In 1978, I spent the summer in Levack, intent on researching and writing a brief history of my home town.

With a recommendation from Mayor Jim Coady, and a bit of bureaucratic stick-handling by a former Levack resident, Tony Soden, I obtained a small grant from the Ontario government which would cover my room and board in one of the bunk houses.

I soon discovered that there were several old town residents living in the area who remembered things "first hand" from the town's earliest days. They were happy to spend time telling stories and sharing their photograph albums.

By the fall of that year I had produced a draft of the book and presented it to the town council. They weren't too impressed. It turns out that there was another history in progress by one of the councillors. Mayor Coady encouraged me to keep working anyway. He had wished that there was a history of the town in place for Canada's Centennial in 1967.

I've always felt that the story deserved to be published; not only for the town and its history, but also out of respect for those great townspeople who shared their stories with me and supported the work.

Levack has many more stories and characters in its history. If the reader has any editorial comments please feel free to share them with me by way of social media.

Early Levack Residents Returning from a Trip to Sudbury
-- How Levack Was Named --

When the Canadian Pacific Railroad extended its westward line through the Levack area in October of 1884, only the Ojibway had names for this unbordered expanse of trees, rivers and lakes.

What is now called the Onaping River had been named Oo-na-min-a- ping, which meant 'flaming red place'.

Windy Lake was once called Ma-ko-ping, or 'water of the bear'.

What was once known as On-ва-tин, or ‘windless water’, we now call Vermillion Lake.

A popular explanation proposed that the town name is actually a mis-spelled version of the name of the man who discovered the first mine in these parts, Levesque. Evidence of this origin lurks in the pronunciation that some of the older residents used – they'd pronounce the town name as "Levek".

In 1885, this part of Ontario was surveyed and divided into townships by a man named C.D. Bowman. Having to come up with names for this new part of Ontario, it was decided to commemorate prominent people connected to the then Premier of Ontario, Sir Oliver Mowat. His wife's maiden name was Helen Levack. It was for her that the township was named.
Bridging the Onaping River --

Choosing the Levack area to log was surely influenced by the presence of the Onaping River along which the logs could be floated out. But, like all rivers, the Onaping needed to be crossed.

One of the first lumber companies to exploit the district was the Salt and Saginaw. They constructed perhaps the earliest bridge across the Onaping; a floating bridge which served the loggers going in and out of the bush around Levack.

The great advantage of a floating bridge was that it could be taken out at freeze-up time and returned after the logs had been run through. However, when the company pulled out of the vicinity it left the crossing of the river unattended. In its place the successors to the area used an old six-oar driving boat to get back and forth.
The first permanent bridge into Levack was constructed around 1916. This bridge, however, was set so low that it was eventually washed out by a log jam. A second wooden bridge was constructed in its place; a fairly substantial one-lane wood bridge that included a path for pedestrians. In later years it collapsed under the weight of a bulldozer. The local REME Militia, including Harold Gilles, Joe Dusick and Ted Tuori put the Bailey Bridge across the river as a temporary crossing while the broken wood bridge was torn down and the present structure built. The present bridge was constructed in 1958.

-- Lumbering in the Early 1900's --

The discovery of the Levack Mine alongside an old lumbering road is symbolic of the transition the area went through at the turn of the century. The change from a mobile operation like lumbering the area to mining, which requires a permanent residential centre, is the reason for Levack’s existence.

Before mining was undertaken in earnest, the lumbering operations of the Levack area were well under way. Companies such as Salt and Saginaw, Loveland and Stone, the Morgan Lumber Company, Grave and Bigwood, and Frazier and Brace were in the area earlier.
In 1899, the Spanish River Pulp and Paper Company acquired large pulp concessions from the Department of Lands and Forests for the Sudbury district. Their most extensive work took place between 1905 and 1928, and the lumber camps were located about seven miles north of the town. The Levack area was cleared of its lumber very early, and Dave Sword was the man who finished the last lumbering job in the vicinity.

Whenever a log jam occurred the lumbermen, such as Jim Burns (a great lumberman and teamster who later made his home in the Dowling area) would blast it with dynamite purchased from Frank Eager. This, according to Mr. Burns, would be done by punching a hole in a long pole, filling it with dynamite and placing softened soap around it to keep it dry. The fuse would be lit, the pole swung out over the jam and the blast would set the logs free.

The log run out of the Levack area would meander along Moose Creek, follow the Onaping River, go over High Falls, travel along Vermillion Lake and River, spilling into first the Wabageesik and finally into the Spanish River.

A logger’s day would begin before the sun and seldom would it end before the sun went down. They were paid $2 per day, and fed four well-prepared meals. Loggers were given Saturday and Sunday off, but on those days they were only allowed to stay up until 10 or 11pm.
Running the logs out of the area would employ over a hundred men for a summer. The men would follow the logs along their run while carrying all of their equipment with them, including the enormous camp stoves used for cooking. These camp stoves were particularly difficult to carry over portages.

-- Bureau of Mines Report, 1905 --

The underlying Laurentian dips 33° to the southeast, and a little projection of rock near the top of the slope seems to have protected the ore beneath which is now, however, largely turned to gossan. A hill of norite rises a quarter of a mile away beyond the muskeg, but none of the rock is to be seen where the stripping has been done.

Less than half a mile farther along the road there is another outcrop of gossan and ore like the first one, but with a lower hill of Laurentian on the northwest and a small lake on the other side. A little beyond this lake there is a gap in the Laurentian hills, suggesting an offset, and it is said that an ore body has been found some distance out in the granite, but we found no trail to it, and left it unvisited. Beyond this apparent offset there is another marginal lake, and then the route passes through low hills to what was once called the Levack Mine, in Lots 1 and 2 in the Fourth Concession at the end of the wagon road, about nine miles from Onaping.
Here two properties, the Strathcona and the Stobie No. 3, or Big Levack Mine, have been opened up by stripping and test pits, and have been surveyed magnetically as shown by the systematically arranged survey pegs.

-- From: Bureau of Mines Report, Vol. XIV - 1905 --

-- Origins of Levack Mine --

In October of 1884, the Canadian Pacific Railroad laid down track through the township of Levack. It was a momentous event in the history of the area, as the blazing trail led geological expeditions to discover the minerals upon which the town is founded.

James Stobie, a geologist/prospector, undertook an examination of rock cuttings and gravel pits along the newly laid railroad tracks between Larchwood and Cartier stations in the fall of
1887. However, this venture was abandoned due to heavy snowfall. It was another two years before Stobie could return to the project. In the summer of 1889, Stobie discovered the first mineral outcrops in the area.

These deposits were left unexploited for years -- likely because the claimholders had no idea just how valuable their claims were. Over time, however, there was growing speculation that the minerals of the Levack area were an extension of what was known as the Northern Nickel Range, or Sudbury Basin.

The first extensive mining exploration of the area was carried out in 1891, by Alfred Merry of the H.H. Vivian Co. Assays showed that the ore contained up to 4.13% of nickel and 0.86% of copper. Another two years passed before anything was done about the discovery.

In 1901, the Monde Nickel Company of England brought a diamond drill crew into the area. The owner, Alfred Monde, decided to reject an offer to purchase the Levack property at that time and the claim was once again thrown onto the market.

The property remained unattended until 1913, when the Monde Nickel Company purchased the claim. By this time Ludwig Monde had developed a process to refine nickel and had put it into effect at Coniston, where minerals from Monde’s several Northern Ontario mines would be sent. Monde put extra effort into the opening of the Levack Mine, fearing that the supply from their other mines was running low.

In that same year Frank Eager, an engineer with Monde, was sent to Levack. Accompanying him was Jack Norrena. Together they took a train from Sudbury to High Falls, where they
found an old logging road along the river. They crossed the Onaping on an old foot bridge which was a remnant of the earlier logging days.

The town site at that time consisted of three or four abandoned log cabins, and it was in these reclaimed log cabins that the first residents of the town spent their first night sometime in the spring of 1913. The founding residents were Jack Norrena (with his wife, two sons and two daughters), Frank Eager and a handful of workers.

The men commenced work clearing the land around the future mine site. Log cabins were constructed for mine offices, stores and accommodation for the miners.

Shortly thereafter a spur line was laid to the future Levack Mine. The first freight to arrive in Levack consisted of items such as drills, a compressor, powder and hose -- whatever was needed to begin construction on the shaft.

The first level of Levack Mine was cut at one hundred and sixty-eight feet, with subsequent levels at hundred foot intervals. Power was brought in from the Wabagishik plant of the Lorne Power Company. In 1913, a spur line from the C.P.R. tracks to the mine was laid and it was in that year that the first carload of ore was hauled out of the ground and sent to Coniston.
By 1913, dozens of carpenters -- many of them Finnish -- arrived in Levack to build the mine and begin construction of the town. At first, two log bunkhouses were built behind the four log cabins that Frank Eager and Jack Norrena found on their original expedition. Larger, full-serviced two-storey buildings were erected later on.
The company steam locomotive was kept very busy shuttling supplies and equipment from the main C.P. line to the town and mine sites. Bolton's General Store opened and sold a wide variety of goods.

By late 1914, the mine was in production and houses for the next few years were at a distinct premium. To accommodate the overflow of workers and carpenters, tents were put up on a rough wood floor with a three-foot outside frame for the walls. During the war years (1914 to 1918), the collection of tent dwellings expanded and the town began to take shape. Copper Street, Main Street, 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Avenue grew each year. Some houses were two-stories, but most were the twenty-four foot square frame and feather-edge buildings that are still common in Levack today.

Eight men could build one of these square houses in a day. The usual method was to erect several at one time. Two men would level and lay the wood foundation blocks at ground level. Then would come the support timbers, floor joists and flat lumber floor. The next two men would build the wall frames with door and window openings, cross supports and roof frames. Four men would then cover the walls (outside only), roof and gable ends. While two men were fitting doors and windows, the other two were -- with the use of a spring-loaded nailer -- putting on the wood shingles. Very often, that same evening someone was moving in.

As development and production increased, more bunkhouses were built for single men and those without their families nearby. During the next four years the town took on an air of permanency. A school, churches and stores were established as the need arose. Families with older children found jobs for their offspring. There was always work for the girls in helping to run the bunkhouses. And as soon as a boy was fifteen, he could get a job at the mine, either in the shop or yard or at the picking belt in the rockhouses.

Family men working shift-work or seven days a week found little time for a social life. There was wood to cut and split for cooking and heating, and repairs and improvements to the house
was ongoing. Spare time in the summer was spent tending the garden and livestock. The winter season allowed for the odd house party for kin and neighbours.

While families kept pretty well to themselves, the bunkhouse boys lived another type of life altogether. Sleeping, eating and working took up most of the day for those living in the crowded, smelly bunkhouses in the very early days of the mine. Two double beds to each room left little space for personal gear or privacy. A couple of tables and some benches in the main hallway served as a gathering place to play cards or just talk. Every now and then someone would bring in some forbidden booze and raise hell for a few hours, to the annoyance of the other inmates.

Not long after the mine started up, Old Quin moved to a high, dry area between the town and the mine. He built a log cabin and continued his favorite pass-time of clearing land. Later, some Finnish, Polish, Ukranian and Russian families obtained building permits to settle on this cleared land. Being close to and yet far away from the Town of Levack, this area became known as Warsaw.
One of the first houses built in town still stands under modern siding on the corner of First Avenue and the road going out of town.
-- Views of Levack from the Hill --

The following photographs of Levack were taken by Toivo Kauppinen:
The first bride ever to have her skirts brush across the threshold of Levack was young Maggie Adams. On April 5, 1915, Miss Adams became Mrs. Tom O’Reilley and made Levack her home.

Mrs. O’Reilley recalled the terror she felt on the railway hand-car as the newlywed couple crossed the bridge before entering town. Throughout the ride she kept looking down to see that she was just a fall away from Moose Creek.

In their honour, the men in the mechanical department of the mine supplied the O’Reilleys with a reception, many beautiful gifts and a touching letter which began:

"We are assembled on this, your wedding day, to welcome you to your Home.
You being the first bride to arrive at the Town of Levack…"

The newlyweds and their friends danced into the small hours of the morning.
-- The Old Railway Station --

While rail service through the Levack area began in 1884, the Levack Station did not come into use until December 3, 1916. This landmark, which stood about three miles from Levack, was torn down after over half a century of service.

-- The Jitney --

Prior to 1913, the only way into Levack was by an old tote road used by lumber operations that was in horrible condition, according to early geological reports, due to damming of the Onaping River. In 1913, a spur line connecting the Levack Mine with the C.P.R. main rail line was constructed, and the Levack Jitney Service was born shortly after.
In 1914, Frank Eager, the mine superintendent, purchased a motor car -- a Whitney Six -- as he realized that a better means of transportation for mine workers and their families was needed between town and the main railway line. He had the mechanical shop at the mine take off the rubber road wheels and fit the car with steel railway wheels. Two small, flat cars were fitted with wood slat benches and a roof to haul passengers. Finally, three small turntables were installed to turn the car around so that it always faced forward.

Run jointly by Toivo Kauppinen -- the mine electrician who was known to everyone including his wife as T.K. -- and Frank Eager, the jitney ran three times a day, to and from the Levack Station. It ran once at 6 am, a second time at 5:30 in the afternoon and another at 10:30 pm, corresponding with the schedule of the C.P.R. train which passed through the Levack Station. The jitney could pull up to three trailers behind it, with as many as twelve people on each trailer.

Only three local trains a day ran on the main C.P.R. line at that time. It was a simple matter to assure that the Company train, hauling ore from the mine to the main rail line, did not run during these two time periods. This allowed the jitney to ferry passengers back and forth.

The car-turned-jitney was destroyed in 1927, during a fatal accident which involved a search party looking for robbers attempting to steal the Company payroll.
In 1937, with the re-opening of the mine and the town about to be incorporated, a more official form of police protection was adopted. The first full-time policing of the town was undertaken by Sergeant Jim Forbes. He was followed by Sergeant Bill Robertson in 1941.
In 1947, Bert Conley became Sergeant. When he retired in 1968, Ed Shalla took over.

-- Ethnic Diversity in Levack --

A wide-ranging blend of people from around the world have come together in Levack, giving their home an original cultural personality. The French, Finns, Slavs, English and other Canadians have lived happily together in this northern enclave for many years.

There are countless stories of how men and women in Levack’s earliest days happened to arrive at this point on the globe. Everyone who came had to be hardy and willing to do very strenuous work. The mine was being dug and it required a collection of powerful men to do it. Harsh weather in cold cabins, with no electricity or running water, and blackflies -- all the hardships of settling into the bush -- were the greeting which settlers accepted. But people withstood. It was a place to make a living at a time when the entire world was in a pronounced state of turmoil.

Single women could immigrate to Canada on the condition that they agreed to marry within a half year of their arrival. Before being allowed to travel to Canada, the woman had to be
signed for by someone who was established here, and who would be responsible for their well-being. This someone, as things went, often turned out to be the lady’s eventual husband.

Several sections of the town today still reflect the background of those who were the first to settle there. One of the most distinct parts of town in this regard is Warsaw. There, on land which is still leased from the Company, people -- mostly from Russia, Poland and the Ukraine -- made their homes. Establishing some of the earliest dwellings in Levack, Warsaw played an important role in the town’s early years. Many of the homes took men or families in until they had a chance to get settled on their own. As well, there being nothing in the young town in the way of entertainment, the men gathered in their homes to share each other’s company over a drink. Many of the customs which the original Warsaw settlers carried with them to their new home in Canada are still evident today. For example, large gardens shared by several families exist even now.

Another prominent cultural group in Levack is the Finns. Attracted to the area partly because of its resemblance to their homeland with its lakes, hills, forests and wildlife, the Finns have contributed much to the present character of the town. Buildings such as the Old Hall, the steam bath, several of the cottages on Windy Lake and many of the small white houses in the older parts
of town were built by the Finnish people.

When the second shaft of the mine was being sunk in 1937, the town had more people than it could accommodate. A group of Finns working on the sinking of the shaft who had nowhere to stay pitched a camp of shades and tents beside the Onaping River, near the bridge into town. This camp was known as ‘Little Finland’. It wasn’t long, however, before the Company asked the group to disband.

At one time there was also a section of Levack known as ‘French Town’ which consisted of five houses, all in a row. All but one were occupied by French-speaking families.

--- School ---

The Levack community wasted no time when it came to providing their children with a good education. The town’s first students initially met in September of 1915, in a company house; the first white cottage west of Hughes’ store. In the meantime, construction was underway on a permanent location for the schoolhouse. Also, prior to the construction of the Catholic Church in the 1920's, services were held in the schoolhouse.
On April 2, 1915, the Public School Section #1 for Levack and Dowling was formed by the public school inspector, D.M. Christie. The first teacher in Levack was Miss Margaret Coburn.

The original schoolhouse was a two-room structure, and the first room was ready to greet its first class in December of 1915. The second room came into use in September of 1917. With increasing enrollment, a third room had to be constructed in the basement in 1925.

In 1926, the heating system for the old school was converted from hot air to steam. In 1929, there was a two-room addition to the back of the school and in 1934, washrooms were installed and a playroom was built in the basement. With the recommencement of mining activity, there followed a sudden increase in enrollment of students. In 1937 the school was full.
A third room was added in May 1937, and a fourth added in September 1937. In January of 1948, an additional two rooms were added, and in September 1948, two more classes were set up in the auditorium. Six more rooms were added in September 1949. Teachers resided at the Old Engineer's Club, which overlooked the baseball field.

The Levack District High School was built in 1957 ( $484,000 was requested for construction) with additions in 1960 and 1969. The site of the high school was once a gravel pit which was once called upon for fill following a cave-in at the Levack Mine.

-- The Fire of 1919 --

One summer day in 1919, Levack was surrounded by fire. It started in the Cartier area and moved in strips toward the town with secondary fires starting up in the hills behind Moose Creek. The threatened town prepared to evacuate. Flatcars stood downtown ready to carry the community away to safety. People dug holes in the earth in which they buried their valuables.
Meanwhile, the men of the town were digging fire breaks along the town borders. Two, each twenty feet in width, were dug parallel to each other along the Onaping River.

One lady recalled seeing her mother gather her clothes from the line when a ball of flame leapt into her yard and set the grass on fire. Another recalled seeing Old Quin standing on the other side of the river, fire behind him, madly laughing.

At the last moment, the winds shifted and the town was saved. The woods around the town were burnt out and all that was left were ashes and charred trunks. The blueberry crops in the following years, however, were one consolation as they flourished in the areas previously ravaged by fire.

**The Employees' Club --**

The Employees' Club was a multi-purpose structure which provided an entertainment venue for the miners and their families. On the uppermost level was the Levack Public Library and a comfortable television lounge. The gymnasium/auditorium on the second floor, with its gleaming hardwood flooring was a popular spot for teen dances, basketball games and the annual Santa Claus visit. The main level offered large billiard tables, and a
bowling alley as well as a snack bar which was well-attended during the many baseball games of Levack summers.

