Digitization of the 'Finnish Folklore and Social Change in the Great Lakes Mining Region' Oral History Collection

Kent Randell

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/kent_randell/3/
Finnish American Historical Archive and Museum

Oral History digitization project

Kent Randell
Archivist, Finnish American Historical Archive
Finnish Folklore and Social Change in the Great Lakes Mining Region Oral History Project 1972-1978

- Organized by Rev. Dr. Art Puotinen, former Archivist and Provost of Finlandia Univ.
- Received money from the National Endowment for the Humanities
- Included interviewing and transcribing
Interviewers?

- Not just Suomi College Professors
- Also Suomi College Students – an Oral History Class was offered
- Also people from the community
- Awareness raised with outreach events, attracted interviewers and interviewees, spread the word, etc.
### Friday, July 12

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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| 9:00 a.m. | Registration & Coffee Hour  
Wargelin Hall, Rm. 303                                                |
| 9:30 a.m. | Presentation & Film on  
FOXFIRE  
Pat Rogers, Adviser  
Annette Reems  
Faye "Bit" Carver                                              |
| 11:00 a.m. | Discussion: A Copper Country  
Magazine                                                  |
| 12:00 a.m. | Luncheon in Student Center                                           |
| 12:30 p.m. | Caravan leaves campus                                                |
| 1:15 p.m. | Arrival & Tour of Indian Cemetery                                     |
| 1:45 p.m. | Leave for Indian Center                                               |
| 2:15 p.m. | Tour of Center with Ted Holappa                                       |
| 3:30 p.m. | Leave for Portage Entry                                               |
| 3:45 p.m. | Tour of Fishing Village at Portage Entry                              |
| 6:00 p.m. | Oral History Banquet  
White Pine Room  
Nikander Hall                                                   |

**Program:**  
Film on Aunt Arie  
Recollections by  
Fr. Reinhart  
Leonard Martonen  
Charlie Pyorala  
Allan Gogd  
Music Presentation  
John Waisanen  
Slides on 1913-14 Copper Strike

### Saturday, July 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>8:45 a.m.</td>
<td>Caravan leaves for Calumet</td>
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| 9:00 a.m. | Tour of Historic Calumet Theatre  
Guide, Paul Kimball                                                  |
| 10:30 a.m. | Tour of Calumet & Hecla  
Buildings, Coppertown U.S.A.  
Guide, Tom Knight                                                  |
| 11:30 a.m. | Tour of Italian Hall  
Site of 1913 Disaster  
Owner, Del Masser                                                  |
| 12:15 p.m. | Picnic Lunch  
Calumet Waterworks Park                                              |
| 1:30 p.m. | Office Session  
Wargelin Hall, Rm. 303                                               |
|        | Analysis of tours & interviews  
Article Preparation  
Magazine Layout  
Finances & Advertising  
Wrap-up                                                     |

3:30-4:00 **Approximate Adjournment**
**Program**

- **Introduction** ......... Art Puotinen
- **Stories of the Copper Country** ........ Fr. Charles Reinhart
- **Stories of the Copper Country** ........ Leonard Murtonen
- **Film: "Aunt Arie"** ........ Pat Rogers
  Annette Reems
  Faye "Bit" Carver
- **Stories of the Copper Country** ........ Charlie Pyorala
- **Music Presentation** ........ John Waisanen
- **Stories of the Copper Country** ........ Allen Good
- **Slides on the Copper Strike of 1913** ....... Art Puotinen

**Menu**

- Tomato Juice
- tosssed Salad and Dressing
- Baked Ham
- Twice Baked Potato
- Asparagus Tips
- Rolls
- Coffee, Tea or Milk
- Strawberry Short Cake

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FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION

Research problem: The Lake Superior mining region has been recognized as an economically depressed area. This present condition contrasts to former years when extensive mining operations helped to make this area highly populated, culturally diverse and relatively wealthy. In analyzing this transition one can find an interesting problem for further investigation, namely, how have the local people coped with this decline of a major industry and its detrimental effects? What resources have they developed to meet the challenge?

Nature of the project: The approach during the summer of 1972 may best be described as a formulative or explorative study in which we are seeking insights from persons generally 65 years and older who have personally lived through this transition phase. The oral history interviews will focus on primarily two objectives: to seek basic information from all participants and to encourage spontaneous recollections from persons regarding areas of special interest in their life and experience. These interviews will be secured from Finnish-Americans and persons from other ethnic groups as well.

