

Interview with Estelle Gustafson

Newberry, Michigan

May 17, 1983

JE: Interview with Mrs. Estelle Gustafson. Newberry, Michigan May 17, 1983. Mrs. Gustafson is in her late sixties, has lived in the Newberry area most of her life. [SKIP IN AUDIO] How long did you live in Dollarville?

EG: I don't remember just how long we were there, but we were there for, it must have been a couple of years. _____, because my dad worked in the mill and from that...

JE: And that was destroyed in the fire then or?

EG: Well there was a mill, they must have rebuilt it. I don't remember now because I was small at that time, but I can remember walking in from Dollarville to Newberry to do our shopping on Saturday nights.

JE: That was on that boardwalk?

EG: Yeah.

JE: It said in *The History of Luce County* that there was the boardwalk that extended all the way from, was that from the center of town like where that, where the club was or was that outside of Dollarville?

EG: It was across that swamp down through there. And it went, how far it come this way I don't remember, but I can remember walking on that boardwalk. But just how far it went, I don't know.

JE: It came in then, the same way that the road comes into Dollarville now?

EG: Um-hmm, um-hmm. Yeah. When they took and widened out the road they found a, parts of the boards down there at that time.

JE: I see, it's like the corduroy roads that they talked about for the logging camps. And then after that you moved to St. Ignace you said?

EG: We moved to St. Ignace, we lived down around St. Ignace, and we moved to Moran _____.

JE: Still a relatively small...

EG: Allen Hill, and then we moved from St. Ignace then we moved back up to Gould City, and then from there we moved to Corinne and out south by Whitefish Lake, out by Whitefish Lake there. And from there we moved to Curtis and then to Newberry, or back to Dollarville.

JE: There was a, you said that the railroad, would catch the train?

EG: Used to take the Soo Line would go from Gould City up to Trout Lake, but they had to stop for water.

JE: Met a lot of the railroad pullmen?

EG: Oh yeah, um-hmm. I can remember the one was Jerry Mathas from the Sault, that was one of the breakmen on the train. And he always wanted to load me up, _____. I used to walk into town with my mother to church and give buttermilk to him.

JE: Sort of like the refreshment the people would have refreshments then?

EG: Yeah

JE: Were those just he logging trains or was that passengers?

EG: No, that was the passenger train. At that time there was, one went down in the morning at eight o'clock, there was another one that went at ten. And this friend of mine who lived up there, she used to have to get the ten o'clock train to Gould City for school, yeah. And then there was one went back at four o'clock in the afternoon and then there was another passenger train that went back at eight o'clock at night. There was a four passenger trains at that time, besides all of the logging or the freight trains.

JE: On one set of tracks, so that was kind of busy most of the time.

EG: Right. They were, there was always a train coming or going.

JE: And that was, that's out, that ran in between Gould City and?

EG: Yeah, towards Manistique.

JE: Toward Manistique coming from the other way. And when did you move back into the Newberry area?

EG: We moved back here around '26, I think it was when I moved back.

JE: And they were building the school at that time?

EG: It had just been completed, and we started school as freshmen that year my _____.

JE: So you had to, you came in from Dollarville then, to go to school?

EG: Yeah.

JE: Did they have a, like a regular transportation system then or did you walk in?

EG: There was, but I didn't stay down there. I worked, I worked here at, do you know where _____ Swanson's is? Right there, that brick house by Barrett _____, and Crocket _____. Well I worked there for them for one year and then I after that I went up at the state hospital, and I worked up there and went to school. So I wasn't home very much during those years.

JE: I see also in some of the material that I read they said that the children had to walk in when they closed the Dollarville school, they walked into town. But then with the coming of the automobile being popular and the road being good, they decided there should be some transportation.

EG: Yeah, they had a bus that used to go, but now up at, when I stayed up at the state hospital, they had, during the wintertime they had a horse drawn outfit that was covered over. And we came down in

that, they had benches along both sides, and that's what we came down to school with. But when it was nice I always walked.

JE: And I want to state that during that time the state hospital still had their large farm complex as I understand.

EG: Oh yeah. That's where my second husband worked. He was in charge of the crew ____.