The writer personally recalls the Employee Christmas Party when most of the town's tots would pack into the gym to watch cartoons on a projector screen and be entertained by clowns. The grand event was the arrival of Santa, who would personally give each child a gift and then listen to our secret Christmas wishes.

The club was managed by Barbara Stanich (nee Ribic) from 1959 until INCO sold it to the town for $1.00. The club was later torn down.
-- The Old Hall --

In the early days of Levack, the place where gatherings of every sort could be held -- the real heart of the community -- was the "Old Hall". A landmark of the town, it was constructed with volunteer help from the Finnish community in the 1920's. Originally known as the Finn Hall, all manner of community activities went on there. A popular diversion among the Finnish men was the making of long political speeches from the platform inside, or even from the steps outside.

The Hall was also a fashionable place to hold wedding receptions. On entering the Hall you might have been met by a pair of musicians. The guitarist, custom dictated, would invite you to stuff money into the sound hole of his instrument. Celebrations would sometimes go on for three days.

In later years the Old Hall was used for Scouts, tap dancing lessons, socials and as a place for miners to play cards and have a few beers.
Mining booms are notoriously associated with such things as bootlegging, gambling, and other kinds of illegal pastimes, and the Levack of 1937 was no different from the rest. With the sudden influx of hard working men at that time there was a near insatiable demand for recreation. Men would be congregated together in hundreds at the various Crawley-McCracken bunkhouses. Card playing, drinking and fighting were the order of the day. Every second door would be answered by a bootlegger in the bunkhouses of the late thirties. Behind the other doors men were too involved in a game of poker to bother answering a knock.

Gambling sent more than one man away from Levack with a broken spirit. Men came into town healthy and ambitious, and left feeling unwell and dejected. Pots of a thousand dollars were not unusual at that time. But if you won it one week, you lost it the next.
In order to keep outside hustlers away from the games one would be required to show his mine badge in order to sit in. This lead to a high demand for badges, which could bring up to $50 for use for one night. Along with all of these trappings came slot machines, which could be found in various establishments in and around Levack.

One such slot machine was located just outside of town, across from the present site of the Hardy Mine. This place, known as the Duck-Inn because of its unusually low doorframe, was a place where men could visit ladies in a town virtually barren of single women.

-- Commerce in Levack's Early Years --

Downtown Levack in the 1920's

In the fast-growing community came the need for a steady source of supplies. The first entrepreneur was Sam Bolton. He made a deal with the Monde Nickel Company, giving him exclusive rights in the town for a number of years. With this bit of assurance, he built his store.

Bolton’s was a general store which sold everything from coal and wood to cosmetics. In addition to having one of the first telephones in town, Bolton’s also had the original mail franchise. Mr. Bolton would pick up the mail from the Levack Station and dispense it from the small post office in his store. Two ladies who worked in the post office were Margaret Coburn and Miss Darling.
Mr. Bolton used to come to his customers' door and, without the benefit of pad and pencil, take the order and deliver the goods accurately shortly afterwards.

In front of the store were benches upon which many an afternoon was spent in friendly conversation and the warmth of the sun.

On Christmas Day of 1924, Bolton’s Store burnt down. The town came immediately to the family’s assistance, providing them with a place to live and all the comforts of home. They rebuilt their store and ran it until it burnt down again in 1940.

A second outlet for supplies was started up in 1921 by Bill Hughes, who ventured to Levack from his job as a ranger in Algonquin Park. Notably, while still in Algonquin, Mr. Hughes became a friend of the highly acclaimed Canadian painter, Tom Thomson.

Upon his arrival in town, Mr. Hughes found that the building which he would be renting from D.L. Mackinnon from Sudbury for $75 per month, had a pool hall on the second floor and a former bake shop and butcher shop on the main floor. The bake shop had previously been run by Mrs. Kelly, and from her one could purchase all their bread and pastries. The butcher shop had been operated by the original owner of the building, George Irwin whose very first shop had been in his boarding house; he had moved it into the new building a few years before he was killed in a train accident.

In the Hughes’ day the pool hall was a lively place. A fellow could shoot a game or two or have Bill Puro give him a haircut. And if he had a bothersome tooth, Bill Hughes would yank it out.
Tom O’Reilly would challenge any man to a wrestling match by drawing a circle with chalk on the floor and bidding anyone willing to come in and wrestle him out of it. Few tried.

Doug Shields ran the local gas station between 1937 and 1974. The newer Shell station was built in 1964. In the earlier years Mr. Shields also sold fridges, stoves, and boat motors.

Bill Lord operated the bus service known as Lord's Levack Lines from 1956.

Sterling Girourd was a barber in the town during the 50's and 60's.

Ted Giannini founded the IGA store.

Fred Dolci was an early butcher.

Aldo Piccolo founded the Red and White Grocery store.

Harvey Elliot founded the Crest Hardware store located where the Home Hardware is found today.
The Fera family ran the movie theatre which was located beside the hardware store.
The Endelman family operated a General Store in town and in the early years provided meat to the lumber camps in the area.

**Levack's First Bank --**

Located near where the laundromat is currently situated, the Canadian Bank of Commerce operated in Levack for only a year and a half after its opening in 1929. Here, miners line up for their pay as two Salvation Army women wait for donations.
Following its initial burst of growth in 1913, Levack was restricted from further expansion due to world economic conditions following World War I. At that time, world demand for nickel fell off considerably. Levack Mine, however, remained in production until 1929, when the mine's headframe burned down, severely impeding production. As a result, the mine was closed down completely by 1931.

During the Depression only about a dozen families remained in Levack. Among them were the families of the men who formed a skeleton maintenance crew at the mine. The hoistmen were Jim Robb and Elmer McNamara. Sam Enoff was the pumpman, Toivo Kauppinen was the electrician, and Patty Serpell was the master mechanic.
The bunkhouses began to empty due to the lack of work, and by 1931 -- when it was known that the mine would remain closed -- many families had moved away and the single and married men from the bunkhouses had left town.

During the Depression the remaining families kept large gardens and fished in Moose Lake. They also caught rabbit and partridge from the surrounding bush. The only way to obtain real cash during that period was to pick blueberries and ship them to Toronto. But when the price of blueberries went down to 40 cents per 11-quart basket, it was more beneficial to hold onto the berries and cook with them in as many ways as possible throughout the long winter.

As with almost every other area in the country, the Depression years were hard and long. In Levack, large gardens were cultivated. Cows, chickens and pigs wandered freely in the streets until most were slaughtered in the fall to provide smoked and fresh meat for the winter. As one older resident remarked, "The town looked like one big farmyard."

In fact, when times did get better the newly formed town council had to clamp down on those backyard livestock farms for health reasons and because they kept getting in the way of the train as it ran through town.

Gradually, signs and rumors that things were getting better climaxed into the real fact that the mine would start up again. In 1937, the maintenance staff was reinforced and very soon jobs were available for all.

In that year, the world demand for nickel rose again and Levack returned to being a somewhat prosperous town. The need for miners was so sudden and so intense that the town could not easily accommodate all of those who arrived. Men began to pour into town looking for work. All the bunkhouses were full again, and a new two-storey, fully serviced building for single men was built. Many were forced to stay in tents right up until New Year’s Day of 1938, waiting for their lodgings to be completed. "Tent town", by the river mushroomed again.
and every abandoned log shack for miles around was taken over, mostly by bachelors who were looking for a private, inexpensive way to live.

In 1937 and 1938, the town saw a complete turnaround from rags to riches. Electricity was available and most houses were wired. A water line was laid from Clear Lake to supply tap stations around town. Of course, later on water and sewer lines supplied each house. But for a while, hauling water from a nearby tap, or paying a lad a few pennies to bring it to the house, was a new luxury.

The atmosphere in Levack at this time was one of a boom town. Expansion called for more services and businesses to keep up with the growth. The Piaskoski family began their dairy which was originally located on 2nd Avenue South.

Bill Woolridge opened up the first drug store. The Fera family moved to town and opened the Rio Theatre which, in its heyday, was showing movies every day of the week. The Toronto Dominion Bank started up in Levack that year in order to take care of all of the new commerce which began to flow through the town. A new police station was opened on Main Street, and Levack’s first newspaper -- the Levack Herald -- began its short run of two years.

Many of the miners and tradesmen who had worked for Monde Nickel previously and were now working for INCO were surprised -- and in some cases disappointed -- with the way the new company ran things. Under the management of Monde Nickel, decisions had been made locally; problems were thrashed out and reconciled right then and there. Nearly all Levack men were supervisors, and the friendly, neighbourhood mood of the town was present at the mine site, too.

In 1938, the village of Levack became incorporated as a town. The first nomination meeting was held in the old school house and it was there also that the first town council meeting took
place on January 9th, 1939. The minutes of that meeting show the following men to have participated:

W.J. Serpell, Mayor

J.B. McNab, Councillor

W.J. Hykin, Councillor

F. Jenkinson, Councillor

F. Fera, Councillor

W. Woolrich, Councillor

J.W. Brown, Councillor

Both the business community and the upper echelon of the International Nickel Company were represented on this council.

In the early days of Levack, as any older resident could tell you, the mayor was virtually appointed by the company and no person dared run against him lest he jeopardize the security of his job at the mine. Levack was a Company town. And the Company was concerned about protecting its interests.

Past Mayors of Levack

1. William John Serpell Dec 1938 to Feb 1940

2. William A. Humphries Mar 1940 to Aug 1941
3. Fraser A. Ross  Sept 1941 to Aug 1942

4. William J. Hykin  Sept 1942 to Dec 1944

5. Earl W. Gilchrist  Jan 1945 to Dec 1964

6. I.J. Coady  Jan 1965 to Dec 1972
   (when the Regional Government commenced)

-- Where People Lived in 1937 --
1  Arthur O'Bumswain
2    A. Luoma
3    Alex Ticks
4    George Ticks
5    Frank Dixon
6    Luoma
7    Steambath
8    C. Sandberg
9    O. O'Bumswain
10  Bill Neva
11  H. Adams
12  Linnamaa
13  Hughes Store
14  Lafleur
15  Reg Belanger
16  T. Kauppinen
17  E.J. McNamara
18  Watier Butcher Shop
19  Boulton Store & Post Office
20  W. Corval
21  A. O'Bumswain
22  N. Danchuk
23  J. Jarvenoja
24  Bank of Commerce
25  The Cookery
26  The Dormitory
27  W.G. Hughes
28  J. Russell
29  W. Puro
30  James Langdon
31  32  A. Cooke
33  Archie Taylor
34  Roy Hanson
35  C. Antilla
36  McNab
37  Mr. Leach
38  Melchre
39  G. Leach
40  Sireni
41  Sorjanen
42  Mose Lecroux
43  Primeau
44  James Robb
45  A. Dockrell
46  Hykins
47  W. Cavers
48  McDonald
49  Alec Dunn
50  Grabbatas
51  Mr. Lewko
52  Finn Boarding House
53  & Sleep Camp
54  J. Langdon Jr.
55  S. Dockrell
56  H. Vandyke
57  Bill Muir
58  Catholic Church
59  W. Stephenson
60  Dr. Kirk
61  A. Sharpe, Superintendent
62  63  Frank Last
64  P. Serpell
65  Wikoski
66  Mr. Sidford
67  W. Langman
68  Engineers' Club
69  McNab
70  A. Blacklock
71  Tony Wilson
72  Simpson, Policeman
73  F. Pegarraro
74  Finn Hall
75  76  Takalas Beding House
77  J. Morois
78  S. Mallette
79  H. Blais
80  F. Dimm
81  Andre Gravel
82  Mr. Sauve
83  Pete Laberge
84  J. Stos
85  M. Bobbi
86  M. Chuby
87  Lankey
88  J. Dusick
89  A. Shuparsky
90  W. Kury
91  Mr. Reid
92  C. Lewkoski
-- Levack Mine Disaster: 1937 --

The worst accident in the history of the Levack Mine occurred shortly after its reopening in 1937. Following a blast in the sinking of Number Two Shaft, a dozen men in a skip hoist rang the slow bell to be lowered down to the blast site. By regulation the hoist should have stopped a certain distance from the blast. However, it went past this level. The bucket was tipped when it hit a timber which had been knocked out of place by the blast. Five were killed and seven injured in this terrible accident.

One man’s life was saved by chance. If he had not gone to the surface in order to replace the carbide in his miner’s helmet lamp he would have been in the shaft with the other men.

The night of the accident was also the new doctor’s first night in town. A party had been organized in his honor at the Old Hall. During the festivities the people of the town were telling him how slow the town had been and that he probably would not have very much to do.

-- Churches in Levack --

Since its earliest days Levack has had a United and a Roman Catholic Church. Both were originally outposts of the Cartier center which was a booming railway town around the turn of the century.
Before 1925, the Jesuits of the Catholic Church were in charge of the missions along the C.P.R. line running west from Chelmsford. The Jesuits, however, asked that the mission be taken out of their hands. The Bishop thus appointed Father Lionel Seguin to the charge which at that time serviced Benny, Biscotasing, Ramsey, Larchwood and Levack.

In 1936, the original parish at Levack was started, but remained under the service of the Cartier mission until 1942. The present structure of St. Bartholomew’s Parish was constructed in 1953 under the service of Father Wells.

In the little yard which lies between the church and the rectory stands a statue of St. Joseph. It was erected to commemorate the safekeeping of the Levack Mine when one year it threatened to lose its soundness of structure as a result of the gradual hollowing out of the ground. To prevent any danger, the slopes where filled with gravel from the location at which the high school now stands. The statue is erected from a core of stone that was drilled out of the mine.

The United Church was relocated in Levack from Cartier in 1942. After the Second World War, the manse and the church itself were erected. Before St. John’s was constructed, services were held in the public school. One minister recalls first coming to Levack and preaching his sermon in the Old Hall from atop a sewing machine. While using the Hall for church purposes, he would have to go in a little early to clear the bottles of Saturday night away and put out the chairs.
Fathers of the Roman Catholic Church

From Cartier

Lionel Sequin 1925-28
M.B. Flannery 1928-32
Owen Kennedy 1932-38
J.A. Benoit 1938-42

The parish was started in 1936 and was serviced by Cartier until 1942.

H.A. O’Neill 1942-48
Thos. A McNamara 1948-49
J.J. Delandey 1949-52
J. Walter Wells 1952-64
Stephen MacLellan 1956-60 curate
D.J. Volpe 1960-62 curate
J.M. Sharpe 1962-65 curate
J.E. Hickey 1964-65
J.J. Delaney 1965-68
D.J. Volpe 1967-68 curate
A. Mulcahey 1968-69
F.O. Murphy        1969-70
Don MacLellan      1970-76 Rev. John Kelly assistant
J.J. Kaptein       1976-

Ministers of the United Church - Reverends and the Size of the Congregation

1926  1952  S.M. Parkhouse
1927  170  1953  "
1928  1954  A.L. Evans
1929  1955  "
1930  1956  "
1931  1957  "
1932  1958  A.T. Kennard
1933  1959  "
1934  1960  "
1935  1961  "  1650
1936  1962  "
1937  "  1963  "
1938  "  1964  Jas. R. Holden
1939  "  1965  "
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-- From The Observer, 1926-1976 (located in the United Church Archives at Emmanuel Theological College, Toronto) --

-- Entertainment in Old Levack --

As the founders of the community became settled in their new surroundings, the desire for diversion and entertainment grew. It had been hard work laying down the foundations of the new town and striking up homes in the wild; now it was time to play a little.
One popular form of entertainment was the surprise party. Every now and then a group of folks would gather together, someone would tuck a fiddle under their arm, and the crowd would suddenly appear at the door of a friend. While this sometimes caught people at embarrassing moments, it was a generally welcomed practice.

More formal dances were often held on the second floor of Hughes’ store. In anticipation, ladies would bake cakes, make pastries and prepare sandwiches which were brought up to the pool hall. All but one table would be pushed aside to make room for the dancers. Meanwhile down in the mine, gentlemen would be practicing their favourite step. Many a night heard the old floor boards of the pool hall creak as the shadows of the dancers passed by the window, falling onto the street below.

A favourite spot to pass a summer’s day has always been the beach down at Windy Lake. On weekends great picnics would be held there in the early days of Levack, involving many from the town who were not among those to have built cottages around the lake.

One event which the school children would look forward to was the end of school and the great picnic which the Company would throw in their honor. And for years at Christmas, all the kids in town would come to the Employees' Club and watch cartoons in the gym. Afterwards Santa would arrive on stage and personally hand deliver a gift to all
-- The Charlie Chaplin of Levack --

Levack had a few great entertainers in the old days. One of them was a man named George Leech. He, along with the eventual mayor of the town, Bill Hykin, would go around entertaining people in their homes and sometimes in shows at the public school. Mr. Hykin is remembered for his magic tricks and the ability, up until a very late age, to do a back flip and pick up his top hat.
-- Old Quin --

One of the first homesteaders in the area was a man remembered as ‘Old Quin’. He made his home at what was the old Hardy Mine site, at the entrance to town. There he took squatter’s rights under the laws of the day: if a man made his home on a section of unclaimed land it was automatically his.

Quin sold his property to Tom O’Reilley, but the sale was not considered legitimate as Quin held no deed. Falconbridge purchased the land some years later -- apparently from Bill Tough, though the O’Reilleys thought that the land was theirs. Quin, it seemed, failed to tell the O’Reilleys upon selling that the land did not belong to him.

Old Quin, lost all of his fingers to frostbite while driving a team of horses through a winter night bare-handed. Only his thumbs remained.

It was said that he held quite a grudge against the first superintendent of the Levack Mine, Frank Eager, though the reasons behind this dislike are not known. Quin, one man recalled, went to the extent of putting boulders on the railway tracks hoping to derail Eager when he was riding along in his hand-car. Another remembered seeing Old Quin on the day of the great fire that surrounded Levack. He was standing on his side of the river laughing. It was suggested that he loved seeing “Eager’s town “about to go up in flames.

One day, while he was sitting on a stump talking to another early homesteader, Billy McDowell, Old Quin just fell over dead. He had asked to be buried on his property overlooking Levack, and he was.
They say that he lived like a bear.

On the mountain across from High Falls, old Morley dug out a mine with no assistance and lived beside it for years in a shack made from roots and logs. He dug out a vertical shaft first. And then, when the shaft became filled with snow and rain, he dug into the side of the mountain to avoid the flooding.

He refused to allow hydro lines to be strung across his property, which he would not sell for a vast sum to the nickel companies which were eager to develop it.

And one did not just wander freely onto his property; not unless you wanted to get a close look at the old fella’s weathered face while he was peering at you from the safe end of an old shotgun. Indeed, Mr. Morley liked his privacy.

It was said that he was crippled by a gunshot wound, having been mistaken for a bear while in a forest in British Columbia. Some residents of Levack remembered seeing his towering form limp into town, his walking stick digging into the earth with each weighty step.

He was a regular customer at Hughes's store, sending and receiving mail as well as purchasing food and clothing. His supplies always included a good stock of salt pork and beans. He used to say, "What I don’t taste, I won’t miss".