Suggested Areas for Questioning:

1. Personal History
   a. what is the name, national origin and occupation of the subject, his spouse, and their parents?
   b. when did the family arrive in this country? for what reasons?
   c. did they experience any special hardships? good times?
   d. what does the person view as his biggest accomplishment in life?
   e. how does he feel about life today?

2. Education
   a. what school(s) did the person attend?
   b. does he have recollections about his teachers?
   c. how did different nationalities get along in school?
   d. did the person learn to speak English in school?
   e. what was the attitude of his parents toward formal education?
   f. were the persons strict in the home?
   g. what newspapers or books did the person read earlier and recently?

3. Employment
   a. what jobs has the person held?
   b. what were wages, working conditions, etc. like in the early days?
   c. does the person recall any incidents of the 1913 copper strike?
   d. what happened to the local community after mining slowed down after World War 2?
   e. during the Depression in the 30s, was the person on WPA? unemployed how did the family and community make ends meet? did some people have it good?
   f. what does this area need in the future? new industry, opening of the mines, improvement of labor-management relations, tourism, etc.?
   g. what does the person predict for this area in ten years?
4. Politics
   a. when did the person first vote for a U.S. President?
   b. did he ever run for public office?
   c. did the Depression of the 30s change his political affiliation?
   d. who ran the local town?
   e. were there any incidents that riled people (e.g. keeping roads open in winter, tax problems, personalities, etc.)?
   f. what has been the attitude of the local community towards law enforcement (judges, police, game wardens, etc.)

5. Social Life
   a. how did different nationalities get along (e.g. Finns and Irish)?
   b. were there any mixed marriages in the neighborhood?
   c. why were there so many saloons? were there many fights?
   d. what did the person and his friends do for a good time?
   e. how did courtship take place in the person's youth?
   f. what was life like in the boarding houses run by the mining companies?
   g. what organizations did the person belong to?
   h. does the person have any recollections about local sports, music, drama or festive events (e.g. Christmas, July 4th, etc.)?
   i. what factors made for change in social life (e.g. car, television, decrease in population, etc.)?
   j. what were the most widespread social problems in the community: crime, conflict between ethnic groups, drunkenness, loneliness, or whatever?

6. Medicine
   a. what did the family do when someone became sick?
   b. did the family have any home remedies?
   c. were the family members included in the mining company welfare plan?
   d. did they ever receive strike benefits?
   e. who were some of the early doctors? did they make house calls?
   f. how were they paid?
   g. was the practice of midwifery prevalent in the community?
   h. what were the most severe health problems (tuberculosis, mental depression, silicosis, etc.)?

7. Religion
   a. does the person belong to a local church?
   b. does he have any recollections of early events in its life:
       - founding of the church, early leaders, activities
       - rites of passage (baptism, confirmation, marriage, death)
       - special problems (travel, lack of funds, conflict, etc.)
   c. who were the early ministers? were they respected in the area?
   d. did they visit in the homes and hold services there?
   e. how did they become involved in local issues?
   f. did the various churches get along with each other?
   g. did the mining company lease land to the person's church group?
   h. did the person ever attend Suomi College; what was his program of study? who were his teachers? how does he view his experience
SUOMI COLLEGE
Hancock, Michigan 49930

I hereby donate to Suomi College in Hancock, Michigan, this tape-recorded interview for such educational and scholarly usage as the college will determine.

April M. Alarcon
Name of narrator

645 E. Division St.
 Ishpeming, Mich
Address of narrator

Elma Ranta
Name of interviewer

717 Cedar St.
Marquette, Mich 49855
Address of interviewer

April 5, 1975
Date of agreement

phone 2250144

Subject of interview:

• Funded in part by the National Park Service Advisory Commission, matching funds provided by Finlandia University, and volunteer Graduate Student “volunteer work match”

• Park Service’s mission is to “Preserve the story of Copper”

• FAHAM also a Heritage Site

- Purpose: provide access, preserve fragile tape
- Hired Grant Contractors with funds
- Scanned transcripts into .pdf files, digitized cassette tapes, made .mp3 excerpts, technical description using *Library of Congress Subject Headings* (including excerpts)
- Created local controlled vocabularies for Places and Names
- Put into a large Excel database
John Bigando

Courtesy of Finlandia University's Finnish American Historical Archive
Mrs. Hugo Klemetti
Arvo Pyrola
Transcripts

• Scanned into searchable .pdf’s with about 80% of word accuracy
• All extant transcripts are available online for free
• Strongly worded copyright statement at the start of each transcript

• Only audio excerpts are available online
• Balance of providing access, protecting materials
• Full interviews available from the Archive
  – Allows for “Fair Use” paperwork to be completed.
  – Allows Archive to generate revenue.
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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Friday, September 23, 9:00 a.m. Nordic folk ensemble and Classical duo. Calumet Theatre, Calumet, Mich. A special concert for area students. Open to the public.

