

BERTHA LIVERMORE  
NEWBERRY, MICHIGAN  
JUNE 4, 1983

SUBJECT: Finns in Newberry

START INTERVIEW

KEN HAGERT (KH): The name of my interviewer is Bertha Livermore. She is seventy-two years old and has lived in Newberry since 1920. The only people in the room will be just Bertha and myself and we're hoping to learn her [inaudible]. The date is 6-4-83. It's 2:30 in the afternoon. My name is Ken Hagert. I will be doing the interview.

BREAK IN TAPE

KH: How many Finnish bath houses were all around town publicly?

BERTHA LIVERMORE (BL): Oh, I couldn't tell you just how many, but I know several that had their own private bath house there. You know, in their own home. And even out in the country they had a shack or something kind of private for a Finnish bath. But this one here was a public one. And I used to go over many times and they were really good, you know. They really spread all that dirt out of you that you don't do in a tub. They're good. Very nice. These people had moved away [inaudible].

KH: How much did it, did you pay?

BL: Yes, we had to pay. I think it was twenty-five cents.

KH: For the,

BL: The sauna. And you get done up, you got off of, the higher you went, the hotter it was. The more steam you got. If you can take it. Some people can't take that, it would be pretty hard on them. They would maybe pass away. Out. Not pass away, out. Go out. But I would take them, and you really felt refreshed after. I was told that some of those Finnish people after they had took this bath in the winter time would jump out in the snow.

KH: Would they?

BL: It was cold out [inaudible].

KH: Were there any other organizations, like social organizations that Finnish people had other than church organizations?

BL: Well, they had this Finnish Labor out here on Harry Street. And at one time they, some people, I don't know who they were or what their names were, they came here from the Copper Country [inaudible] and just [inaudible] the head was a guy [inaudible] organizations were by the red car. The people of Newberry knew that they were coming and they were going to close down the sawmill. That's what they came for. But before they did that they got a lot of these lumberjacks to join the sort of organization and a lot of these foreigners were at Kingsford. They were foreigners. And they didn't understand what this was all about. And they charged them two dollars. And they sent them oatmeal and stuff against labor laws.

KH: The Lumberjacks were worked hard?

BL: Yes, the Lumberjacks worked that hard. And they gave them their two dollars and they gave them oatmeal. So then this one day when they were going to close down the sawmill, why it seemed like the business people seemed to know all about it. And they were standing around and they were all waiting for it and then they marched down the main street and towards the sawmill. And they had the fire department there waiting for them, which they didn't know. That [inaudible]. My husband worked in the powerhouse where they blew the fire whistle. And when they blew the fire whistle then it was time to turn the hose on. And they run them right out of town. I know one man was cut off by the railroad tracks by the depot, he was shot dead. There was another man that was a surveyor in this town. I think he was a justice of the peace, also. And they, after they found out these names then they gathered down at the labor hall. It was the fire hall, which I guess they did and they broke all the windows in that labor hall. There was no more labor hall after that. They called it the Finn Hall. [Inaudible] road and he got away and [inaudible]. And this other party, I was told [inaudible]. So that was the end of that. [Inaudible] Newberry.

KH: The Finn Hall, was that the Communist Hall?

BL: Well, some of them called it that, the Finnish people did, and church members did. You know Communist Hall, then some called it the Labor Hall. So I don't know, I guess it was supposedly. That's why you don't [inaudible] anybody had that their name in this book they were pulled in by the firemen. And they lost their jobs.

KH: What was the purpose of going down, what was the purpose of going down in the sawmill and close it down?

BL: Well, it's just like a union, I imagine, eh? They was going to ask them, I think they wanted them to give them more money, you know. Pay them more money. And since they're a union that's [inaudible] they didn't mention unions in those days. And another thing, you know a lot of these guys, I remember when we had a passenger train coming through Newberry. It would get this labor paper from, I don't know where it came from. Whether it came from, I think it came from the Copper Country. We didn't get it through the mail. They would go and pick it up at the train. I seen many of them come in to where I worked and they would have it sticking in their hip pocket. Labor Paper, they called it.

KH: You had mentioned of one lady down in the work [inaudible].

BL: Yes, yes. She had just come from there. And I guess it was probably [inaudible]. They were supposed to fire her. And then they said don't say anything because we need her. Because [inaudible].

KH: They were going to fire her because,

BL: Well, they were supposed to fire her but they didn't want to because she was a, they were going to keep it quiet and keep her. So, then she had to make them see, remarks that I didn't care about. I'm the [inaudible] I thought. So I just quit and walked home.

KH: Was there any, well besides the big hall, where there any get together that just the Finnish people had that their, did they celebrate any special holidays? The Finns?

BL: No. There's two classes of Finns. That I know of. They were either all real good Christians and church members and the others were the opposite. Two classes.

KH: Were they all?

BL: No, what I mean... They were just the opposite. And of course we didn't associate with them and they seemed to know who they were otherwise,

KH: Were the relations between the Finns or the Swedes on the other side of town strained at all?

BL: I think, you know, I don't know. But I was always told, you know, if you called a Swede a Finn [laughing] they got mad. Got angry. They didn't like it.

KH: And what was the reasoning behind putting the two churches together into one?

BL: Well, I was told that it was because the Finnish population, you know the older people died off and they didn't have a large enough congregation to keep the church going. So they got together, the Swedish church got together so there, they get along very well. And some of them resented it and joined the German Lutheran Church there. And so they sold the Finnish church and they had that for the senior citizens.

KH: You said that the, at one time the railroad tracks separated the Finns and the Swedes?

BL: No. No, I don't think so. But I think that they did. Because the Finnish people all lived on the East side and all the Swedish moved on the West side. So there was this railroad track here, of course you got one running, you know, East and West, too. But I think this one here is off the main track, I think. Separates the Finnish from the Swedish.

KH: The workers in the back [inaudible] coming down there, someone said that they lived right around the back of the, like, attic?

BL: Well, not really. No. They lived all over town. The town wasn't very big. It really wasn't. Oh, yeah. I know what you're getting at, I know what you mean, there was folks who lived in the company houses [inaudible]. Those were called the Red Row.

KH: Red Row.

BL: They were red houses, they were all double houses. You know. Two family houses.

KH: At one time did you live on that side?

BL: I did. Me and my husband did.

KH: Okay, that's a wrap.

END OF INTERVIEW