And it was not uncommon to see him with an old tin wheel-barrow, hauling his ore all the way into Larchwood and returning with a load of dynamite. Many offered the man a ride but seldom would he accept it. If he did, he would leave ten cents on the seat behind him for their
trouble. When occasionally he had to make the trip to Sudbury he would walk the long distance, stay overnight in a small hotel and return the next day, declining any offers of a ride along the way.

At Bolton's Store he would sit for hours chatting with whoever happened to drop by. In the winter a few old railway seats were set up around the large wood stove in the store, and Morley would pass the hours discussing whatever subject was current at the time. In the summer a couple of long benches outside the store were the meeting place for anyone who had the inclination to pass the time of day. He was considered a well-read man, and his thoughts and opinions were respected. The ladies remembered him well as a very polite man; a real gentleman.

Few ever got to know old Morley really well. He chose to live in seclusion. He was a religious man, and traveled to town regularly, however, to teach Sunday School to Levack's youngsters.

Ed Piaskoski was the last person to see him alive. On a chilly fall evening in 1942, Ed gave Morley a ride on his bus from Levack to his log cabin by the road at High Falls. Morley's main cabin was near his mine along a path that set out through the bush, around the hill and up to the mine. It was dark when he let him off, and Ed offered to lend him a flashlight. Morley, however, indicated that he might stay overnight in the roadside cabin and declined the offer.

Morley was thought to be nearly 80 years old at the time. On his return trip from Sudbury Ed wondered, as he passed the roadside cabin where Morley said he might stay the night, if the old man had decided to try and find his way in the dark to his main cabin. The next day Ed's question was answered.
Tom Morley had stayed in the small cabin by the road. He died in his sleep that night with his unopened mail, unread newspaper and the odd groceries that he had purchased at Hughes' Store beside him.

-- A Conversation with Jim Averill --

In the summer of 1978, on a beautiful northern August afternoon I went to visit Jim Averill where he lived at the end of an old road, at the edge of the woods in Dowling. Nearly 90 then, Jim was a lively speaker with a great memory. We spoke mainly of characters who had lived in the area in the first 4 decades of the 1900’s...

Well, I tell you I was born in Sudbury, you know.

Born at the Gatchell. And that was in, 1889 -- June the 22nd, 1889. I was born at the Gatchell. And then we hung around Sudbury when I was a little baby for a long time and then we moved up into Water’s Township – that’s between Copper Cliff & Mountain. And we – I was raised in Water’s Township ‘till I was 15 years old.

Then in 1904, my mother, she took me to Edmonton, Alberta. And I was raised in Alberta most of – after I was 15 years old up till I was about 20. Then I went out to British Columbia, and from British Columbia down to the western States and all over …come back and – come back to Alberta and I…In February 1916, I enlisted. And joined the army.

Then I put in about two – three and a half, maybe four years in the army. Then I came down here in 1922. My brother was living in Levack. He came down when I joined the army. He came down from Alberta. He lived in Alberta, too. So he was living in Levack and I came down – 1922 I came to Levack.
Then I didn’t stay very long. I hung around here for a while. We trapped in the wintertime, me and my two brothers. We trapped in there. But I, in the summer, I used to work in Parry Sound in the summer.

And, so I worked in Parry Sound for four or five years and then I came up and stayed and worked for INCO at Copper Cliff for a driving team for The .... boys. Their father had a little team of horses and I used to drive their team at the plant for a couple of years.

In Levack?

No, in Copper Cliff. Then, after a while I came up here. I been -- my brother was living back here on a, a mining thing. That’s where Charlie Annett and his wife – they lived on the same thing.

And, he lived there and I came in and we bought this place over here from Malcolm McNeil. We – it’s the old Johnson farm. We bought it and that’s about 42, maybe 44 years ago. When I come in here last. And I been in here ever since.

I was asking you about old Morley the other day. And there was another fellow who was supposed to be like – live the same type of life as Morley around here. Did you ever hear of him? He lived over by Windy Lake Station.

I might of heard something. No, I don’t know -- I’m sure I…nooo… Oh yes, old man Morley.

You knew him?

Oh yes! I knew him. Well, I used to go to see – the Second – the Canadians – in the Second World War the Canadians made a raid on Ypres – there’s a base in France – Ypres. And there was one Sunday I went up to see – I used to go up and see him on Sundays when he lived way back in that -- he lived way back – in that old shack.
And so that was – one Sunday at the time of that raid in Ypres I was there. And he said there was a raid the other day in a place called Dieppe. So that’s one time I remember going up to see him on Sunday.

**What was he mining?**

I don’t know what the contents -- he wouldn’t let you call it a mine, you had to call it a prospect. He wouldn’t let you call it a mine. He’d call it a prospect.... And he’d tell me when the boom was on – he’d tell me when the boom was on – the boom was on – there was a mining boom on here at one time. And they – and they, uh – I think it was the company – some – INCO or some company – I heard they offered him $40,000 for his claim in the mountain, in that big mountain. He was tellin’ me all exactly what to do.

“No”, he says. “I wouldn’t do that”, he says. He was a very religious man. He says, “That’s only a prospect.” Which I guess it didn’t make much difference because he was talking about the money anyway. He must have been pretty wealthy because I’ll tell you what he done. He give the Roman Catholic Church a big donation and he give our Protestant Church a big donation. So he must have had some money. But the way he lived. Oh gee!

He had a brother, but I never seen his brother. But Harry Guise was tellin’ me about his brother. But his brother was different than him. Oh his brother, he’d take a bottle of beer ... Harry Guise was telling me about his brother that came here. He says, “Oh”, he says, “He’s a different man than this Old Morley.”

This Old Morley was a very religious man. He was an old country Englishman. He’d been out west in British Columbia and out there, and doing whatever and how ever he made his money was out there some place.

**He used to go into Levack and preach Sunday school.**

Did he?
Yeah.

Ohhh yeah.

That’s what they tell me.

Yes....

Remember Quin?

He died about 6 months or a year before I arrived at my brother's in Levack. And there was an old fellow by the name of John – an old Ukrainian fellow by the name of John Kazerouk. He was there and he says, “Old Quin went out and sit on a stump. Sit right on a stump and dropped over dead.”

That’s about, oh, it’d be 6 months or maybe a year before I got in there. And when Old Quin died, they uh, Billy McDowell and old Tom Reilly, they buried him up on the little mountain. You know, where the big INC...Oh yeah. You see that big pipe that runs out, down into...on the south side?

Well, that’s down in his grave. They hadda dig him up and move him from his grave to put that big pipe in there. So I don’t know where they moved him. But I never saw him because he died before I come here....

I never heard any stories about him. I just heard, mostly what, uhhh, my brother Ans, he was talking to Tom Reilly. And, he was talkin’ to Tom Reilly and I guess it was...Tom Reilly and old Billy, they buried him. And he said he wanted to be buried up there so’s he could watch old man Eager. So I heard my brother – Tom Reilly told my brother that. He said it.

Oh, he was a great enemy of old Eager, the old.... To the bitter end he was, yeah. He went up one time, they tell me that, uh -- Tom Reilly was telling my brother Ans -- he put stones on the
rails to run his car off. And all kinds of stuff like that. Oh, he hated Eager, from what they’ve told me.

**Did Eager ever play any dirty tricks on him?**

Oh, I don’t think so…Well, I’ll tell you, he must have had some kind of deal. I don’t know what but…

**But you don’t know why they were enemies.**

Well, no I don’t really know why they were enemies. I guess – it’s hard to say what happened, but that was what old Tom Reilly was telling my brother Ansen. So I heard my brother Ansen telling that about him. He said that old Quin, they buried Old Quin up on that little hill there. He said he wanted to be buried there so’s he could watch old Eager.

**You were a good friend of Tom Reilly’s?**

Hmmm. Yes. Oh, he married old Jim Adamson’s daughter Maggie. And all the boys – we lived with all the boys – we worked with all the boys in Levack and old Jim the father and young Jim the son. He was our foreman when we was putting the road through there. Young Jim was the job foreman.

**Putting the road in to Levack?**

Yes, going in from the station. You can see the old road up there, but no one goes over that way now. And, there’s a bunch of us worked there. Me and my two brothers, and Percy Peever. Did you ever hear of him?

**No.**

Did you ever hear of Jim Burns?
Yep.

Well, Percy Peever…Percy Peever is no relation to him. I was thinking about Bill Hughes. You know Bill Hughes.

Yes.

He was here – he come and seen me – he’s been here two or three times. Whenever he gets…wants his watch repaired and he comes down and Mr Ainsley down here -- he’s an expert on clock and watch repair. So Bill, whenever he comes down here, he always comes to see me.

So, uh, he…let’s see. He’s married to Percy Peever’s sister. And he was working with us on the road. Putting the road through Levack.

Yeah. How many men were doing that?

Well, among others there was me and my two brothers, there was three. And there was, ohhh…there was Percy Peever’s – four. Oh, there was four or five – eight or nine fellows working on it, and only one truck. Old Russell – he had a truck. He was working with his truck. He was the only one that had a truck.

Oh! Pilon (sp), too. Pilon worked for a while. Pilon, young Pilon – he had a truck, too. He worked for a while.

How long do you think it took you to put the road in?

Eh?

How long did it take to put the road in?
Oh, I don’t know. It was – somebody had worked there before we worked. I don’t know how long it took. It was a rough job in them days ’cause there was no motor traffic. There was the odd car – the odd automobile went in and out. But very few. So, it was just a gravel road through the bushes – stones, you know. (Mumbles.)…so I couldn’t tell you. I don’t even know when they first started.

**I guess there wasn’t too much in Levack before there was a road there, then?**

Well, by the time we were working on that road into Levack, there was a lot of people in Levack. Oh, it was a big place then. It was for a long time, it was closed down after the First World War. When I come in here it was closed down, I think. And it belonged to the Monde Nickel Company. And then I think the Monde Nickel Company started up and worked it for a while before they sold it to INCO.

Then, I remember the engineer – oh yeah – that Percy Peever I was telling you about. He married old man Cook’s daughter. Old Cook used to run the steam locomotive in and out of Levack. A nice man. He was a very – everybody liked him – he was a nice man. He died from an awful cancer of the insides.

**Oh. Do you remember the time that they held up the Paymaster?**

Yes, I wasn’t here then. I guess I was in Parry Sound working then. But my brother – my youngest brother Ansen – he was there with Mrs. McDowell, my brother Dave – they lived in a house up there with Mrs. McDowell and Gladys. And I think that Mrs. McDowell had a boyfriend and used to chase old Billy Elkwood (sp) to take the old lady. So, this young Patty Spencer…

And Patty Spencer and my brother Ansen, they were sitting out in the evening. They were smudging mosquitoes and woulda had a smoke going. And when they held up the pay car they fired some shots. I don’t know who done the shooting – must’ve been the ones who held up –
they fired some shots. And my brother Ansen ‘n Patty, they thought it was somebody shooting ducks down on the river. It must have been in open water, ‘cause they thought it was somebody shooting ducks.

The next day – ohhh, boy was there hell to pay. Everybody was armed. That one poor fellow lost his life over it. Hanson. He had the speeder…coming in and out on the speeder. And he met the big locomotive coming around there and he didn’t have time to stop and it (Claps his hands together.) killed him dead. I think, they say, they say he was going to get married to Margaret. I don’t know. But I know he lost his life over the damn mess.

But as near as I can make out, they tell me, they didn’t get no money, they claim. I don’t know.

They – Patty and Ans – they heard the shooting. But I don’t know who was doing the shooting. I think old Eager was on the cart at the time.

**Did you know Eager?**

Nooo, I didn’t know him. But my brother knew him. My oldest brother Dave, he knew him. But, my brother Dave hated him so bad that he wouldn’t speak to him. Whatever the hell happened…?

**What kind of a fellow was Tom Reilly?**

Well, I’ll tell you the history of Tom Reilly. He came over from Ireland. Ohhh, years ago – before he came to Levack. And he got working in a gold mine up somewhere round Timmins, or up in that country, in some gold mine. And you know what they call high…uh, what do they call it, highjacking?…When they swipe valuable metal…And it’s got enough gold in it…they sell it, you know. The bootleggers sell them. Ah! What do you call that? High grading!
Tom was high grading up there for, oh I don’t know how long. And he was arrested. They arrested him. Got the judge ..., but they didn’t put him in jail as far as I can remember – that people told me. They deported him back to Ireland.

So he didn’t stay there very long. Canada looked too good to him. So I guess he came back and worked his way around through the United States and sneaked in the back door and he got back in here and he came to Levack and he worked here.

He was supposed to own that farm where Falconbridge is there now. Had a big ranch there, he raised a lot of pigs. But I don’t know whether he sold it to somebody or what, but anyway, Falconbridge come in and they took it over. They had the right to it. However they got it, I don’t know.

I guess there was a lot of bootlegging going on in here in those days?

Well, there wasn’t…yeah, I guess so. But in them days…oh yeah, I guess there was a lot of bootlegging all right. But, uh, we didn’t look around for anything like that then. We was working too hard then and…working – we didn’t look for anything like that. And of course, there was a lot of that we didn’t see. If you’re not looking for it, you won’t see it. But we never looked for anything like that, and so…I know there was some people down through here that had their stills ...

That old John Kazerouk? He, he was making…whiskey. And when I first come here to live with her, after her husband died I went up in the loft in the old log house and I found a worm up there. But I never touched it. I left it alone and didn’t stay very long. Whoever come and took it. So, I guess old John Kazerouk, he was makin’ it all the time.

Uh, she always told me how her husband…what happened to him – he run off a batch of pure alcohol. Ohhhh, a big percentage of alcohol, you know. And a big percentage is strong. And
she said he took and pretty near drank a bottle...killed him dead. That’s what she told me. She often said that.

He was a old – George Cosselman – he was an old Indian. Old Indian. But he spoke seven languages.

There was another family by the name..was it.. Euk. E-U-K. He was – her husband and another Ukrainian fellow by the name of Harry Petick – they worked down in Quebec for a long time. And Harry Petick was running some kind of a…working someplace – I forget what he was doing – and he was working. And there was a fellow with a loader coming over him and as soon as the fellow came up – a French fella – he pulled a ligament. Couldn’t get up. Buried partly in the rocks. Crippled him for life. He never got over it.

But he stayed around for a long time and he was able to work. And he came back in here. He owned that farm up on the hill where .... He owned that. And he used to live with Cosselmans. They chumed together. And her husband, he got a job out at Flin Flon…he got a job on the railroad. But he was quite a big – he was quite a good contractor. But he got a – he was called – to a job out in Flin Flon. And they moved up to Flin Flon. And I don’t know, they stayed out there two or three years before they came back down to Sudbury. And…this Harry Petick, I guess he stayed with them all the time.

So, uh, she had a house and lot in Sudbury and he insisted on her selling her house and lot and coming up here and buying this property. So…she always regretted it. She worked so darn hard here. Another bad thing happened to her: she got stung with a wasp. Stung her on the hip with a wasp. She never got over that. Poisoned her whole system. She never got over it.

I guess this old barn out here is pretty old, eh?

Well, that – well, let’s see…when I come in here 52, 54 years ago, I don’t think, I don’t think it was standing. But when I came in here about 44 years ago – the last time – with my brother
down here, it was – the walls were standing but no roof on it. And it stood that way for a few years. And old Paul Temple, he owned the farm across there, and he owned a farm over there. And there was nobody living over here on this one.

But they had a house there and a big barn, and …He was married to a woman and -- an English woman. Of course, they were English, too. And he was married to this English woman. Her name was Burton. And she went out of her mind living over here. They took – sent her away to an asylum. And I think she died in the asylum. And then the house got burned down.

Well, all that was here and he didn’t have no place to go. And Paul was over there, and the house burnt out, so they come together and they came over and they put a roof on this old log house. Paul and Al. And they stayed here, they stayed here – oh, I don’t know how many years before they sold it to her husband. Old George Cosselman. And they stayed in this old log house. Then after a while they sold her. Then he – old Cosselman – after they stayed here a while…there was -- he got a fellow by the name of Roman Samborski. He was a carpenter in Sudbury. He got Roman Samborski to come up and build that house.

Oh yeah. What’s in there now?

Eh?

What’s in there now? Is it empty?

Oh, there’s nobody lives there.

No? I’d like to take a picture of the old place. I’m taking picture of old houses...

You can take a – an outside picture? Yes. Oh yes. You can go out there anytime.

Good.

Sure. As far as that’s concerned, I don’t want no copy.
So who is... Do you remember any of the other old people that had to do with Levack? There was Quin, and Eager, and Riley, and Morley...

What about, uhmm... McNamara?

Do you know McNamara? Which one? Elmer?

I knew Elmer and I knew his father. When I first came in here I stayed with my brother... (Voice trails off under foreground noise, mumbling.) And old man McNamara was foreman on the railroad from Levack to the station. He was the foreman on the railroad, old man McNamara. He’d be Elmer’s father.

Oh yes, I remember Elmer well. I remember Elmer well, and Elmer used to come in to see us when we were living down at my brother's. And I guess Elmer is dead now, eh?

Yeah.

Yeah, he’s dead. Then there was... I don’t know anymore excepting old Bill Hughes. His store was where the Chinese restaurant is now. They were part Indian, them Hughes’s.

I was talking to his sister-in-law today. Alice. Do you know Alice? She used to work there. Alice Greene.

Eh?

Her name was Alice Greene.

Ohhhh, yes. She’d be pretty old now, eh.

Yeah, she’s just going into a nursing home. Pretty soon.
Oh. I wouldn’t know her. She wouldn’t remember me. You could, if you ever see her, ask her if she remembers the Averill brothers. Yes. Alice…Alice. I remember Alice well. I don’t think she ever got married, eh?

No, I don’t think she did.

No. She didn’t get married. They had a boy – she had a brother, Bill. He was an awful…he was an awful…well, you know he was all over the place…(Mumbles.) But, uh…she was…poor old Bill Hughes. He liked his brew, too. Ohhhh, he liked his brew. They’re part Indian.

I didn’t know Alice was still living. And, old Sam Boulton.

Mmm hmm. You knew him, eh?

Ohhh.

Do you have any stories about Sam Boulton?

No, I don’t know any…I couldn’t say…All I know is he kept store. I guess his store burned down one Christmas day. And his store was standing, as near as I can figure out – remember – it was just where the red and white store is, just where Picolo’s store is now. That’s where old Sam Boulton’s store and post office…He had the store on this side and the post office was off on that side in this corner here.

And Margaret, she used to look after the post office. So old Sam told her, he says…one day old Sam told her, he says, “It’s time to get in the store. You don’t need to spend all your time in the post office. It doesn’t take up all your time.”

So she refused to go into the store and work, is how the story goes. And old Sam fired her. (Chuckles.) That’s what I was told. I don’t know.
Well, did you know Margaret?

Oh well, I used to go there. We got our mail there. I used to go there. I remember all one winter. But I never got very friendly with her. I just know she was in the post office. She recognized me and I didn’t have to tell her my name. She’d always give me my mail. So that’s all I ever knew about her.

And then – I didn’t know these fellas – there was two. And one was Blacklock and one was Forbes. I think Margaret married a Forbes. I think she ran away with Forbes and got married. That’s what I was told. I don’t know. But, that’s the only story I remember about Boulton’s. And, yeah, I think he had a boy killed overseas.