Saturday, September 24, 7:00 p.m. Nordic folk ensemble and Classical duo. Calumet Theatre, Calumet, Mich.

MORE CAMPUS EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES
2008 Oral History Digitization Project

Overview:

A large collection of oral histories from the Copper Country (in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan) and northeastern Minnesota were recorded in the 1970's by staff and students of Suomi College, now Finlandia University. Rev. Dr. Arthur Puotinen led the project and received a grant from the United States National Endowment for the Humanities. There are approximately 250 hours of transcribed interviews and about 150 hours of non-transcribed interviews.

In 2010, the Finnish American Historical Archive and Museum received a generous grant from the Keweenaw National Historic Park Advisory Commission to digitize the Finnish Folklore and Social Change in the Great Lakes Mining Region Oral History collection.

Link to the Oral History Project Website

Complete interviews and transcripts are available to visiting researchers at the Finnish American Historical Archive.
FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Places and Names: Pelkie, MI. Lake Ladoga

Subjects: Anecdotes; Armed forces; Armies; Black Bear Hunting; Community Life -- Pelkie (Mich.); Deer Hunting; Finnish-Americans; Fishing; Hand-to-hand fighting; 1939-1940.; Ski patrollers; Soldiers; Tracking and trailing; Venison; Winter warfare;

Excerpt T2S1 10:51 - 13:51 Description of a battle in the Winter War
Subject terms: Russo-Finnish War, 1939-1940; Warfare; Finnish-Americans; Lake Ladoga

Nelson, Alex
Interviewed by: Jalkanen, Paul. 28 Jul 1972

Subject terms: Emigration and immigration; Norwegian language; 1913; Copper Miners' Strike, Mich., 1913-1914; Agassiz, Alexander, 1835-1910; Calumet and Hecla

Excerpt T1S1 2:07 - 7:30 "I have a very high regard for the young people today." Frisbee tournament. "I don't judge a man by the length of his hair." Predictions about the future.
Subject terms: Flying discs (Game); Upper Peninsula (Mich.)

Nelson, Rev. Keith
Born in Minneapolis, Minn.

Inclusive dates: 1970 - 1973

Places and Names: Pelkie, MI

Subjects: Alcohol; Baptism and church membership; Campaign management; Church attendance; Church committees; Church work with older people -- Pelkie (Mich.); Finnish-Americans -- Pelkie (Mich.); Liturgies; Lutheran Church; Parish Councils; Religious Life -- Pelkie (Mich.); Rural elderly; Social work administration;

Excerpt T1S2 10:26 - 12:17 Finnish-American "Black & White" attitude to alcohol
Keep in Mind:
The Changing Fashions of 1972
* Can’t judge a person’s attitudes by the way they look

* “I have a high respect for the young people of today”

* “Can’t judge a man by the length of his hair”
Alex Harvey
Rev. Dr. Art. Puotinen 18 Jun 1973

* Italian Hall Disaster
Alex Harvey
Rev. Dr. Art. Puotinen 18 Jun 1973

Ways to verify story:

* Nyberg – Skate Sharpening shop exist?
  * Was the ice rink open that night
  * When was Joseph Trudell Sherriff?
  * Which way did the door open?
    (conflicts with Woody Guthrie song)
* Was there a saloon on the ground level?
William Parsons Todd
Rev. Dr. Art. Puotinen 18 Jun 1973

* Quincy Mining Company

* Does he have a different accent than the last interview?
William Parsons Todd  
Rev. Dr. Art. Puotinen 18 Jun 1973  

* “I don’t know if we ever lost a man from air blasts, directly”  
* “[Deaths] underground very seldom really anything but men’s own fault”  

* Accent very different – East Coast, cleaner accent. (Doesn’t say “T-ree” for three)  
* Puotinen’s interviewing ability… “umm hmm”  
  * Other sound clips online
* Finnish vs. Finglish

* Historical Context: Finns kicked Swedish origin words out of their language

* Recent French controversies.....

* Future research: When did they emigrate? Where are they from?
Armas Holmio
Rev. Dr. Arthur Puotinen 1 Jul 1972
Former minister, seminary professor at Suomi College,
Archivist. Author of *History of Finns in Michigan*

Final thoughts to future Archival donors

Role of “Common Danger” for unity

*Real* Finnish accent.
Thanks!

Questions ??