JE: So it was relatively, a large, pretty large operation?

EG: It was, they had some wonderful cows up there. They took, we was up at the state fair _____. They had a big farm, and I think it was a shame when they got rid of it because so many of those patients, they enjoyed getting out there and working on that farm. You'd go around the _____ there and you'd find a lot of them sitting there shelling peas or snipping beans, things like that. And they enjoyed doing things of that kind.

JE: So that provided a lot of the food for them, for the hospital itself?

EG: Oh it sure did. Um-hmm.

JE: Did they sell it to, was it like, did they have a, did they sell it also to the public or was it just?

EG: No, it was just for the hospital.

JE: It was just for the hospital. It seems so big, as it is right now, it's hard to believe that, not _____, hard to imagine how much bigger it really was when they would have the whole farm in operation, but there is an awful lot of land.

EG: There is. They had that blue barn out there, that old barn burnt down and they built the new barn, and that wasn't too many years before they shut it down. I did get to see you know, that they did that. Because that meant a lot to those patients. And I think it was good therapy for them.

JE: And the fire department, did they come out to put the fires out then at that time? I know some of the old newspaper clippings said someone lost their barn because they lived outside the village limits and the fire department only went to the village limits, I guess. I just wondered, did it get all the way up there or not?

EG: I don't know, I don't remember. Whether it went that far or not.

JE: At that time was there, there was a school also up there, or was it just the hospital?

EG: No it was just the mantel at that time. The other was built a few years after that.

JE: But did they have children up there too or just was it adults if there was no school?

EG: Adults.

JE: And when the children were brought in, then they had the school?

EG: They had some children that they had on the adult side. I can remember one child there that was born blind and they took him _____ hospital.

JE: Then at that time it was still in the outskirts of town? It's pretty much outside ____

EG: My husband made one of the _____, I took him and three of his friends down to Lansing for, they had a forty year retirement for those that had worked for over forty years for the state, and I took them down but we stopped at Pontiac and we visited with a friend of theirs that had been here years ago. And they said there was talking about, that they would come down from the hospital but the Newberry kids would meet them up there by where the Legion is now. And they said they'd have a regular free-for-all fight, but they didn't want the kids from up there coming down here!

JE: Oh! From the hospital location and down First? They all went to the same?

EG: Well they had their own school up there.

JE: Oh, I see

EG: There was one up there _____ - school there and there as one out at the top of the _____ hill out there, there was school there. Then there was was another school out at the, Freddie Victorson's house was the school that was out there.

JE: So but then when they built the new school in the late-20s, then they were all consolidated and they all came into Newberry? And that's in the present location, the school?

EG: That's right.

JE: Because _____

EG: The Annex used to be their school at one time.

JE: What was the school then? Then it was the hospital after it was the school?

EG: No, it was a school before and then it was, oh yeah! The hospital and then the annex. At one time they had a big school down in Dollarville, it was two houses that are next to the cemetery. That was, used to be the Dollarville school, those two rooms.

JE: Oh so that was closer into town than the _____

EG: No they were at Dollarville, but after they were discontinued as a school then they were moved out here.

JE: Oh! They moved them out to this side of the cemetery.

EG: Yeah they were bought and moved up here.

JE: And then the, you said when you used to walk home that, where the cemetery is now, was that just like a wooded area?

EG: It was a wooded area all back through there, that's when I heard the wolves that one time. Dad says, "Oh they won't hurt you."

JE: Did, in the wintertime, what was like the transportation into school or on the rail, was it badly hindered by the weather we have? We seem to manage relatively well now, I just wondered how much, if they had snow days then at school?

EG: We did when, I can't remember if when we lived over in Curtis if we had a, I can't remember any school days, because we walked. We had, it must have been about two miles, but we always walked. When we lived in south of Corrine, we always walked to school. Yeah. Sometimes we could walk behind where the logging trucks went. They had a good path, but we had to walk to school. And I can't ever remember school days, you know, or snow days at that time. And I never, we never had any when we lived in Curtis, we always got into school and back. Lots of times we'd go, we'd go home. We lived, it must have been better than a mile out, and lots of times we'd take our sleighs and skis and go back into town at night, and we would have a party. We'd go skiing and sleigh riding down the hills there. Then afterwards we'd go to one of the houses and we'd make fudge or something, we'd have taffy pulls. But we didn't mind our walking at that time. Now a days they wouldn't walk!