Yeah? They tell me that Tom Reilly used to go and wrestle with the bear.

Eh?

Hughes had a bear? The Hughes’s had a bear...

Oh yes. They had a...yes, I can show you where the bear’s den was. You know where the old police station – the police don’t live there anymore – but the police station was like here. And right over, about 60 or 70 feet from the police station here, old Bill Hughes had his bear’s den there. Kept him on a chain and he'd just den up there in the winter. I can show you the spot where his bear’s den was.

They say Tom Reilly used to go wrestle that bear.

I don’t know. I never heard of that. No, I couldn’t tell you that.

Yes, and Sam – old Sam Boulton – he had a girl working for him. Miss Darling. You heard of her, eh?

No, I never...
Never heard of Miss Darling? Yes, she had to go to work. Miss Darling.

**Was she a good looking girl?**

She wasn’t too bad looking. She was pretty good looking girl. She wasn’t as nice looking as Alice, though. Alice was a nice looking girl when she was young. She didn’t show the Indian. She was fair complected.

**Well, did you ever know any Indians from around here?**

Ohhhh, yeah. Well, I knew a few…I know…The Guise’s was here, and there was one fella that used to stay with them…Fred Stevens. He was an Indian. And he used to stay with Guise’s out here. Harry Guise. You heard ‘a Harry Guise?

Yeah.

He used to stay with the Guises’s out here. They lived on the old Jim MacLeish farm and it now belongs to Bill Hayes. They used to live on that farm. And they had one boy that used to stay with them. Chummed with them, trapped with them, hunted with them. And his name was Fred Stevens. He was an Indian boy. His mother’s buried back here in the bush right back here. She was a Naughton…a Naughton Indian woman. Naughton. Same as Sandy’s wife. She’s from Ellen. She’s a Naughton Indian woman. From Naughton.

So I – oh yes – and I used to know…There was a few of them…used to come in here and make baskets. Down here they got camps down here. Some of them standing yet way down on the river. They used to make baskets. Then they’d sell the baskets around here. I knew all them bunch. But…Then…named Bilks, Bilks…let’s see…what the hell was his name? Steven? He was here a long time ago. An old Indian fellow. Used to trap back here. So I knew quite a few Indians.

**I guess the Indians were good trappers?**
Oh yeah. But they, I guess…I don’t know whether there was trapping in the winter time or whether they – they used to hunt moose a lot.

Did you ever hear them talk about old Trapper Joe, an old French fella? Lived up the river?

No.

He lived up the river there and I guess the old shack’s standing yet. When you come out into an opening there and its right over there. Used to live there. And he went away, and he had a sister livin’ in Quebec. He was a fine old fellow. Ohhh, old Trapper Joe. His name was Lafontaine. Joe Lafontaine. Oh, he was a fine man. Honest, straight. No…wouldn’t make no trouble for nobody. Finest man I ever met.

He went away and this dirty old bugger by the name of Gignac came and took over the place. Oh, he was a dirty old bugger. Ah, gee…old Gignac. But old Trapper Joe. It’s funny you never heard of him. He was there for a long time.

He lived right in Levack?

No, he had a, he lived up a bit…oh, it’s up about – I don’t know how far it’d be from the…you know where the commencement of the…dump. Where they’re starting to make the big gravel – or the garbage dump? When you go around there, the opening of the big garbage – it just opens here and goes waaay back? Well, about…oh, it’d be about, I guess about two or three hundred yards or maybe more. I don’t know just how far. If you looked over that way, you could see this old shack. Right across like that. It’s old Joe – Trapper Joe’s shack.

But to get there you’d have to go through Levack?

Well no. You could go – you could take a short cut. You know how the bridge crosses the Onaping, the main bridge. Well, that used to be an old bridge down, way down below. That’s a new bridge there now. And you could keep on the left side – you didn’t have to cross the
Onaping. You could keep on the left side and go right up. But you’d have to go about a big long mile before you’d get there. He used to live up there.

**Lived by himself?**

Oh Trap – yes, they both lived by themselves. Old Trapper Joe, he lived – he was a bachelor – lived by himself. And this old Gignac. He was a married man. I guess he lost his wife. I know he had a daughter in Quebec. Her name was Emma. He used to get – he’d write to her and read her letters. And write to her. He was a dirty old bugger. Ohhh, gee. Bad.

But old Trapper Joe, the first one that was there, he was the finest man I ever met in my life. Ohhh, gee he was a fine old man. Really good. Wouldn’t look for no trouble. Do anything to keep out of trouble or bullshit like that.

**And he was there when you came up? He was already, living there in the back?**

Oh yes. Old Joe was living up on his shack when we first came in there. And I don’t know how long before that…Joe Lafontaine.

**Did you...I guess you were trapping in the same area as him?**

I don’t think he was doing much trapping when – Old Joe wasn’t doing much trapping when we started up there. I don’t remember him doing any trapping. He, I guess he’d saved his money and he had a little bit of money hid and…I guess he was living there, but I don’t, I never remember him doing so much trapping. But he was an awful good man. But he was awful frightened of wolves. Oh gee. He was so frightened of wolves.

**Why?**

God knows, I don’t know.

**He talked about wolves a lot though?**
Yeah, well he was…Oh yes. He wouldn’t go out at night.

(Long pause.) I have an old – I have a map of Levack. I don’t know how well you can see, but this is in 1927. These are the houses that were there in 1927. This is Warsaw. You knew Warsaw, eh? Did you ever know anybody in Warsaw?

Oh, I forget. I might have, but I forget now…I forget. Couldn’t tell you.

And here’s the Onaping River.

Yes.

And someone was telling me the other day that they used to…they threw up a bunch of – the Finlanders threw up a bunch of shacks here and then they moved them out into Dog Patch. INCO made them get out and go into Dog Patch. Did you ever see them?

Yes…I never seen these in Levack. But I know all about Dog Patch. But I didn’t know there was any Finlanders in Dog Patch.

No? They say that there started out to be Finlanders there…Yeah… Here’s Levack in ’27. There’s not too many houses. It’s way out here now.

Yeah. (Long pause. Singing to himself....)

You said there were some Indian shacks back here.

Well, that’s... two or three shacks down on the banks of the river. Just up here a ways, on the banks of the river. Straight down here – see this farm runs down to the river, which is a long ways. One mile.

Is it?
Oh yeah. So they had to cut the shacks down there. They used to make baskets. They split the ash, you know. And they … There was a family. There was a couple of families. That’s a long time ago.

**What’s left of the shacks now?**

I don’t know. I haven’t been down there since. I don’t go down there…

This is my…this is my old rationing book. See, when the Depression was on, we had to have a ration book. You could only use so many coupons. You use so many of them coupons – if you’d get a ½ pound -- or a couple of ounces of tea…A couple of ounces of sugar. You had to put in some of them coupons. You had to use so many of them.

**Why didn’t you use them?**

Oh well. I used all I could there was always a surplus left over. But we wasn’t bad off. We had to get some tea and we had to get some sugar. That’s all we had to worry about. We didn’t have to worry even about sugar because we made our own sugar in the bush, maple syrup. There’s some more, you see.

**Oh. Very interesting.**

This is my radio license. I had to pay $2.00…I think it was $2.50 for it. A radio license. To operate a radio. It was a little Fortune Baby Champ. Run by A & D batteries. But you had to have a license to run it.

Here’s another rationing book. Yup. More coupons, see?

**Ohhh, yeah.**

This is…I'more. Look at all them.
Boy. You should go cash them in.

I might sell them for souvenirs…Look, there’s more.

Those are your old pictures, eh?

Yeah, there are actually more in there. Yeah, there’s lots of them in there…

That’s on account of a woman that died, Mrs. Greenoak. That’s an old obit…

Now that’s my niece in Vegreville, Alberta. Vegreville, Alberta. They was headquarters of the telephone company in Vegreville, Alberta. That’s taken about…oh, let’s see…that was taken about 54 years ago. And she says, “I’m the best looking girl in the bunch. Can you find me?”

Which one’s her?

This one.

No, this one here.

Ahhh.

Yup, that’s her. There was mostly Ukrainian girls…She’s a Ukrainian. But this is my niece here.

That’s me. It was taken at Point-au-Baril in Parry Sound. Point-au-Baril….And people by the name of Dumont. Stayed at the Dumonts. I was working for the Schraeder Mill & Timber Company then.

At Paxley, in from Paxley…a place called Lost Channel. And his boy was looking after septic tanks and he came here and he cleaned out my septic tank about three – three or four years ago – he cleaned it out. That’s the last one I seen of the Thoosiks.
I don’t think there are any Thoosiks left.

No. And that fella that cleaned out the tank, I don’t know whether he’s living or not. He used to go around and clean the old septic tanks. I know there was a lot of them – there was quite a few died in the Legion. Two of them, I guess, died in the Legion. They would belong to the Legion.

But you know, you were telling me about old Gignacs. How would you spell his name?


What was his first name?

Louis.

Louis Gignac.

Yes. He had a boy that used to trap once in a while with Harry…Harry Guise. Old Louis had a boy that used to trap with Harry Guise. But I never saw him. I just saw the old man.

Did you ever know Mattie Koski?

Hmmm. I might have known him, but I forget.

He was a trap — well, he wasn’t a trapper, he was a hunter. Bear hunter.

Yeah.

I never saw old Quin. He was – I think he was buried about, oh…maybe six months before I come in here. Less than a year, because old John Kazerouk told me about when he died. But the first one who told me was old man Guise – old Harry Guise. He used to be a fire ranger up here and he was the first one who told me about old Quin dying.
But I didn’t know his first name. Then old John Kazerouk, he told me all about it. Old John said he was sitting out there on a stump in the evening and he just fell right over dead. That’s what old John told me. So that’s all I know about old Quin. And I know where they buried him and I know who buried him. Old Tom Reilly and old Billy McDowell. And they buried him right in that little mound there. That little one and when that big company put in that big pipe down there, they had to dig him up. And I don’t know where they took him.

You had two brothers, Dave and Ans.

Yes, I had two brothers. Dave and Ansen, yes.

You weren’t there when they laid the road to Cartier, were you?

Oh, I was living down here then. I think so, yes…Yes. We were living here when they made the road to Cartier. When they – we used to have that over– you can see … that goes up that whole way. Now it goes way around here. Oh yeah. I was living here when they made that road. …

...And poor Alice. She’s going to an old home, eh?

Yeah…She’s -- I was talking to her this morning. She had arthritis. She said she’s helpless

That’s right. Well, poor girl, eh.

But I’ll say hello to her. I’m talking to her later – in a couple of days. I’ll say hello for you.

Yeah. Ask her if she remembers Jim and Dave and Ansen. The Averills…

(Long pause.) I guess…ah, let’s see. You wouldn’t remember Mrs. McDowell?

No.

They were there about forty years ago. You wouldn’t. That’s before you were born.
What did they do?

Well, they lived ... their old house still standing – you know where they tore down the old rail station? Well you see that big house across there? It looks brand new yet. That’s an old house. That old house was built fifty-four years – and a long time before that, she lived there. And her husband lived there with her. And she had a younger brother named Patty Spencer. Used to come and chase old Bill out and stay with her.

Her and her daughter Gladys...her oldest daughter Muriel married...Henry Adams. And her youngest daughter Gladys, I don’t think she ever got married. Her and her daughter Gladys ran and kept house for my two brothers. They lived way up there along the Onaping River. And Patty Spencer, he used to stay with them once in a while. But they kept house for my two brothers.

Did you ever know Toivo Kopenien?

Eh?

Did you ever know a guy by the name of Toivo Kopenien?

Nooo. I never knew Toivo Kopenien. He’s the boy that takes all the pictures of Levack. And he is a old-time – he knows – he’s supposed to know the whole history. I never seen him. I don’t remember.

How did you know he took pictures?

Well, I seen it in the...Onaping Falls.

Oh yeah.

Toivo Kopenien.
What year were you working on the road into Levack?

Well, that would be, oh let us see…that would be the year of ’34. Maybe ’35. Be a long in there. ‘Cause I come in here in, I think it was…’33. 1933 I come in here. And it couldn’t have been anymore than a year or so after that, that we went up and was working on the road to Levack. So it might be ’33, ’34 or it might be ’35. I know it’s somewhere around that time. That’s the nearest I can figure out.

And before that, they used to get in and out by...

Well, before that – before they made the new road – they used to…When I first came to Levack they had that old road broke through there as a cut back. But they used to come through there with buggies – horse and buggies. Yes. Before I came to Levack.

That was 1922 when I first came to Levack. But they was going through on that old road. You can see it up there. With horse and buggies. And then a few years after, they started to go up there with automobiles. Trucks.

So when you made the road, you didn’t pave it. You just sort of…flattened it out, eh? Just cleared it.

Just cleared it. Just an old dirt road. Just an old dirt road through there....

... Alice ... Alice and, I guess it was old Bill and the wife. And Alice. They moved to Sudbury after they – they say they chased him out of Levack. Old Bill Hughes. They say they chased him out of Levack. And he had to get out. Well, they went to Sudbury and I remember, they started a little store in Sudbury someplace. I forget just where it was. I remember seeing Alice in that store. Yes, they went to Sudbury and opened a little store.

And there was another famous character there. He was a French fellow – Armand Gogan. He was a great fire ranger. You never heard of him, eh?
No.

No, you wouldn’t hear about – they wouldn’t know anything about it now. Well, he just, you know…crooked fellow, you know. He used to fire range up there. Oh, he was a sponger.

**When was he there?**

He was there, ohhh…let us see. He was there about nineteen hundred and thirty-three (1933) to nineteen hundred and thirty-five (1935). He was there a couple of years. And he used to have a place down there where you’re coming out, you look down the river. Look down that way into a hollow, you know. After you passed that big machine on there. And he used to have a log house there. And he used to keep his wife in there. She – he had a bit of a fence around the outside of the door. And he used to keep her in there and she couldn’t go outside that fence. He was so jealous of her, he used to keep her in there all the time. Humph. Oh gee…So I heard she ran away and left him.

**I guess he – is he still alive today?**

Oh, I don’t know. I don’t know whether – I don’t think the old man is still alive. But I think the boy – the oldest boy…I only remember one boy. I think he’s alive yet. In Sudbury.

**You say he was a sponger?**

Ohhh. He was a crook. That guy was a crook.

**What would he do?**

Well, I’ll tell ya. He would do anything. He’d live on charity, you know. He’d always…Whenever he was supposed to get unemployed he’d ring in … groceries…of somebody. He’d live on it. He’d never work if he could. But he used to…Oh he was crooked. He was no good.
He was good to us boys. He used us three boys good. But my brother Ans, he had an automatic pistol. He used to carry that pistol. He lent it to this Armand Gogan. And the damned fool, he went up and showed it to a policeman. I think it was Forbes. And Forbes says, “Has Averill got any license for that?”

Well Gogan says, “I don’t know.”

Well, he says, “He’d better have.”

So Forbes – it’s a wonder Forbes didn’t take it then. But Forbes came up after that. They had some kind of a jamboree at Adams’s. And my brother Ans was there and they said my brother Ans took this pistol and was gonna shoot somebody. And he never done that, you know. He was ... But anyway, Forbes came down and took his pistol from him, and he never seen it...That was Ansen.

Did you like Forbes?

Oh, I never had much to do with him. I seen him and Blacklock once or twice, but but I didn’t have much to do with them.

But you knew – you were telling me that you knew old Black.

Oh. Jack Black? Oh yes. He used to own the Black Mine. I used to know ol’ Jack Black. And then there was – he had a boy who was working for the Purcell Lumber Company. He was a head scaler for the lumber company. He used to go around and scale. I was working up here for Sumner...for...Sumner, I forget what the name of that...up at Munroe Siding here. They operated up there.

And anyway, it was a lumber company. And he came up there and I saw young Black. Young Jack. That’s the last time I seen him. He was a scaler in the camp. Scaler. He used to go around all over and scale in the lumber camps. And old Jack, I seen him a couple of times. But
I didn’t understand much about them. And I didn’t understand much about them. I couldn’t tell you much about them. I know he owned the old Black Mine. I don’t know who’s got it yet. I don’t know whether it’s Falconbridge or INCO. I guess it might be INCO…owns the old Black Mine.

(Whistling to himself, tapping his feet.)

Do you know any songs? Were you ever a good singer?

(Nods.)

You could sing, eh?

Oh, yeah. Used to know all the songs.

What kind of songs did you like?

Oh, I didn’t like anything. I wasn’t impressed with anything.

No old folk songs or anything?

Oh, I used to know a lot of them. Knew every one.

From where? Where would the folk songs be from?

Well, there was a lot of them I used to know, they were all made up about the old civil war down in the United States. Old colored people. A lot of them. And I used to know all them old songs about the colored people. And I knew a lot of them. Oh! I knew so many of them…I don’t know. I couldn’t tell you…

You don’t remember any now?

Starts singing: I wish that I…oh no.
Starts singing again:

Oh, you asked what makes this ... weep

Oh he like others am not gay

Why does the tears roll down his cheek?

From early morn to close of day.

Oh death, came in my cabin door

And stole from me my joy, my pride

Was then I laid my banjo down

I laid my banjo down and cried.

I won’t go through the rest. That’s one of the old civil war songs. In the days of slavery in the United States. We used to know a lot of them. My mother used to sing...

And I knew all the modern songs, too. But I couldn’t sing now too much.

Well, you sing okay.

Oh yes. I know the music on every one of them. Oh, there’s a lot of them.

What was your favorite?
Ohhh. I couldn’t tell you what were my favourite songs. I couldn’t tell you... Oh, I used to know hundreds and hundreds of songs.

Before I took this thing here, quite recently, I used to be singing to myself all the time.

Starts singing: Oh, there once lived an Indian maid...

Ohhh. A lot of them. I can’t think of them now, but they come to my mind and I’d start singing them all day long. Singing them all the time.

**They’re great songs because they told a story.**

Oh yes. They told a story.

**Songs nowadays, they don’t tell stories too well.**

No...Oh, it’s a different thing altogether.

Yes... (Whistles to himself.)...Oh, the old colored songs. The old songs of the days of slavery, they were interesting. The people who come from the States, they brought them songs into the – my mother, she learned them from her mother. And they originated – they were part of the United Empire of Loyalists. The UEL’s. They came from the States over here. Mostly German. But they came...My mother, she didn’t belong, I don’t think. She was an Errington. Her mother was an Errington. My mother’s mother was an Errington. And her father was a Tripp. They came from over on this side.

But they got all these old songs from...they got from the colored days and the days of slavery. The civil war. Just Before the Battle of Mother. And, the uh...The Faded Coat of Blue... That was about the civil war songs. Just before the Battle of Mother. And then there was The Faded Coat of Blue. Oh, I used to know all them. I know them all yet, but its too hard for me to sing them....
Oh! Well, I’ll tell you what… I would sing the froze -- you never heard about the Frozen Charlotte. It happened down in Renfrew County. I don’t know how many years ago. But I can’t sing it now because of my throat.

Recites:

Young Charlotte lived by the mountainside

In a wild and a lonely spot.

