so when we weren't allowed any water my brother sneaked into the chicken house and got a few eggs and we mixed our mud pies with eggs. Then my father got real angry because "The neighbor's dog was stealing our eggs," so he shot the neighbor's dog! And they never did find out why the eggs were disappearing, but they didn't disappear after that.

P: The pies probably turned out lovely.

Y: Oh, yes! They could stand real good! (laughter)—and then if we didn't have any frosting we'd try to find a creek running somewhere where it makes foam on the side, and take the foam off and put it on.

P: Did you play store when you were kids, as we did?

Y: Oh, yes! But we didn't have the empty boxes and things that they did in later years. So many things came in big boxes, you know, so we didn't have too many things to play—but mostly the boys would play "mine". When they got an empty shoe box (when they got a new pair of shoes) they would cut the end of the shoebox off to look like a skip, put some strings on it, and pull it up and down over the back of a kitchen chair, put stuff in it and hoist it up,—"Now the skip's comin' down"—one would be hoisting up and the other one was filling it down here—and play "skip" or "mine".

P: That's good imaginative play. Also there wasn't so much litter

Y: No.

P: When we were little we played store with stones for eggs and leaves for Beef steak and things like that.

Y: Yeah. There was very little that you could use boxes for. And there was very little paper in those days too. Well, we got a daily paper, I think.

P: You saved it for wrapping or packing.

Y: We used 'em on the pantry shelves.

P: Did you wrap tomatoes in paper the way we did late in the summer?

Y: No.
P: Maybe we had a different season. Our tomatoes didn't turn ripe until quite late and there was such a danger of frost, we'd pick them before they were quite ripe and wrap them in newspaper.

Y: Well we used so many of the green tomatoes for pickles.

P: You told me another story about a sleigh ride party and we went what they called "Goin' 'round the county."

Y: Yes. When we were a little older—I think I was probably 17—we had a sleigh ride party and we went what they called "goin' 'round the county". We had a great big sleigh with four horses. We started from Hurontown and we went up Quincy Hill and to Calumet and back down through Lake Linden, and that's what they called "goin' 'round the county."

P: That must have been fun! There was (were) boys and girls together that would make it fun.

Y: Oh, yes, Yes. And we had the bottom of the sleigh full of straw and we had some blankets and things to keep warm. Usually we went as couples, you know—with our boyfriends.