JE: I know the limit now is a mile. You've got to live a mile from the school, and if you live more than a mile then you get to ride the bus.

EG: Well, as for some of those of kids, I think they only live a few blocks from school and they drive to school.

JE: Yeah, yeah, that was a, that makes me think. I know, one of Mrs. Bouchard said that she, her husband I guess had one of the first cars in Newberry, and I just wondered what, do you feel that made that, changed it for the good or was, after the novelty wore off, was it, did people prefer the old ____?

EG: I don't know, I think that years ago that the kids had a lot more fun than they do now. We used to make our own fun. And when I was in high school we used to go to Curtis and we would to Lakefield or there was, dad says, "We ____ go to Dollarville" and we _____ group of us go together, we always went in a bunch. And we had a lot of fun but I don't know, I don't think the kids do that now a days.

JE: When did all the, the children all went to school even the, like the loggers, the children from the, whose fathers worked in the logging camps, or did the camps have their own schools?

EG: No, they just didn't go to school as a rule, unless their parents sent them someplace. I know I've worked in a wood camp and I remembered they have I think it was like five or six kids. I was about thirteen and I helped just like ____ wash dishes. And they had a bed or a cot right beside of the stove in the dining area part. It was partitioned off so that there was the dining area part and then it was the kitchen, and then they had their living quarters just kind of partitioned off in a corner back there. But those kids never went to school.

JE: did, were the children usually born ____ ____?

EG: No, uh-uh. These families, those two families there that run the camp that winter, and they were from over around Manistique, but they were just there for that one winter.

JE: Was that, that was before there was a requirement that they need to go to school?

EG: Yeah, it was after we moved out there that, my mother and some of the other ones gabbed up on their ears about the kids going to school because there was enough of them. So they said, "They have to transport us into Gould City to school." And we went in, I think it was a little truck. And it had tractor treads on the back wheels to get through the snow in wintertime. And that's what we went, they had it covered over and we sat in the back part of that to go into school.

JE: and that was horse drawn or?

EG: No it was a motor.

JE: A motor cab.

EG: It was like a pickup truck, but then they had those tractor...

JE: Tank treads, like or?

EG: Yeah, uh-huh.

JE: So that, you lived out there at the lumber camp during that time? Your mother, she was ____?

EG: It was on a farm. No, my mother wasn't. There was this other woman that did the cooking, and I helped ____ , helped with the dishes, you know, things that I could do.

JE: When we talked, spoke before you mentioned that, that the riot that they had, and that was the one where they had the. Could you tell me a little bit about that, when that ____?

EG: Well not too much about it because I had, I don't remember whether I had one or two small children at that time, but anyway when my husband went to work that morning he says, "Don't go out of the house," he says, "Or away from the house." He says, "And don't let the kids go. Because," he said, "there was going to be trouble." But he didn't tell me what kind of trouble or anything, and I heard all this noise over by the, by the elementary school in there. They had chased them out these roads towards Dollarville. They were down in what they called the Finn Hall, and they had their breakfast all ready. And they just went in, I guess and threw everything around ____ .

JE: It was because of the strike, they were striking at the mill?

EG: They were trying to get, or to form a union, and that's why they choose to ____ because after that ____ . I _____ where it is _____ .

JE: This was the incident where they said that the Union instigators were ridden out of town on a rail.

EG: Um-hmm, um-hmm. I guess some of them were used pretty coarsely. I didn't see it too, I had just heard from wherever.

JE: And after that big, then what was the result of that? Did they form more unions or?

EG: I think they did form a union after that.

JE: It was of all the workers or just the, like the Finnish?

EG: No, it was for all.

JE: For all. And what was the reason that they, was this one of your, that they tore up the Finn Hall? Because they didn't want to join or?

EG: No, it was some of the ones around here, I think there was. They didn't want the union in here, and that's why they went after it ____ .