No dwellings there for three ...

Except for father’s plot.

...the winter...young swains would gather near

For her father kept a social world and Charlotte she was there.

Her sweetheart come to get her with the old bobsleigh.

You’ve ever seen the old bobsleighs? We had lots of them in Levack when I got here. A team of horse on ....

Paraphrases:

He threw her into the sleigh.

It was a 40 below zero night,

and her mother told her to muffle up and she wouldn’t listen.
When they got to their destination where they holding this big ball or dance she was froze stiff.

But it’s a big long song and I, I couldn’t sing it now. But I could sing right through if I wanted to, but it’s too much for me now....

For references to Jim’s songs see:

http://imaginemaine.com/Features/Archives/Charlotte.html

http://www.civilwarindex.homestead.com/TheFadedCoatofBlue.html

http://www.fortunecity.com/tinpan/parton/2/justbef.html
I met with Alice Green and her niece at their home in Sudbury during the summer of 1978. Alice was a lovely, elderly person whose name came up many times when I spoke to other early residents of the town.

Her home was charming. It was mid-afternoon. I recall the dusky soft late summer sun shining through the kitchen window and onto the photographs spread out on the table, Miss Green’s hands eagerly going through them as she recalled days gone by.

On the wall of her kitchen was a sketch which looked like a pattern for needlepoint. I admired it and asked about it. She told me that it was a pattern drawn for her by an old family friend who worked in Algonquin Park with her brother-in-law, Bill Hughes. That friend was Tom Thomson, the renowned Canadian painter.

Alice provided a wonderful picture of life during Levack’s early years. She had a particularly soft spot in her heart for a Bear...

(Blue text is spoken by Miss Green’s niece.)

Do you remember the Old Policeman Simpson?

Oh, you bet I do!

What can you tell me about him?
Just a dirty story he did on us! When our bear died. Teddy...our tame bear.

And so...you know the bear had to hibernate every winter, you see. And we had him – I don’t know how many years. We didn’t first get the bears at Levack. Teddy had already grown up big when we went into Levack in 1921.

We just had Teddy there. There were two cubs that Mr. Hughes had bought. And the other one, he was very cross and so Mr. Hughes sold him to a porter that was on a train and we just kept Teddy. So when we went into Levack, Mr. Hughes had to crate him – put him in a box, you know?

He really should have been in an iron cage – the instructions called for that. And so we also had the two huskies. The old husky and we had a female husky when we went into Levack. So when we landed at Levack Station – Mr. Hughes had had to crate the dogs, too. And so we stopped that night – it was night when we got there – and Mr. Hughes wanted to let the dogs out, you see. (Laughing.) So the station agent said to him, “Aren’t you gonna let this black fella out, too, for a run?”

I couldn’t just say exactly when we arrived. But we were in there from ’21 and Teddy died in 1930. The year we left. And every winter he would den up. Mr. Hughes had made him a – just like – you know what an old root house is like? Well, we had – water ran down the hill into the river, you see. Well, you know where the house was there.

And so the bear died. And it had been a very early spring that year and he came out of hibernation too early. And he caught cold and he died just like a person would have... of pneumonia.
And the men were so good to him. Crawley McCracken’s men. And there was Gordon and Eric. And they used to come over, and the four of them – used to drink high wines in those days. And they poured the high wines down and everything, trying to get him better. But he died.

So anyway, my brother-in-law thought it was perfectly all right to bury him where he had been all these years. He’d been up there 8 years anyway. And – for the winter, you see. In the summer my brother-in-law would cover it over and put him on his chain. And he had a post. I’ll show you the post.

And so he buried him like that. Covered him all over and leveled it all down. And I’ll tell you, it was on a slope and so this old Simpson – he never did like us very much. And we used to have our store open on Sunday, too, and he closed us up on Sunday. Wouldn’t let us open the store on Sundays. We had a better time afterwards anyways. We used to take the car and go on a ride in place of working. And he closed us up and wouldn’t let us operate on Sundays.

And so, after Teddy was buried, well he came to the house one night. And we were just having our supper. And he wanted to speak to Mr. Hughes. Mr. Hughes wasn’t there. He was still at the pool hall. So he said, well he said, “I just wanted to know where you buried the bear.”

So my sister said to him, “Why, we buried him in his den.” Where he denned up all along. Right down there on the hill. We buried him there. And we didn’t see any harm in it at all.

“Well”, he said, “I’ll tell you. I’ll give you 24 hours to move that bear. That bear can’t be buried there on account of the town water.”
And we said to him, “The water? Why any water from there is going down and draining into the river.” It didn’t run uphill!

He said, “It doesn’t matter. The bear can’t be buried there at all. You tell Mr. Hughes I give him 24 hours to have the bear moved.”

So when Mr. Hughes came home, we told him. He said, “Well, I guess we’ll have to move the bear.” So Mr. Hughes got that Mr. Riley. He lived across the river and he had a piece of property of his own. And Mr. Riley had a horse, too. So he came in the night and he took the bear out of the den and he took it over and buried it on his property across the river. And to this day there’s only a few people know where Teddy was buried.

And so Mr. Simpson, he comes back again. And he says, “Where did you bury the bear?”

And there’d just been a light fall of snow. A light snowfall fall in spring. And Mr. Hughes said, “Well, beings you’re such a great” – I forget what he called him – he said, “You go and track the bear.” And he couldn’t make Mr. Hughes tell him where he’d buried the bear, you know. He couldn’t make him!

He said, “The bear is buried. He’s removed from where you said. And he’s not in the town of Levack.”

So, he was over buried in Riley’s...

He was buried over on Mr. Riley’s property. Every time we’ve gone in there since we stop, you know, and look over at what it is now.

I’ve heard stories that Mr. Riley used to go and wrestle with this bear. Is that true?
Yeah, he would go and box around with him...Mmmm Hmmm. Lots of men did. Teddy would box at them and think it lots of fun. He was a great bear.

And then, when we first went in there, Mr. Hughes who thought Teddy – Teddy wouldn’t hurt nobody, you know. And so he thought he was quite an attraction. So he put him at the back of the steps going up to the pool room, you see. And so he put him down below with a heavy chain on him, you know. And he used to sleep most of his time up there where the men went into the pool room. So then he took it into his head to tear that to pieces, if you please.

That’s Husky. And on the back it says, “To Mrs. Hughes. Many happy returns.” But no year. That’s old Husky. He used to go a lot around to the neighbours for his morning treats, didn’t he?

He was the leader of our team of huskies. We had him when we went into Levack.

You used the huskies to deliver things?

We used to have to bring our groceries in from Levack Station into Levack. That was about 4 miles in those days. Because the road has all changed, you know. But it used to be uphill, downhill.

Did you show him the dog team yet?

I haven’t gotten to that yet. I’m looking for more pictures of the bear. That’s old Husky all by himself.

You’ve heard stories of him, too, likely? Husky?
This is when we only had three, we had three. As I say we had the two main huskies. This old boy here, he was the leader. We had him and we had the female. We used to call her Judy. I had a picture of her. She’s not in this one … But she wasn’t a very good breeder. She’d only have one pup at a time. Yeah. And so the last pup was pure white, so we called him Nickel.

That was the front of our store. Just, a…

What would be to the left here? Is this where the ice cream parlour was?

Yes. We had an ice cream parlour in there. We made our own ice cream.

Did you? Where did you get your milk from?

We used to use canned milk. And we used to store ice. And Mr. McNamara, he used to bring in ice for us every winter. We had two ice houses. And our fridge that we had in those days, it – there was no electricity in Levack then.

No.

So the fridge, it was a walk-in box. Just like you see them today, you know? But they had to use ice. We used to bring ice once a week from our ice houses to put in our fridge and store it, you see. And Mr. McNamara did that for us.
These are just some I picked out that I haven’t seen for a long time. I thought my niece would be interested. That’s the place here. We’ve been here 46 years.

So you used to work in the post office.

Here, yes. We had the post office – what they call a sub-post office in the city, you know. We had it for 23 years.

In Levack, did you work in the post office as well?

No. Boulton had the post office at Levack.

Was there much of a competition between Hughes and Boultons?

Yes, I’m afraid there was.

There was, eh? You were selling more or less the same things.

Yes. Because, as I told you, when we went to Levack we couldn’t afford hardly to buy butter at the price Boulton was selling it for.

No.

So, we started up our own store. Some of the men chipped in. We’d get an order and divide it up with them. And we did that. Finally we got so by 1923, well we were able – we had a quite a good store. It just belonged to ourselves by that time.
And Mr. Riley, he was a good friend of ours. He was one of the ones who was real game for sending to Sudbury for groceries. And Mr. Wilson. He was another one.

*Who was Mr. Wilson?*

He was one of the bosses at the mine. Stoke boss they call it? He’s dead now.

*What was the doctor that, doctor…*

Dr. Robinson.

Robinson. Right.

Yeah. He was the doctor while we were there. He was, he was married. He wasn’t married when he went there, but he got married and brought his wife there.

Have you got any pictures of him?

No. I haven’t.

You should have somewhere, you know. Because you took some down home.

I remember the paydays in there. How they used to go out, Uncle Will and this Mr. Simpson. And then they’d come in on a flat bed car and there’ be all their guns out – they all carried guns and everything. Remember the paydays?

Mmmm Hmm. 
They used to bring the pay into Levack from the train.

Well, there was a robbery on the...

Yeah. You’ve heard of that, eh?

Yeah. I’ve heard a few things. Were you there at the time?

Yes...yeah.

That was an awful...

Oh, it was terrible. There were a lot hurt – burnt.

When was that? After I left?

It must’ve been before you came.

Because I came in home in ’28, I think wasn’t it?

Yeah. It’d been before that...I don’t know what year it would be.

Probably around ’25.

’25? Oh.

There were a couple of – someone was killed. Someone who had something to do with Margaret Colburne was killed, involved.
Yes…I don’t know who that was…It wasn’t – she was going with a Forbes when I, the last I knew of her. She was Mr. Boulton’s sister-in-law. You don’t know anything about it do you, Mike?

No. I’ve heard her name various times, but…

There was a Margaret Boulton, too. Wasn’t there?

Yeah, that was their daughter…And Miss Darling, she worked in the post office.

So I guess the pool hall would have attracted a lot of people – a lot of the miners?

Well, there was only one shift working while we were there. And then, that didn’t mean very many men, you know. And Mr. Hughes, he was a barber. He had the barber shop there, too.

Did he pull teeth as well?

(Laughing.)

Yes, you heard about that did you?

Yes.

The rotten ones. He’d give ’em a drink of booze, and…(laughing).

Yeah, well I heard there was a dentist who came in every summer for two weeks. And in the meantime, when he wasn’t there, Mr. Hughes would do the...

I remember the dentist who used to come in.
He worked at your ice cream parlour, didn’t he? The dentist when he came?

No, the clubhouse.

The clubhouse. I thought I could remember him in the ice cream parlour.

Oh my brother, how he could pull teeth like no dentist. I still have the forceps…He went through partly – he was going to be a doctor. And he took sick. That was years and years ago. He had to give it up. So then he went bush – uh, park ranging for many years. Times were hard then, the 1920’s. That was after the World War.

I guess Levack was a pretty slow place at the time.

Yes. When we went in there, I think there was no more than half a dozen English-speaking families.

A lot of Finns and French people.

That young girl there, in the picture with the bear, here? She was one of the first to come to welcome us. That girl? She died shortly afterward. She died real young. She’s buried in the cemetery.

This is a good picture…What did you – what kind of things did people do for entertainment at that time?

Well, they used to play tennis in the summertime. They used to have their ballgames. And in the wintertime we used to – Mr. Hughes used to let us have the pool room. We’d move the
pool tables back over and he’d leave one pool table so that they could play pool if they wanted to. And we used to have the pool room for dances. That was the biggest building there was then. Everybody would bring a lunch. All the women would bake, make sandwiches you know? And we’d have a dance. Pretty well every other week anyway.

You had card parties, too. I remember you telling me about card parties.

Yes, we used to have card parties. Play cards.

This would have been before the Old Hall was built up, then?

Yes.

Did people get along? Did the Finnslanders and the –

They seemed to. There never was any friction.

That’s surprising because there was so many languages and that. You’d think it would – the community – would be apart, you know?

Well, Warsaw was the only one that was off by itself up in, uh, the north area there…

Warsaw.

Yeah, that was the only one.

Yeah. There was a lot of bootlegging going on.
That’s right.

Oh, you heard that eh? (Laughing.)...Another thing, in the summertime they used to go down swimming and that was down by Riley’s farm and that’s where several was drowned. My uncle used to be the one to go take his canoe and he had to use grappling irons...

What did they call that swimming hole?

Hmmmm. I don’t know.

It was a dangerous place to swim anyhow. Right at the bridge.

I heard seven people drowned. Seven years in a row.

I guess that’d be right.

I guess so. Because I know…my sister, she used to say about the canoe – we’d had the canoe when we went in there and he didn’t want to sell it, you know. And he’d had it for quite a while. It was strung up in the store room there, you know. And, so every time there was somebody drowned, “Go and tell Mr. Hughes”. And we’d take the canoe down and he’d go down there with his grappling irons.

And my sister said when we were leaving there, “One thing you’re going to sell is that canoe.”

Levack. It’s a nice little place, though, isn’t it? I don’t know, it just seems to be set in hills. Hills, all the way around it.

Yes.
It’s homey.

We used to ski a lot, too.

And snowshoe and whatever.

Well, the ski hill. Would it be the same ski hill that’s there today?

No.

There was another one behind Warsaw?

We used to ski anywhere.

Cross country and everything?

Hmmmm. There used to be a sweet man there by the name of Emil Hansen. Anybody mention him to you?

He was a great skier. He was the one that really got things – skiing – in Levack.

I heard he was a very colourful character, Mr. Hansen.

Yes.

Was he mostly known for his sports?

Yes.
And he worked for Monde.

Yes. He had the first radio.

Is that right?

We had the second...Yes. What was his chum’s name? He used to work at the mine...Oh yeah. George Kilner.

No. Never heard of him.

No one mentioned him to you?

No.

Well, he was Mr. Hansen’s chum. They used to go stay at the Clubhouse, you know? But George Kilner, he was a clerk at the mine.

Did you know Mr. Eager very well?

Oh yes. Very well. Yes. And Mrs. Eager.

Their dog and our husky team had an awful fight one day. (Laughs.) We were just coming in from Levack with a load of stuff on the sleigh and she had been shopping and she was just coming out of the store with – what was their dog’s name? It was a real fancy dog they had.

Anyway, our huskies – fight, that was their middle name. If there was a dog anywhere, they’d be on to it And they’d get their harnesses all mixed up. You can imagine five of them.
Oh yes. Twas Mr. Eager that suggested to Mr. Hughes that he send to Sudbury for groceries. Yes, twas he himself.

‘Cause he saw that the prices were so high.

Mmmm Hmmm.

Even today there’s not too much competition in Levack.

Well, they can get in and out to Sudbury so quick now. But in those days, you see, you couldn’t.

You had to make the trip by train and stay overnight and come back the next day.

As I told you, we had the first car in 1923. Well, we were in there from 1921, you see, to ‘23 before we got the car.

Yes.

And then it took you all, a full day to go to Sudbury and go back. You wouldn’t spend much time in Sudbury either. The way the road was, you always had to carry a shovel with you. I should’ve got a picture of that up by High Falls. I’ve got some more around someplace but I don’t know where they are.

But they…It was right alongside the railroad, you see? And if that would fall, it would all fall down. And you couldn’t get across there without shoveling your way. You’d have to shovel your way going and coming. Never safe to go out without the shovel.
But Boulton had people cornered. There was no other store there. He was the only one. He had the store and the post office until the Rauntier brothers. They got in there somehow. And they were more for meats.

Did they start up in your time?

Yes.

While you were there?

Yes.

So I guess that was about it? Hughes, Boultons and Rauntiers.

Yes. There were the three of us. And whatever that one was that burnt. For the life of me, I can’t think what that store was... It was right back of us...I don’t know.

Quite a few people had dog teams in Levack in those days.

Right. Well there was maybe one or two, just with two dogs.

Yes. But I guess the main method of transportation was the...Well, the McNamaras and the LeBarges had their outfit.

Yes. They didn’t run any freight, though. Only from...the box was a flat car like the INCO...used to run out to the station twice a week and bring in everything that was necessary,
that you had coming, you see. Well, we’d run out of fresh meats. There was no fresh meats there. We were the first to have the fresh meats.

And so when we started the fresh meats, well we didn’t want them kicking around Levack Stations for two or three days before we’d get them, you see? So we used the dogs. We’d go out there and bring in the – we had a long sleigh – long as this table.

Well, this is part of the road here. How come there’s five dogs there and yet in these others only three?

Well, they breded. See, Judy wasn’t a very good breeder.

No, wasn’t the type. (Laughs.)

Yeah. I think she had three one time because Emil Hansen bought one from us. I remember Emil buying one. I forget what he called his. He used to be awfully good to it.

See, old Mr. Argue? He gave Lonnie the husky, the grey.

So that’s how he got it in the first place.

Mmmm Hmmm. So then Jack Tye, he said to your Uncle Will, he said “We ought get a female and make some money.”

And so Will said, “I don’t know where in the world we’d get a female husky”.
“Don’t you worry.” he said, “I’ll get one.” He was conductor on the train and so – that was before we went to Levack. And he came along one day and he had this pretty husky; Judy.
I don’t see the picture of the pure white one.

He must be in that team where the five are.

I guess he’s the middle one, the third.

The second one. He was pure white. Didn’t have a black hair in him.

Who was it had the chickens and the one came close and he stole it? There on the spot. There were all these feathers.

I don’t remember the peoples’ name who had the chickens. But they had a bunch of chickens anyway. And we had one that we called Rowdy. It was Rowdy, I think.

He got the chickens?

Yes. And he went in a little wee place and they said they could hardly believe that a big dog like him could just crawl in it, you know. And he went in there. He didn’t kill the chickens, but he scared them to death I think. There wasn’t a mark on them. We had to pay for them. I think it was 20 some odd. And we had to pay for the chickens.

And Mrs. Hughes, she cleaned them all and there was no refrigeration at that time so we couldn’t keep them. So everybody around our end, all our neighbours -- they all ate chicken for a week! There was nothing wrong with them. Not a mark on them. He just scared them to death.

That’s funny...Did Mr. Eager live in the big superintendent’s house?
Yes.

So that would have been built in the early twenties, that place.

Dr. Robinson lived beside him, eh?

He was up there someplace.

That would have been the first hospital?

We didn’t have a hospital...

-- A Conversation with Oscar Laberge --

How long has your family been in Levack?

Well, we moved there in 1918.

1918.

And I was there until 1966...Yeah. Well, I grew up there, eh...Well, my mother came from Papineauville in Quebec and my dad came from Pembroke.

What did your family do there? Did your father work in the mine?

Yeah, he worked as a – oh he done pretty near everything at the mine. Outside of underground work. He never worked underground.

Your family ran trucks?
Trucks, taxi and the stage to the station.

Could you tell me about the stage?

Well we used to have horses, eh? And at that time there was no antifreeze for the cars. And from the time it started to get too cold to run the Company furnished an automobile that run on the tracks. And my dad used to run it.

Then when ... and he used to pull what they call the lorry behind it. There was room for 12 passengers in it, besides the automobile. And he used to turn at the station and at Levack. He had a turntable, mounted up on there and he’d turn it by hand.

But then, when it got too cold for that he used to put one horse on that lorry and drive on the track until there was enough snow to use the sleigh. And the stage, we had two or three different kind of stage, too. So we run a long time with just an open stage; no top on it. Just side seats, eh. It used to – there was room for 20 passengers in there.

How many trips did you make?

We used to meet all trains. There was three trains. Early in the morning, and then 5 o’clock at night, and then eleven-twenty at night.

Oh. Now were you in competition with the McNamara’s?

That’s right.

They ran the stage, too?

They ran the same thing.

Yes. Was there any – how did the competition go?

Oh we always got along all right.
Somebody told me that when the Conservatives were in government, the Laberges -- is that right, Laberges? -- had the right of way. And when the Liberals were in government it was the McNamaras...

That’s true.

The McNamara’s were Liberals, eh. Well it worked on…Well, not so much with the…Government jobs, eh. If the government changed, well the Liberals got the government jobs. Such as driving the mail. They used to make one trip to the station a day with the mail. And if the Conservative government was in there – well of course, my dad never run the mail until near the end because he always had a job on the road with his horses. And he was a road foreman, a part-time road foreman. And he used to work at the mine and look after the roads. But McNamara run the mail for a long time. And when McNamara… The government changed there, that was in the later years. In the earlier years, the man that owned the store and owned the post office, he run the mail himself. He and an older brother used to run the mail.

*What was his name?*

Boulton. Mr. Boulton.

*I have pictures here. (Shuffling.) Of old Boulton’s store. I’m pretty sure it’s Boulton’s Store.*

Yeah. You’re correct. What year did that burn?

*I don’t know.*

You don’t know. Uh, I think I’m lost here… No. I don’t think so. I don’t think that’s Boulton’s Store because – course this is taken from the side, eh.

*Uh huh.*

This would be the front, eh?
I think this is the front.

This is the front.

That’s where Piccolo’s used to be?

No, Piccolo’s built their own. They took over after Boulton burned down, eh. And then they rebuilt. But you had – that has never burnt again.

But Boulton’s... If this was the front... Boulton’s had wide doors here, between the windows. And I think this is too narrow. It’s not wide enough for Boulton’s Store.

Well, there’s a sign there. Let me try and read it. There’s a sign on the store. It says “Pool Room Barber Shop”.

Pool room and barber shop. That would be where the...

Where the Bluebird Grill is?

No. Where – who is running old what’s-his store there now?

It closed down. It used to be Ginnini’s.

Yeah. That’s where that was. That’s the place it was. It was French people had that. He had a pool room and he was a barber. And that was located where Ginnini’s store is now.

Do you remember any of these fellows?

That’s Jimmy Smith. And that’s a Hanson. You know the Hansons don’t ya?

Hanson in the back? (Long pause.) No, that’s the only two I know.

Who were some of the other families that you consider early people in...
Well, McNamara’s I think were there before us.

Yeah? And the Kaupanens and the Koskis?

Kaupanen was there. Not Koskis. Koskis came in after, but they’ve been there a long time. The Kaupanens and Boulton was ahead of us. I can’t think of anybody else. The only people that I can think of, they’re gone now. Enoffs are both dead. And there was foreign people – there was quite a few foreign people. But when we went up there, they had a boarding house on the other side of where the mine is now. You never worked for the mine did you?

No. I left there when I was a kid.

Yeah? Well, where the road goes by the mine there. There was a place there, that they had a boarding house. People by the name of Rattans run that.

Rattans?

Yeah. They kept a boarding house and that wasn’t very far from the mine. And Crawley’s was there a long time....

What did people used to do for entertainment in Levack?

Nothing.

What did they do? At the Old Hall?

Well, the Old Hall. That was the Finns – a bunch of Finns built that. And they owned it for a long, long time. And they used to have a dance there once a week. Every Saturday night. With mostly accordion music. (Mimics an accordion and laughs.)

Somebody told me they had wrestling there and boxing. Do you remember that?
Yeah, yeah. But not in a big way. They just…if they knew…well, Finns – most Finns like to wrestle, eh. They used to once in a while put on a – not too often either – maybe amongst themselves and they wouldn’t announce it, eh. But boxing, they had boxing there two or three times. They’d know somebody that could box. Somebody else’d take them on and they’d just…they’d make a little evening out of it. Get two or three guys to box two or three others. But not in a big way. It was just a…And it wasn’t professional boxing either.

Do you remember Mr. Eager? Frank Eager?

Yes.

Do you have a story about him?

When he left Levack I was only young. Maybe, oh…about fourteen. But he was the superintendent there when we were in there. And I don’t know any…I can tell you a dirty story about him.

Sure.

He was at the mine and we had horses. We had quite a few horses and my dad caught some guy coming out of the barn. And he had… I guess he had tried to screw the mare. He had a bunch of water pails piled up behind the mare and he got caught short. And he went out the window. You know, the window we threw the manure out. And Dad caught him, anyway. And he asked him what he was doing there. And he says he was looking for moonshine.

So after we went in the barn…Dad give him a beating, anyway. Kicked his arse out of the yard. But the next day, he asked Eager. He told Eager what had happened. “Well,” he says, “I don’t think he hurt the mare.” That’s all he said.
But the guy disappeared. He never came back. He never was around Levack after that. I guess he figured he was gonna be in the dog house. He was a German fella. But…

Old Eager was a very sober person, you know. Had an awful habit of clearing his throat all the time (Clears his throat a couple of times to demonstrate.) But to tell stories about the work or how he’d run the town, I wouldn’t know. But they were the guys who run the town, eh, the superintendent.

Do you remember the big payroll robbery?

Yeah.

What can you tell me about that?

Well, what they done – have you heard anything about it?

I just heard ... somebody told me yesterday that it turns out they didn’t rob the payroll, it was just a bunch of suits.

That’s right. It was a tailor’s showcase that they threw out. But Eager was the guy that used to go to meet the paymaster, eh. And there was a tailor got off the train with the payments. And he got on this – they had a little speeder. A little gas engine outfit, four wheeled. There was a seat in the middle, but you could sit two on each side. Eager had come down to meet them, and on the way back there was a…On the track from Levack to Dogpatch there was one place we used to call the Horseshoe Curve. And on the way back they noticed that – Eager noticed – that there was a railroad tie across the rails, eh. So instead of stopping – I guess right away it struck him that that’s what it was gonna be, a hold up. And he just give the car lots of gas and the son of a bitch happened to jump the tie and landed on the rails on the other side. And they kept on going.
Well, then they started to shoot at the car. And after the first shot, this tailor, he threw out his case with samples for suits. He threw it out in the bushes. So they quit shooting. But that one shot had hit…The paymaster’s name was Harry Stevens. It had hit him in the leg.

And they looked at…That led to a lot of bad things. They got a bunch of men out to go and hunt for these robbers, eh. And I don’t know if it was in the excitement or a misunderstanding…It was a Finn fellow that was driving the automobile on the track. He had gone down to meet the train and he was bringing back a bunch of these guys that had gone to look for these robbers. And the automobile was loaded and the lorry was loaded behind it. And the locomotive used to go down to the first bridge there to take water and the locomotive was on its way down to take water and they met head on. Well, there was one guy died – Frank Lieber died. He was sitting in the automobile with the driver. I guess when it hit, it exploded and he went through the floorboards. He died.

Round the Engineer’s club at that time, that used to be where the club was but on the opposite side of the…It used to be the Engineer’s Club. The people run that and they just kept the engineers, you know, and shift bosses that weren’t married or captains that weren’t married stayed there. But that place was just like a hospital. They had everyone out on the lawn.

That all led up from that goddamn outfit from trying to hold up the payroll. At that time they paid in cash, you know. Little envelopes and your money would be in them.

So it was quite a crime, anyway.

Yeah. And they never found out who did it.

No? Any rumours about who did it?

No. I never heard any of them.
What happened to Levack mine when it closed down after the fire? What happened to Levack in 1928?

Well, there was only about eight or ten families left there. We stayed there. And Enoffs stayed there. Mallettes, my wife’s people stayed there. But there was nothing doing at the mine. There was only two or three people working at the mine, keeping it... And the master mechanic, He was the bigshot there then and he had – I think there was three men. There was a compressor man on each shift. One of the McNamaras – Elmer McNamara – was one of them. And there was a man by the name of Robb. Do you know a Robb that works there now?

The Robbs? Yeah.

Yeah, well his dad was one that stayed there at that time...I can’t think of the other one...Anyway there was three. There was only four men working at the mine.

Hmmm.

And I think what closed it down at that time was it burnt in...

’28.

’28. In ’29 they rebuilt the rockhouse – the one that burnt down. That was rebuilt when they decided to close down. But by the time they closed down, International Nickel and Monde Nickel Company had amalgamated, eh. And there wasn’t too much sale for nickel. So they shut Levack down. I think...See, INCO had a bunch of mines and Monde Nickel had a bunch of mines. Coniston was Monde Nickel and Levack was Monde Nickel.

But in the earlier years, when they amalgamated in ’29, it was INCO. And they took the whole thing over. They closed down a bunch of mines and they kept enough going just to have enough nickel for sales. And then they reopened. They reopened in ’37 when INCO opened it.
Do you remember any legends that your father would tell you about the Levack area when you were a boy? Before you arrived. Stories that were passed to you about the place, you know... when it first started up?

The only thing I heard, it was a Mr. O'Bumswain that discovered that first. And he sold that for very little. That’s the only thing I ever heard of it.

Were they Indian? The O'Bumswains?

Well, it’s not an Indian name but... I guess maybe the grandfather – there was a little bit of Indian. That’s one of his great grandsons.

O'Bumswain?

Yeah.

Did he ever live in Levack?

No. He always worked for the CPR. But he never worked in Levack at all.

No? Do you remember anything about the policeman? What’s the old guy’s name... Simpson? No. Who was the first policeman in Levack?

Oh, there was lots before Simpson. Simpson was the first guy that wore a uniform. But before that there was a... Blacklock. But if there was any trouble he wouldn’t move. He was just a policeman to draw pay, I think.

Oh.

If there was any trouble around, you couldn’t find him. There was a fellow by the name of Blacklock and Jim Sykes. Sykes was the first one that I can remember. They never wore a uniform or anything but everyone in Levack knew. There wasn’t too many people there, you
know. Levack today is about 40 times the size that it was when we went there. There was about seven houses. Where Warsaw is now? There were about seven houses. And then right in the village there was a store and that row of white houses. Not the new ones, just those little white ones, eh. Up through the first avenue where you go up the other way and then up there, there was three or four houses on that street. And then the public school. That was bush beyond the public school.

Oh yeah?

The public school was – they just cleared a place there and built it right in the bush.

And then there was another row of houses along the track where the trailer park is now. There was five or six houses there. And that was Levack. There was a post office and a store and that was all they wanted to build.

Who ran the post office?

Boulton. Well, it was one of his employees. It was a girl. A Miss Darling, I think. She run the post office, but she was working for him.

Yeah...Do you remember the big accident? In Levack there was supposed to have been a...four or five men killed.

That’s when they sank Number 2 Shaft.

Is that all that were killed? Four or five men?

Five.

How did that happen, do you know?
There was…once there was two killed. The time of the fire there was two killed. See, when the fire took there, there was fellas below and they were running a small outfit with a big hoist. To go from one level to another. And these guys – there was three of them at the bottom – and they were going up as far as they could on this little thing, eh. And that happened to be in the skiff compartment of the mine. And they hadn’t used those skiffs yet; they had just installed them and they hadn’t used them yet. And they had built a new hoist through. But before they got to their destination the goddamn ropes, where the skiffs burnt, and the skiffs went down and hit. They were picked up at the bottom of the mine. At that time there were about 11 levels, I think.

But the accident you’re talking about, that was in ’38 or ’39. They were sinking Number 2 and…well I guess maybe it was carelessness that caused it, eh. ‘Cause they’re supposed to stop so far above the blast. They had blasted – the one shift had blasted and there was another shift taking over, eh. But they’re supposed to stop so many feet away from the blast. The pointer goes down first to see that the shaft is all clear before he lets the, what they call the bucket, in. It’s a bucket that they let down to the bottom of the shaft so they could fill it up with muck and send it back up. And that’s what they were doing. There were five of them. And I guess they just figured, you know, they’d take a chance, eh. They gave the hoistman a slow bell and he tried to go down. And apparently there was a timber across the shaft – kind of across the shaft like that -- and that cracked the edges of the bucket and upset it. And they all went to the bottom.

Any other big accidents in Levack? There was supposed to have been a big fire in the town itself and they had to ship people out in boxcars. Is that true?

Oh. Not in my time. Not in my time. There were very afraid of having to move. That fire burnt in strips. There was a strip burnt from … it came from way on the other side of Archer and came right to Windy Lake. And then there was another strip above Levack. Came to the river. But there was nobody moved that I know of. But we ploughed. We ploughed fire
breaks, you know. With horses. And they would plough maybe for 20 feet wide and you’d leave it and plough another 20 feet wide. So if the fire did cross the river…But to my knowledge it never did cross the river. But that was a big fire. It came from a long way. And it burnt in strips.

_Hmmm. I never heard that before._

Well, the strips were wide but it never took everything.

_I don’t know what else to ask you Mr. Laberge. Do you have any other stories about Levack that would be interesting for..._

No, not that I can remember.

_Anthony about...Well your family used to drive people in and out. Anything about the horses and stuff?_

Well, the horses – I didn’t finish with the – you said something about competition.

_Yes._

See, once it got cold enough to drive sleighs, then we would both run the stage. Both McNamara and us. And a lot of times we used to have to go – we used to take off where Monettes’ is now. There was no road beyond that. We’d take off where Monettes’ is and go along the side of the hill, there. And then we’d have to cross the tracks three times and then you’d come out near Dogpatch. But then in later years they used to haul wood with the horses, eh. They kinda made a road so far on what is the road today, only it was a lot more crooked. And in later years that’s the way we used to go to the stations. We’d go as far as we were allowed, as far as Clear Lake, there where we ... And then we’d…right…Well, its just about where you come out of Levack now. Highway 44 runs into Levack? Out of Levack. Well, we used to cross that and then there’s a little lake there below where Burton
lives. That’s the only house on that side there. We’d take the little lake there and follow the creek right down to the station. And it was a lot easier on the horses to follow the waterway.

**But the competition never became heated?**

Oh no.

**It was a friendly sort.**

Well, there was…We both charged the same thing for driving. And we had two stages there. If there was a lot of people, they’d just go with whoever they wanted. If there was only one or two, they’d both go with one. What the hell. There was no point in fighting over it. You couldn’t take them by the hand and…

**No.**

And later on we had a covered stage – canvass-covered stage with a little coal-lighted stove. A little round coal-lighted stove. That son of a bitch – people’d kick about headaches and then we got rid of that and just left the cover on, no stove. (Laughs.)

**Headaches from the smoke?**

I guess, yeah. Well, some people are allergic to that. There’s a certain amount of smoke and smell. They’d kick about our stage for giving them a headache. So we took the stove out. Though it’s a hell of a thing if you try to please the public. You can’t please everyone.

**No.**

But he done that because some people suggested that’d be a hell of a lot better. It was warmer even without a stove. But with the stove it was more comfortable except for the smell. Somebody suggested we put the little stove in and see.
-- A Conversation with Johnny McNamara --

Talking to Johnny was like talking to the town itself.

Mr. McNamara kindly met with me at his home one afternoon in August. He had a great memory for Old Levack and he clearly enjoyed talking about the town and her people.

Everyone I'd spoken to so far had asked, "Have you talked to Johnny yet? Have you talked to Johnny Mac? You've got to talk to Johnny." I grew up knowing he was an important figure in the town. Looking back I realize that I could have spent days speaking with Mr. McNamara just filling in missing details about the history of our town.

**Lumbering, the Railroad and Monde Nickel**

... They lumbered back of Moose Lake, eh. They drove their logs out at Moose Creek. That place belonged to Ed White when I was there but he didn’t start that – he wasn’t the original. Ed White had that camp when we went to Levack, but he wasn’t the original. I don’t know who the originals were up there.

They had a stable there. They had about...oh hell...about 15 to 18 people’s horses that they used to pasture... that was all pasture land, eh? ... where it was flat, lots of water.

Lumbering was first, eh. Lumbering was first, that’s for sure. But, I don’t know when Monde Nickel got their property. Monde Nickel got that property, eh. ... But they started to sink Number 1— in 1913. ‘Cause my father went in there in 1914. My father went in there with, uh, Cooke Construction. And they built the railroad from – not from Levack Station, where Levack Station is now – but where that highway is there. That’s where Levack Station was originally. Where that old highway place is?
That, uh … where the train goes out now, eh, from there down to the station, that was CPR property. See the road going into Levack, eh, from High Falls, where all those dykes are? That was where the CPR was before. The CPR was moved over in, uh ... the CPR was moved over either in ‘14 or ‘15 over to where it is today. But Levack Station was almost ¾ of a mile inside of where it is. Where it was is torn down there now.

**What attracted your father to the area? Do you know?**

What attracted my father to the area? Work! My father was a railroader. And he went in there, and they built the railroad into Levack, eh. And then when they were finished with the railroad Oliver Hall, the General Manager of Monde Nickel hired him. He was in there as a general foreman. So he had … Well, that was the only reason he went in there.

**And how many people were there when your father came?**

When my father went in there? Oh there was just – there were – until they got a railroad in they had nothing, eh. They didn’t have no road or nothing. They had to have the railroad before they could do anything else. They were working in there. They had a steam hoist and a steam compressor and they were sinking Number 1. I guess they were – I don’t know what the hell you’d call it, eh – there was very little diamond drilling at that time, eh. And they were trying to locate the best place to put a shaft down, eh. They put a shaft down about, uh … See, that ore body at Levack ... Eventually they ... When it finished there? That Number 1 shaft. That’s all that ever went into service. That Number 1 Shaft was sunken in ore. They wouldn’t allow you to sink in ore anymore ... It caught fire, eh.... and that’s why Two Shaft is where it is.

**Levack Public School**

(Looking at pictures.) Funny how they never changed the front of that school.
No.

The school wasn’t originally that wide. This was built on. The rec room and everything else was built on later on. The school was built in ’15, and it stayed the way it was until ’29. Then they put the addition on it. It went from two rooms to four rooms. It was only a two-room school until ’29. From ’29 on it was four rooms, then they enlarged it again in ’47.

This is a deed to a log cabin in Warsaw dated 1916.

1916 … (Reading.) … It was 29 feet long and 20 feet wide completed, with two rooms. By the looks of it, it belonged to a rich guy. Who the hell ever drew that up? … That says $500. Jesus Christ! That’s enough money in 1916 for a log house.

It sure is.