JE: Because I had heard, that had been mentioned that they were run out of town on a rail.

EG: Perhaps.

JE: Sort of hard to imagine here in the ____ 1908 _____. During the Depression, did it seem, what's your. I just wonder what your impression was. Did it seem that it was quite as hard hit up here?

— —

EG: No, I don't think so. I don't think it was, I don't think that we had it near as hard as they did in a lot of other places. There were so many farms around in the area. I know it didn't bother us too much because my husband had folks had a farm. We would have meat and milk and eggs and stuff from there, so. And he was working and we could, the people that we were renting from owned a store. And we could charge stuff there so that when he did get paid, we could pay off our bills. We weren't too badly off, a lot of others were, I know, but we weren't.

JE: Did the banks, there was just one bank in town, correct?

EG: Yes.

JE: Now did it close at all during this?

EG: Yes, because we had some money in there, and I think we finally got it all back, or at least the biggest share of it.

JE: I was curious because, perhaps it was other towns in the U.P. other than Newberry, but one book that I looked at did say that some of the Newberry banks that they were, I guess, they were Federal Banks they didn't close because they were in the other Federal Reserve System from Minnesota.

EG: Uh, well I know we couldn't get our money out, and we got it just a little at a time afterwards.

JE: And then were there any of the, like the New Deal Programs instituted up here? Like the WPA?

EG: Um-Hmm. ____ My dad worked on the WPA on the county road there. Those trees that were out around the hospital curb out there, he was working, he planted those trees there, it was the WPA that planted those trees.

JE: They also did the streetlights on Main Street? They had a little trouble with those?

EG: Those used to go right down through the middle of the street, but that's when they took those out and put them to the side, it was much better.

JE: And the C.C.C. I know did a lot up here. I don't know exactly what areas, but you could maybe tell me?

EG: Out north they had some camps out there, and they had some...camps out north there, Fred could tell you more about just which camps were which out there but.

JE: But they employed all, did they employ a lot of the youth from Newberry?

EG: I don't know whether it was a lot from Newberry but I know there was a lot that came in because some of the fellows married girls from here. Some of them left and went away, some of them stayed around.

JE: I was just wondering what the, if it, how it was received. In that if they felt they were taking jobs that could have.....

EG: No, I don't think so. I think that everybody was glad to. And I think it would be a good thing to have that back.

JE: That ran for a relatively long period.

EG: Yeah, it must have been three or four years I gather anyway.

JE: But there, a lot of the stands of pine that are around here

EG: Oh there's a lot planted. They had one up towards Munising there, it was called Camp _____, just outside of Munising _____.

JE: And I was going to ask you about, sort of talking back and forth there, about Gould City. Was it larger before than this? It doesn't seem, it's not very large right now.

EG: It's about the same now as it was then. Although where the county garage is there now is where the school used to be there. And it was after we left there that they moved the school out south farther, they built a big school in there. But I guess that's all been torn down.

JE: I think they all go into Engadine, the consol, yeah, Engadine Consolidated School.

EG: But we used to live pretty close to the tracks there at one time. And that's when they used to haul the logs in from out, outlying districts there. You know, they'd haul them in with sleighs in the wintertime and they would bank them, deck them there, right there by the railroad tracks. And then there would be cars that'd load them up from there.

JE: Did they have very many accidents where the, I know there was I guess a controversy so to speak about which gauge was better, because the narrow-gauge was a lot more unsteady with those large loads of logs.

EG: You know, there was never anything much about that. The only accident that I can remember there was, one fellow was up on top, they were loading the logs onto the cars. You know, those flat cars. And he wasn't paying attention and one of the logs got loose and it hit him and knocked him right off of that, but he landed and didn't do too much damage. He was kind of sick for a few days.