(Turning to another picture.) Jean Anderchuk … This here guy here is Proulx. He was a …notary public from Chelmsford. P-r-o-u-l-x … Most of those guys were known by nicknames. Black George, Red George, what have you.

**Tale from Levack Mine**

Your dad played hockey in Levack, eh?

Yeah, he used to coach the Huskies.

Yeah. Around the beerfest down at The Old Hall. (Laughs.) He was cage tender over at 3 Shaft. I was a hoist inspector. I used to see him everyday.
Yeah. I laughed like all hell: Tell him sometime about – they were supposed to wear glasses, you know. Keep ‘em safe. And Al Parks kinda got on him that day. I guess he was in a bad mood about some goddamned thing, eh. Laddie had no glasses on. They got out at 26, eh. Stopped at 25 to pick up the safety hitch in there, eh. And maybe he wouldn’t have said anything to him if the safety engineer hadn’t got on him.

But they come up a little further, and Al Parks says, “Where’s your glasses?”

He said, “In my pocket. I don’t have to wear them in front of the cage.”

“You’re goddamned right you gotta wear them! -- That right?” to the safety engineer.

The engineer said, “Oh yeah, as long as you work you’ve gotta wear your glasses.”

So, your dad put them on and he came to surface. And I’m standing there and I never wore glasses. But I guess he was so goddamned mad. He said, “Jesus Christ! You squawked to me about glasses! There’s a guy, goddamnit! I never saw those glasses on in his life, eh.”

The safety engineer didn’t know me -- Alf Armstrong would be the safety engineer. And he got out and took a look. He says, “What’s your name?”

And before I had a chance to say anything, your dad said, “Joe Bibic (sp).” (Laughs.)

“Where do you work?”

Before I had a chance to say anything, “Electrical Department,” your dad says. I guess he thought he had made a mistake when he said anything, eh. But he said Joe Riddick, eh. And
he took down the goddamned name: Joe Bibic, Electrical Department, no glasses –
underground and no glasses.

So when I came to surface, eh, I called up the electrical super, Sikkard, and I said, “You get a
squwak about Joe Bibic being underground with no glasses?”

He says, “Yeah, the goddamned safety engineer was in here and eatin’ my ass off because Joe
Bibic was working underground.”

I says “It wasn’t Joe Bibic, it was me.”

“He says, “Where the hell did he get Joe Bibic from?” (Laughing.) And I didn’t want to say where he
got it. I said, “Oh, he just got it.”

He said, “You son of a bitch! Did you tell him you were Joe Bibic?” (Laughing.)

… What possessed your dad to go into real estate?

I have no idea. I think my mother possessed him.

Eh?

My mother did.

I had no idea either. All of a sudden he told me he was gonna quit. He was gonna go into real
estate. I had no idea why.

He’s doing well.
Real estate’s a goddamned good deal if you can sell. I couldn’t sell nothing.

On the Origins of the Levack Mine ... Mr. McNamara’s version.

Well, just getting back to Levack Mr. McNamara, did you ever hear about how the mine was discovered? The story behind that?

It was a prospector. And I’m pretty sure the prospector’s name was Levack. But I don’t know if it was spelled the way it’s spelled today. Because I never saw Levack spelled like that. I never saw L-E-V-A – I never saw it spelled like that! That’s the first time I ever saw it spelled like that. But, uh, it was -- I don’t know what the hell year it was found.

But I know that they started – that Monde Nickel started the development. Not the development but looked at it in 1913. See, Monde…They talk about INCO taking over Monde, eh. I don’t think INCO ever took over Monde, a goddamned bit of it. I think that Monde was – it was an amalgamation alright, but I don’t think it was ever a takeover. Because Monde Nickel had Garson, they had Levack, they had Cray Hill (sp). They had Number 4 shaft, which is the best ore body here.

See, for years and years and years, all International Nickel ever mined was Creighton. All the west places – Victoria, White (sp) and all those places…Worthington – that was all Monde property. That was all Monde property, see. And this guy that they had for general manger, this Oliver Hall? He was a real brain, eh. He wouldn’t work for INCO when they went together, eh. There was hardly anybody stayed with INCO. The only two that stayed with INCO … three stayed with INCO: the superintendent of Worthington, Mumford. He stayed with INCO. Eager was transferred from Levack to Frood. But Eager was an American, eh. See, the International (INCO) was all American-owned. All American. Monde was British-owned. And Sharpe. Sharpe stayed with them. But Mumford and Sharpe never held
jobs as superintendents. They were knocked down to assistants, or some goddamned thing like that. But I don’t think that they … see, there was … before Eager – Eager came to Levack in 1916. Eager came from a little mine out here near Blezard. The Whistle Mine. It was shut down. He was there and it was shut down, eh. And then Monde Nickel hired him and he came into Levack then. But there was two supers before him. One was Noble. Frank Noble was – I think Frank Noble was actually the first super in Levack. And then there was one more. He was only there a short time, and then Eager came in there. And Eager was there from about 1915 until the amalgamation in ’28. The he was shipped to Frood. Then Sharpe came in. Sharpe came in from Garson. And I guess Mumford must’ve taken Garson at that time, because Worthington was down.

And after Eager?

Sharpe came in for International Nickel, Al Sharpe. S-H-A-R-P-E. He was from INCO … yeah. Then after Sharpe the mine was shut down from ’32. After the fire, eh, they rebuilt but they didn’t open up the mine. After the fire in December, 1929, they rebuilt the rockhouse. And … the rockhouse was about the only thing that was burnt, eh. The head crane was the only thing that was really damaged.

And then they flooded the shaft, eh. They flooded the mine – they let the mine flood to 7-Level. They put in a set of electric pumps at Seven Level. Then they pumped from 7-Level. And International opened it up again in March, ’37. And Stewart went in there. And after Stewart – Stewart went in there – then there was J.D. Pike. Cliff Stewart was there from about ’37 to ’41, I guess. Or ’40. Say ’40. And then J.D. Pike went in from ‘40 to ’42. And then Lively came in – Charlie Lively from Creighton came in. Lively was there for, uh … Jesus, he was there for a lot of years! Then after Lively was … McIntyre, Frank McIntyre. Then after McIntyre there was, uh … Lennie, Dave Lennie. Then they changed,
eh. Addison was the super actually. Lennie was the whole area super, eh. Then they had Moffat in there as super.

**You were in Levack during the Depression?**

I was in Levack just for a short time during the Depression. I was in the air force. But I was in there. Why? What about the Depression?

**I was just wondering how Levack was during the Depression.**

Well a lot of them were transferred – a lot of the men were transferred, eh. They kept their hopes up in Levack, but they were transferred to Frood, eh. Quite a few of them, eh. Levack alone, they … after they shut the mine down they had a skeleton staff in there. They had how many men?

**Five, I think.**

Wait a minute. They had more than five men. They had Jimmy Robb, Johnny Robb’s father, my brother, and, uh…Sam Enoff, Toivo Kaupinen … Serpell, Patty Serpell, the master mechanic. I guess that was it, eh?

**Yeah, that’s five. Who is your brother?**

My brother is Elmer, E.J. They stayed in there. There were on … uh, I guess it was kind of a maintenance deal, eh. They used to turn over the rockhouse, and … my brother was a compressor man -- my brother was a hoistman. So was Johnny Robb’s father, right. And Toivo Kaupinen was an electrician. Serpell was master mechanic. And Sam Enoff was the pumpman.
Transportation in Old Levack

Were you involved in the transportation business at that time?

There was no transportation, there was nothing doing then, eh.

Well, when did you finally run the stage, then?

Well I run the stage from 1922 to … ’till when? … From about 1922 to 1928, I guess. The Lebarges’ ran one. There was two stages. The Lebarges’ ran and we ran, eh. Before that for transportation in the summer, they had that jitney on the track, eh. Did you hear about that, eh?

Uhhmm…No.

They had a jitney on the track; they formed the Levack Jitney Service I guess it was. Eager was – there was Frank Eager and Toivo Kaupinen and Hanson. The three of them. And they bought an old Whitney 6; ran on rails. They bought it from the States some place. They had about three trailers behind, eh. And it ran from the time the snow left in the spring until the time it snowed again in the fall, eh. Used to run that … three trips a day. There was the local in the morning at 6 o’clock. There was the Number 2 at night, at about half past five. And then another local at night, at about 10:30, I’d guess. So three trips a day. And then in the winter time they staged with horses. The stages would hold about twenty people. Ten on one side, eight on the side seating. It would hold about 20 people. And the fare was 50 cents from the station from Day 1 until it ended.

They wouldn’t give us a bus franchise, see, up the road, eh. The road was, they said the road was too hazardous to insure a bus franchise. But we had a license to drive, eh, and we used to have, uh… what the hell did you call ‘em? License on the car, and the same as they have on
the big trucks today. You know, and it cost, um… you turned in what you made and they set a fee to what you made.

A kind of a tariff?

Um, not a tariff – what the hell do they call it? … A PCV license, a public carrier vehicle. That’s what we had. They set a tariff for it, eh. But we had that from ’26, ’27, ’28, and then in ’28, the Sudbury Transport Co-op – it was basically the Sudbury Star – got a bus license and they started to bus to Levack, so that finished the staging pretty well.

They got their bus license in ’29?

They got the bus license in ’28.

What were the names of those fellows?

Sudbury Transit…same guys that owned the Sudbury Star. Guy by the name of Cole. I forget what the hell his first name was. Cole was actually the manager of it. They had two … about 25-passenger busses, I guess. Each silver Studebakers.

Oh yeah, and you got back into the busing business later?

Not the busing business, no.

You were in trucks?

Trucking for INCO, yes. Well, we had a … we started working for Monde Nickel, eh, and they had, uh … what the hell you call the -- transfers, more or less. Used to handle their powder and
unload their gyp and stuff like that. And we started with them in 1922, eh. And then we just continued, eh, when INCO took over. Just continued, eh. We supplied them and then in ’37 when they opened up again there was lots of trucking need, eh. They sunk the shaft and there was lots of trucking then.

*When you were running the stage, was that a pretty smooth business?*

What do you mean smooth?

*Well, I guess I just want to know...*

Financial or what?

*Yeah, right.*

Financial … yeah, I think it was. Well, it wasn’t big business, but it was more money than you could make at the mine, lets put it this way. Because if you had 20 passengers going – if you took 20 out in the morning, you brought 20 back at night, because… There was the odd commercial traveller come in – the odd insurance man, or something like that, eh. You know, you’d have him in and out. He’d have to get into Levack and he’d have to get out. So…Oh yeah. So I think it was a good deal.

*Yeah. Was the competition between you and the Lebarges very... did it ever get –*

No.

*It was always a lighthearted thing?*
Well, there wasn’t very much competition about it. Jeez, we had horses and Mr. Lebarge used to shoe ‘em when their shoe would be off. There was never any …

Oh, so it was a pretty friendly operation.

Oh yeah. Oh yeah. It was a … Well, let’s put it this way: it was too big an operation for one person, and it wasn’t big enough to pay to hire somebody to handle it, eh. Because it was, what the hell do they say… seasonal. It was only the winter, eh. And when the hell does the winter start, eh. Sometimes the winter starts – sometimes in Levack the winter was there in October. Sometimes not until December – late, eh. And the same thing in the spring, sometimes the stage went right through to April, sometimes the middle of March the roads were … we were back to wheels again. And like I say, ‘till they got the road open … The first road that went into Levack was opened in 1924. There was no road there before that. The only way out was CPR from the station. That’s all.

You see, that’s 10 years, eh, that there was no roads. From the time they opened up the mine in 1914 to 1924 there was no road into Levack. They had a sort of a … what the hell would you call it? They had a – you could call it a trail. You wouldn’t call it a road, from Levack to the Station.

And Boulton’s had the mail contract. Sam Boulton? He had the mail contact. They handled the mail everyday. In the summer they had a little express team of horses. In the winter it was sleighs.

**The General Store**

How did you…the general store and things. When did that get started?

For us you mean?
You.

Well, we bought off Endelman. Endelman had that. Endelman opened -- Endelman built that in '37, eh, when the place opened up. Harry Endelman? He opened a general store. They had a general store, eh, clothing and groceries and hardware, coal, wood. They had the whole deal. Mr. Endelman died in ’57, I guess. Don, the son, took it over, eh. But the estate was left to Guaranteed Trust, eh. My wife ran it for Guaranteed Trust. For two years, I guess. And then McNamaras bought it. So we took it over from there. But the Pool Room, we bought the Pool Room in, uh…My brother bought the Pool Room in, uh, what the hell year?…‘45 I guess.

Who had it before that, St. Pierre?

Yeah, the building belonged to McKinnon, eh. The building belonged to D.L. McKinnon there, eh. But they just had it rented, eh. But my brother bought the building. When he bought the building – he bought the building in ‘45.

Well, who was this St-Pierre fella?

St. Pierre, Albert St-Pierre. He had the Pool Room. He leased it from McKinnon, see? I guess he owned the Pool— but he owned the equipment and the hall, eh? Stan Piakoski bought it off him, off St.-Pierre, and then we bought it off Stan Piakoski.

Oh, I see.

Yeah.

*Town Doctors*
They say they didn’t have any doctors until up until, well, what, the ‘30’s?

To when?

Up until the ‘30’s sometime?

Always had a doctor.

Always had a doctor?

We always had ... We had, uh ... The first doctor in Levack was, uh ... Dr. Hamilton was the first doctor of Levack. We had Dr. McCullough, ... Dr. Hamilton, Dr. McCullough. Now Monde Nickel – same as INCO – they had a medical plan, same as INCO. They had a doctor there for emergencies at the mine, accidents. And I guess 90% of the babies were born at home, so that was part of his job.

Well, they had a few midwifes.

Uh, yes and no. They had a few midwifes but I don’t think ... not to my knowledge was there a baby born with only a midwife there. There was always a doctor on hand. Because, say now, pre-natal care, eh: They go to the doctor and the doctor examined them and he would ... anything, I guess ... he prescribes and then when the baby was born he was there.

But, uh, we had Hamilton there, and McCullough, and then Dr. Kirby. And after Dr. Kirby, uh ... what the hell was the guy called ... Kirk. Dr. Kirk -- K.L. Kirk came in next. Then from 1932 until 1937 there was no resident doctor. But the doctor – we had one of the INCO doctors from Sudbury was on call. I mean if you needed a doctor, eh. Because anybody that was in there, eh. Like I say a lot of the people stayed there, lived there, eh. Jesus Christ! Rent was
only $45 dollars a month, eh. If the husband worked in town, well, they were still on the medical plan so if they needed a doctor they got one, eh. He either drove in or came in by train and somebody met them. By the time they opened up again there was a resident doctor there all the time.

MmmHmmm. When did Jessup come? He was my doctor ...

Jessup came to Levack twice. Jessup came to Levack in ’39 the first time, I think. But he never stayed. He unloaded his furniture one day and he loaded his furniture back the next day in a boxcar. He left Conniston. And then he was moved to Levack after that again. Years after that.

Let’s see, we had Stayon. Dr. Stayon was there. What the hell was the first doctor's name? He left the Company … Dr. Thompson was the first doctor in Levack after INCO opened up. Then Stayon came next. Jessup came, eh. But Jessup didn’t stay. Jessup went to Conniston, eh. Stayon came in --

Stanyon?

Stayon. S-t-a-y-o-n. Dr. Stayon was there. And then Dr. Bennett, Dr. Cowan.

How do spell that?

Cowan. C-o-w-a-n. Dr. Cowan was … Dr. Cowan came in there in ’47. And after Cowan who the hell came? After Cowan, I guess that’s when Jessup came in, after Cowan. Jessup came in there and he was there until, uh, they did away with the medical … No he wasn’t! Jessup wasn’t there until they did away with the medical, because, uh, they had several doctors that used to come in. They had Arthurs and they had Jones. They had several doctors
that came in but they didn’t stay very long. I think it was just on the verge of breaking up, eh. Getting away from the medical altogether, going to Medicare? And then they … Once they opened up that other place, well, then they got their own doctors, eh.

The Church

Do you know about the church? I understand there was a wooden structure where St. Barthomews is now.

Yeah, the wooden structure was built in 1925. And that was, uh, where St. Barthomews is now. The wooden structure – the chapel was built in 1925. And it was, uh … what the hell was it called? … Cartier was the resident priest, eh. And it was just, uh … what do you call it? … I’ll think of it later. Cartier was the resident priest, eh.

Cartier.

Cartier was the resident priest then.

Yeah?

When the chapel was there, eh. And then in 1942 they made Levack a parish. And in ’37 they rebuilt part of the – ’37 and ’38 – they rebuilt part of that chapel, eh. And then this new church I think was built in ’53, right?

Yeah?

By Doctor – by Father Wells. And the Anglican Church – St. John’s there? The United Church?
MmmmHmmm.

I don’t know when the hell that was started. That was called the Mission. The Mission. The Mission of Cartier. Up until ’42. From ’25 to ’42.

The Priest – the Mission – was centred in Cartier?

Yeah, yeah.

I guess they were Jesuits or something.

They were Jesuits. There were Jesuit priests up ‘til, uh – wait a minute – uh, the Jesuit priests were there until 1925. Cartier was a Jesuit. Until, ah, until 1925. Then it came under Bishop Scollard. (Pause for phone call!)

Jesus! You try to get them off the phone! (Laughing.)

I guess, ah – did you ask anybody about that United Church there? I’d say about, ah … ah hell! I’d say about 1950, eh?

Yeah. I’ll have to go see the, what do they call it, the pastor there and ask him, I think.

Is Sorenson there?

Is it Sorenson now?

I’m not sure, but he was there.
I’ll just go knock on his door one day.

Yeah, sure! Sure! Ask him when it was set up. Yeah. Hey, have you got no information at all now that the – the centre where the mayor is – have you got no information at all?

Oh they have a, there is a very thin file of records from 1937 on, but their notes...

**The Mayors**

It was incorporated – the town, eh – in ’37. And, uh, I guess the first mayor was Serpell eh,

Yep.

Serpell, and then…

Hykin?

Eh?

Hykin.

Hykin. Yeah, well, I don’t know if Hykin was the next one or was it Fraser Ross? One or the other. Fraser Ross was in there. I think it was Fraser Ross after Serpell. I think, that’s the way it went, I think. It was, it was Serpell, then Fraser Ross and then Hykin.

And then Gilchrist.

Gilchrist, yeah. And then Coady.
Yeah.

(Laughing.)

And then there was Coady.

And then there was Coady, yeah. Nobody’s going to forget Coady.

No, guess not.

Eh?

I guess – he’s a good friend of my father – my father thinks well of him.

Oh, shit yeah! I always thought good of Coady, too. He was right in there, you know. Coady and Charlie Riley’s daughter were going together. I don’t know what the hell happened there. Christ, old Charlie made him a shift boss, you know? Right off the goddamned bat. Oh, he was going great guns, there. I don’t know what the hell happened there. Something happened!

Yeah.

Something happened there. I don’t know what the hell it was. Edo (sp) never married. But by Jeez, Coady was going great guns. Coady was only there a short time and Coady was shift lead when he was running around with Edo. (laughs.)

He’s quite a character.
I like him! I like him. He’s pretty well down to earth and ah …

Well, he seems to be respected by the town too. Most people I’ve talked to …

I, I think he does, ah – a fair job you know? I think he’s pretty just in whatever the hell he does. He, uh … he had, uh … You couldn’t say a hell of a lot about Gilchrist. Gilchrist was a pretty quiet fella in a way, too. But hey. The Company was – he was chief engineer, eh, and the Company just called the shots, eh. He was just a figurehead, that’s all.

And, uh, there were a bunch of guys around Levack, eh. They couldn’t get a job with the Company, eh? Mike Shombie (sp) was one. And old Santa Claus was another. Four or five of those guys, they couldn’t get a job. And there was no such thing as welfare, eh. And, uh, goddammit! Coady got in and – Christ! Coady had the whole goddamn mission working. Picking up paper and picking up garbage, and doing some goddamn thing – at least they were making a living. That was one of the – that was one of the things that he got in on. Because he went to the guys and he said – different guys, you know – and he said, “Goddammit, this guy has been in here a long time and he’s not fit to work for the Company. He don’t want to leave Levack and so – what the hell – get him a job.”

Sure.

Somebody’s got to do it. And then he put a lot of the kids to work in the summer. I think he did a pretty fair job.

Yeah.
I think he did a pretty fair job. But he’s not crooked at all. I don’t know if he ever was or not – he told me he was a major in the army.

That’s what my father told me.

Yeah, yeah. Jesus Christ, I’ll tell ya, that guy doesn’t look like an army man. I was in the air force for three years, and by the Lord Jesus I never saw anybody – well, a major’s not supposed to look like Coady! (Laughing.)

Yeah. I hear that Hykin was supposed to have been a pretty colourful character, too.

Which one?

The mayor. The guy – he was supposed to have been a magician on the side.

That’s right, that’s right! He was real good at that. He was, uh … You’d never know to look at him, eh. He was a hell of a fine man, and a hell of a good blacksmith. And, uh … But I guess in the old country – he came from England, eh, originally. And I guess in the old country this is what he had followed, eh. Oh yeah. He was a real good ...

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A Note from Dawn Copeman (nee McNamara) Dated September 5\textsuperscript{th}, 2004:

My brother-in-law found this site on the internet and I found it very interesting. I was working in the old Levack General Store one summer around that time, and I seem to remember someone coming into the store asking questions and I believe I convinced my aunt to lend some pictures for a history of Levack project - there can't have been two, but I'm pretty sure it wasn't 1978, maybe 1977 because I worked in Toronto the summer of 1978.
The picture you have on your site of the old Levack school has several of my relatives pictured. I have a copy of this photo and I think I even have the names of most of the children pictured if you are interested and don't have this already. There were two staff - the principal and one teacher (they both taught) the teacher was my great aunt Mary McNamara who died shortly afterwards of strep throat (before antibiotics). The photo was taken circa 1933-34 and she died in 1936. I have some information on the history of the McNamara family as I have been doing some genealogy research for my Aunt - not too much on the Levack history unfortunately, and your site was able to fill in some blanks.

Do you have more photos than are shown on the site? I would love to have a picture of the old General Store, which my grandparents bought from Endelman in the fifties. We had great times in the basement of the store as children with the barrels of old rusty nails, boxes of men's fedora's and duck decoys stored from when it was more a "general store". My grandparents also owned the building which was originally owned by D.L. MacKinnon (the Bluebird Restaurant and the poolhall) My Dad ran the poolhall with his brother Edy, there was a small trucking business EJ McNamara & Sons Ltd that hauled coal and gravel for the mine and the downstairs was leased out to "Sam" originally and later to Wing Hum. I still keep in touch with the Hum family who sold up and moved away at least ten years ago.

On the site you mention the name Pilon as someone who helped build the road into Levack. I will have to ask my aunt Lily if this was her father. When the "new" Catholic Church St. Bartholomew's was built in the 1950's my grandfather Elmer contributed and laid the cornerstone, and my Uncle George McNamara and his wife Lily Pilon were the first couple married in the church 28 November 1953.

I haven't been back to Levack for a few years now - my nearest relatives have all died, or moved away and are quite elderly now. The High School was closed a couple of years back and the school district has moved the public school into the building as it was more modern and in better condition than the old public school. When I went to LDHS in the early 70's, you could toboggan down the sides of the old gravel pit, and there were a few poplars starting to grow - it looks like a regular forest now!

Thanks for putting up the site.

Dawn (nee McNamara) Copeman
Local Historical Lore

(The excerpt is taken directly from The Story of Onaping Falls, compiled and written by Robert P. Trott)

The Wisconsin glacier, named because this U.S.A. state was the point of its farthest advance in 10,000 B.C., covered this area with ice two miles thick. During its advance, with its tremendous pressure and grinding action, it leveled mountainous craggy land to low exposed rolling hills that surround us today. As the weather warmed and the ice retreated, large volumes of water were left to flood hollows, making today's lakes, and to drain via rivers to lower levels and out to the sea. The Sudbury Basin, including all of our local area, was covered with 300 plus feet of water right up to what we know now as High Falls. At the same time, the three Great Lakes, Superior, Michigan and Huron were one mass of fresh water and called the Nippising Great Lakes. The North Shore of this tremendous body of water was at High Falls and Skead; today it is the North Shore of Georgian Bay.

How many hundreds of years it took for all of this glacier run-off to drain to the sea is hard to determine. One indication that turned up a few years ago south of Sudbury was when a summer cottage owner was digging a deep trench in the sand to the lake. During this chore he uncovered an arrowhead. Fortunately, he realized that this could be an important find and called a local historian who phoned Ottawa for an archeologist to investigate. By the simple method of “reading” the sand, much the same as one can count the rings across a tree trunk and determine the age of the tree, the archeologist was able to establish that the arrowhead in question had been dropped into the lake many hundreds of years ago. As a matter of interest, to “read” sand to establish how many years it was covered with water, a trench is dug through the sand and one side is sloped at about 45 degrees to expose a wide face. This face is then very lightly brushed until the dark and light lines are fairly clear to see. In winter the lake is frozen and the water is still, all sediment gradually drops to the lake bottom making a black line. In
the summer, wind on the water causes continuous movement, allowing only the heavier particles to settle, forming a light line. Consequently, a dark line and a light line make one year.

After the ice age and the receding of the water, vegetation found its roots and the southern aboriginals moved North. All of this phase and time period is vague and conjecture on the part of historians. Later the Indians roamed this north country. Although they did not have a written language, the white man brought that culture, they were fluent in understanding a sign language and the spoken word of other tribes. Some crude rock drawings have been discovered and believed to be made during this early period.

One important find had been discovered years ago but was only brought to light recently through a remark during casual discussion between a local Onaping man, Ed Durocher, and historian, George Stock. It seems that, as a boy living in Skead, Ed used to swim and dive from a rock in a local lake. One day he noticed some markings on the face of the rock below the surface of the water; a closer inspection showed that without doubt someone had scarred the rock face with lines and curves. Over a period of time, Ed mentioned this fact to many people but it was just a conversation piece until George Stock heard the story. He at once organized a trip to the scene.

The little band of explorers was made up of Ed Durocher as guide, George Stock, historian and interpreter of any finds, and Graham Medley, Ontario Land Surveyor to pin-point the exact spot. Graham’s son was also with the party. The lake had to have been quite calm and the sun in just about the right position, because from a canoe it was possible through the clear water to see the markings which stood out and were easily recognized. As best can be done from an unstable canoe, George made out the crude figure of a man with a horn protruding from his head. That was proof enough for George! It was a find. The drawing was of man’s head with a horn growing from it pointing towards the sky. This is the Indians mental picture of their God—Nammabouzoo.
Indians in our area were all hunters and trappers; they did not grow any food or keep animals and, because the only mode of transport was by flimsy canoe or walking, great care and thought was given to where they would spend the winter. Each small tribe would stake out a winter area, usually close to a lake or river, to cut down on the amount of goods and chattels that would have to be manhandled through the thick bush from the canoes.

Rough temporary winter quarters were erected by digging the butts of saplings into the ground, possibly seven to eight inches apart in two rows eight to ten feet long. The tops of the saplings were then bent towards each other about five feet from the ground, and secured to form an arch. Moss, clay, branches and whatever was at hand, was used to cover the arch and walls. Both ends were closed except for a small crawl through opening at one end. The final covering was of animal skins to give it reasonable water resistance during the fall and spring rains. Heavy skins were hung at the opening to serve as a door and when the snow came the whole structure was banked and packed with snow to preserve heat inside and to cut down on drafts. Only a small dry twig fire was made inside to heat river stones that retained some warmth after the sticks had burnt. Larger fires for cooking and drying were always made outside from quarters.

Trapping for beaver and hunting for any animal that crossed their path occupied the long cold winter months. All the skins had to be cleaned, stretched, dried and made supple. Everyone was kept busy; the women and old people with the normal household chores of cleaning, cooking, looking after the young children, preparing whatever skins the hunters brought in and keeping the fires going and the men, hunting, trapping, stalking—often many miles from camp, cleaning the game, and lugging the wet heavy skins back to camp. Winter daylight was a matter of a few short hours when so much had to be done. Food consisted of whatever they had carried in with them, dried fish, corn, tea, a little sugar and dried vegetables plus fresh meat from the hunters. It was a time to survive or die.
In the spring, just as soon as they could get their canoes in the ice free water, they moved south down to Whitefish and along the North shore trading their furs with Southern agriculture Indians who came North to trade their corn, tobacco, pots, blankets, etc. for furs which later in turn, by inter-trading, would end up in Montreal.

Summer was a time of bartering, fishing and preparing for the long trek north to once again trap hunt and survive. This was an enormous trading empire and the Indians were masters of their own fate, each dependent on the other. When we consider this era that survived countless years without a single piece of paper, we sometimes wonder where our present complicated computer controlled paper jungle will lead us.

The Ojibwa Indian knew the area because of the canoe trails to Onaping Lake and Onaping River. Its obvious though that few tribes would forget the torturous portage from the lower reaches of the Onaping River and up High Falls to reach the hunting and trapping areas of north of here.

History records say that in the 1600’s an Iroquois war party came into our area and in their chain of destruction wiped out a local link. The story is that when reaching the junction of the Vermillion and Onaping Rivers they heard of a tribe of Ojibwa camped north of the Onaping River. They made a small detour, because the Iroquois were traveling south at a time, up High Falls and then north again to the vicinity of Moose Lake where the Ojibwa had a fairly large encampment. This would most likely be an area, where, after being dispersed in smaller groups for winter hunting and trapping, the Ojibwa would collect as a tribe for the summer trek to the North Shore to barter their furs and to fish and trade.

It is believed that there were only a small band of Northern Iroquois “braves” who in the short period of four hours killed possibly 200 to 300 men, women and children of the Ojibwa tribe. Indian History records elsewhere say that once a plan of attack and annihilation was
planned by the Iroquois, very little in the records of man’s life on earth will equal their cold blooded, cool, calculating dedication to the destruction of life.

Possibly one day archeologists will organize a “dig” to uncover and piece together the terrible moments of these tragic hours. Although this was only a war party in 1660 passing through, the fear of the Iroquois kept this area clear of Indians for the next 100 years or so, but by the early 1800’s the fur trade was beginning to develop again and small Indian bands lodged in this area in the winter, trapping and hunting.

Possibly the first white men that the local Indians encountered were the Jesuits who also used these water highways. Their main occupation was to learn the different dialects and explore this vast wilderness as well as to establish friendly peaceful relations in whichever tribal area they were traveling through. These priests were hardly men who lived by the good book and had to learn the very basic rules of survival. They were around in 1660 when the Iroquois with their methodical plan of destruction wiped out the circle of trading that fed the French the rich furs from the interior.

In 1885 the Hudson’s Bay Company at Whitefish opened a trading post just below the junction of the Onaping and Vermillion Rivers. Two important reasons prompted this decision, and without doubt it was a local resolution because to obtain permission from the boardroom in England would have taken up to three years, depending on the wind conditions in the Atlantic.

It seems that the Hudson’s Bay Trading Post at Whitefish was losing quite a bit of trade from some petty competition up-river, possibly at Vermillion Lake. This English word “petty” does not necessarily mean small; in this context it is used to imply, without authority—not by appointment to is or Her Majesty. The other incentive to establish a post here was that near the meeting of these two rivers was Nammabouzoo snowshoe tracks where the Indians stopped to visit. Surely an ideal spot to do business.
This was one very important reason for all Indians to stop and usually camp overnight at the connecting of these two rivers. An extremely visible Indian shrine was there, and no self respecting Indian passes a sacred place without stopping to pay his respects. If he did ignore a hallowed place he would expect his canoe to suddenly tip and dump everything into the water or his wife and children would become sick with an unknown ailment that, because of his disrespect, the most powerful witch doctor could not cure.

The visible signs that their all-powerful god Nammabouzoo had walked through this area was his snowshoe tracks in the solid rock that can be clearly seen even today by the bridge over the river south of Dowling. Although the white man has a geologic explanation it was quite obvious to the Indians that these clear oval imprints were made by Nammabouzoo as he traveled through the land. In fact there are not just one or two signs; these intriguing oval imprints can be observed for at least five miles at different places.

Before passing through this local area the Chief of the tribe or head man if it was a small group walked to the site, mumbled a few appropriate words of praise and thanks for Nammabouzoo’s protection and left the necessary offerings which were, a few dry sticks for a fire, a piece of fur or cloth to clothe him, and a pinch of tobacco for his pleasure. Having done this the party could continue its journey convinced that no unforeseen experience would befall them.

The Hudson’s Bay Post was not there very long. By 1892, the logging activities had seriously affected the annual trapping commerce, so in that year this small but useful trading outpost was abandoned. Gradually the fur trade diminished in this area and most of the Indians moved West and North.

In the latter part of the 1800’s two events led to the final collapse of this primitive but efficient circle of commerce. One was the influx of loggers cutting trees for the American lumber mills and the other was the intrusion of the Hudson Bay Co., who established middleman posts all
through the north to “save” the Indians the long trek to barter and trade the furs with his southern neighbours.

In 1870, a disastrous forest fire in the northern states robbed the American North Atlantic seaboard wood mills of their raw product. To compound the lumber companies problems, Chicago burnt the next year adding to the massive demands on the American wood industry. Consequently these wood mills looked North to the massive stands of trees along the Canadian Lake Huron north shore.

In 1872, the Ontario Government, or Canada West as it was then, was under extreme pressure to deal with this problem of the massive influx of Americans and American money to deprive us of our natural resources, particularly our vast stands of forest. Remembering at this time, 1872, that the whole area from the North Shore of Georgian Bay, North was, except for a few bands of Indian trappers, the odd Hudson Bay Outpost and a small number of hardy pioneers establishing homesteads and farms, empty for thousands of square miles. This silent invasion by the Americans could have had far reaching complications for our future, even to the point of who owns the land.

Fortunately, previous to this time frame, the Government, in 1856 realized the need to pin-point on the ground where the homesteaders pioneers and even settlements were. The government commissioned A.P. Salter Provincial Land Surveyor to mark a first point at Sturgeon River near its entrance to Lake Nipissing, and cut a line due west as far as he could go. This line when shown on maps is called Salter’s Base Line. At each six mile interval along this line, Mr. Salter was to go due north and south for six miles. These points were picked up by other survey crews thereby marking the area into 36 square mile sections which were recorded and numbered and called Townships. Later they were all given names. As a matter of interest when Salter was surveying what is now Sudbury, at Creighton his compass deviated 15 degrees from true north causing him to abandon this local area. He contacted Alexander Murry, a geologist and this was the birth of the interest in mining around Sudbury.
By 1872, this Township pattern was the means of recording legal agricultural and homestead development. To quickly control and organize the immediate need of the American lumber industry, the Government in 1878 used this Township survey as a base for allocating timber cutting rights. Renumbering more than 200 town sites and calling them timber berths, and the calling of public auctions to sell only the cutting rights in these areas, cemented once and forever that Canada owned the land.

The Canadians also gave very precise directions on just what could, and could not be done within the framework of these timber berths. Only temporary buildings were to be erected and one other major restriction was imposed. No trees having less than 13 inch diameter through the butt were to be cut down. This strict condition on the size of the trees doesn’t sound that bad, considering that the part of the tree close to the ground is much thicker than the trunk. Realizing this, the Department of the Crown Lands enforced the rule that the 13 inch measurement had to be made 5 feet from the ground. This meant that, even after an area was harvested by the lumber companies, fair size trees still stood to grow and re-seed the land for future use. It is unfortunate that in a few years, when the mining companies smelters needed wood to burn the sulphur off the ore, because only the lumber companies were governed by this regulation, the mining companies cut down everything in sight and the sulphur fumes killed the remaining brush as is very evident in the Sudbury region today.

The railway coming through this area in 1884 without a doubt opened up the land for agriculture homesteads and particularly for mining companies who knew of ore bodies in this area yet without a railway link could not plan to develop mines. For the American lumber companies the steel road made little difference except possibly to more easily ship supplies and tools for the logging camps. The logs were still sent down the Onaping and Vermillion Rivers through Vermillion Lake and Georgian Bay and across to the mills in the States. Later the American wood industry found other sources of raw material because in 1897 a law was passed prohibiting the movement of this raw product. All trees cut on Crown Land had to be milled in
Canada which led to the establishing of our own lumber companies and the building of Canadian wood mills.

Locally the cries of the lumbermen disturbed the tranquility of these brooding hills as the ring of the axe and bite of the cross-cut harvested the forest that had, except for the odd forest fire, been undisturbed for hundreds of years. In the spring with the snow melting and the hills draining, all the caches of logs piled beside the rivers and on the lakes would start to move. Large gangs of men with long stout poles struggled endlessly to keep the logs moving. Log jams were inevitable. Sometimes the pressure of the weight of logs following were enough to clear the jam but usually a powderman had to use dynamite to break up the tightly packed hodgepodge of tree trunks.

Although lake dams were opened to assure ample depth and flow of water in the rivers, sand bars and sharp bends in the rivers were always trouble spots. At High Falls where logs would be propelled into jagged rock outcrops, breaking and splintering the trunks and causing jams as one followed another in quick succession Bob Monette’s father Dick, a local early settler, was one of a crew who built a pine log cribbing fences to guide and deflect the logs past these points.

The railway gangs gouging away the rock and filling the defiles along the north shore of Windy Lake in 1884 was only a passing annoyance to the area. Even the animals large and small became used to this roaring, smoke belching monster that kept to its own trail.

Prospectors came and went, possibly camping on the sandy inlets on the west side of Windy Lake as they went about their business of “reading” the rock structure and chipping here and there with their little hammers. A favourite place to look would be the many rock-cuts blasted out for the building of the railway where the jagged exposed face could be probed for signs of interesting ore.
Local pioneers and homesteaders built the odd rough log shack, near the sprawling swamps and small rivers, as overnight places to stay when hunting and fishing. Many were built as trap line shelters for use during the trapping season. One such small log cabin could be seen on the left hand side of the road approaching Levack by Clear Lake before the new by-pass to Cartier was built.