JE: Let's see I might do it, they look awfully large. _____ flatbed trucks, I don't like _____

EG: To get whammed with one of this. There was one kid that, who was in school that day and he was working. He was only around sixteen, seventeen, and he was working in the mill. Some way or another his sweater got caught and it pulled him into the saw and it cut him right straight across, like that. They brought him up to the, one fellow who had just come back from the Army. And he was the only one that could go and help, but they got him up to the hotel and they stopped the train that night, the eight o'clock train and put him onto that to take him up to Manistique. And the doctors up there said that if they could have been close to where they could have got some chiefs and captains or something, you know do some repair work, they thought they could have pulled him through because he had a real strong heart. But he lived, that happened one day and I think he lived on the next day before he died.

They said he was just laid him out, and then they come to the school and got his two daughters _____.

JE: Was this, you said that you spent some time in the St. Ignace area. Was that, that was before they completed the bridge?

EG: Oh yes, that was in 1917.

JE: When they, but they didn't, how did the people get across, on a ferry?

EG: Yeah. We had to take my grandfather with me to be on that _____

JE: Was it? How many did they run per, do you know or wherever, how often they ran across the straights?

EG: No I don't. That wasn't, I think I was around six or seven maybe back then.

JE: And those carried just the people or also like.....

EG: Trains

JE: Oh? The whole train?

EG: Yeah, it was all a train boat. So I don't know how often they ran or not.

JE: I was just wondering, it's just hard to imagine other than the bridge. Do you remember any like groups of, they said there were, during the First World War, a lot of the European movers who were over here to work on the railroads and everything, went home. And there was some Mexican, Mexican labor that came over to take their place, because the Europeans went home during the war. I just wondered if you remembered anything about, maybe during that period.

EG: I can remember going on, we was living in Moran and they had a circus come to St. Ignace and my uncle, my dad's youngest brother, one of them, they had a friend who worked on the railroad, didn't have charge of it, so. Scooters and motor ones that they worked on the railroads with you know what I mean?

JE: Like gandy dancers, I think? The little hand cars?

EG: No not the hand car ones, but they had ones that had the motors on them. And anyway we went down to St. Ignace that night and when we came back we got, my mother and another friend and her daughter and I, we got off at the cross and this speeder went up to take my uncle and his friend and their girlfriends back up by Ozark. And on their way back they met another speeder, they were coming from St. Ignace with a bunch on it, and they were running without their lights and they come together. _____ that's when my uncle was killed, and his friend was badly injured, but they had let the girlfriends off, so they weren't on but there was several, at least on this other one that were killed. One of them couldn't talk any English, and she was pretty badly injured and some children that was on there. But they said they had, that the fellow that was running it was drunk, and _____.

JE: So those were, just like a small transport rather than a full sized train? Those ran in between the regular train?

EG: We had gone to St. Ignace for the circus that night because they had, you know, permission to use those.

JE: _____-the circuses, were there any other types of, like, what other types of entertainment were there?

EG: Well there was a fair, they had a nice fair there in Allenville for years, we used to go to that. When we lived in Gould City we used to come over to Newberry for the circus and the fair. We'd come, we'd pack our lunch and stay for a couple days.

JE: Stay at the hotel?

EG: At the hotel, there used to be a hotel down there. One of those big houses at Dollarville, I think it's Burnett's ___ now, but that used to be a hotel. They had rooms there, and we brought our stuff and we could have our own stuff to eat. We didn't have to buy meals, and I can remember staying there.

JE: Then would the circus come by train or and that would run on those same, the Soo Line tracks?

EG: _____

JE: When did the, when did they finally, did they have like a stage, a lot of stage productions or anything like that? Local theater? Or anything, before the movie theater came in _____.

EG: Oh, I don't know anything about that. I know that they used to have another theater, there was one down there, just the other side of where Rahilly's has his store, there used to be a theatre in there, and then there was another theatre over, just in back of where Sommers's store is there was a theatre in there because I can remember coming from I used to stay with a family down near Trout Lake and we used to come up on the train. And she had a sister that lived here, we used to stay there when we would go to the show.

JE: Stayed with different families during the summer to work?

EG: No, this family I used to spend more time with them than I ever did at home. They were really kind, they had no children and they had been married, I don't know how many years, before they finally had some. But when she had her second one she called my mother and wanted to know if I'd come and help her take care of what was _____the third one because she had the two girl...

AUDIO ABRUPTLY ENDS

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