

Forest History Foundation, Inc.  
St. Paul, Minn.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with Mrs. Maggie Orr O'Neill  
at her home  
St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin

October 1, 1955

by Helen McCann White

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DATA SHEET ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

FOREST HISTORY FOUNDATION, INC.  
2705 West Seventh Boulevard  
St. Paul, Minnesota

INTERVIEW

Date: October 1, 1955.

Interviewer: Helen McCann White

Persons interviewed: Mrs. Maggie Orr O'Neill

Place: At her home in St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin

Other persons present: None

Remarks: 2 reels. Mrs. O'Neill talked from notes in the first half of the interview.

TRANSCRIPTION

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Mailed: October 11, 1955, to Mrs. O'Neill

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Mailed: j To Mrs. O'Neill on December 1, 1955

## MAGGIE ORR O'NEILL

I was baptized Margaret Orr. My father and mother, James and Margaret Orr, came from Maine in '54 and we have lived in Wisconsin ever since until, of course, they both passed away, but as I am 83 years old now and have been called Maggie Orr O'Neill all my married life (57 years) I think perhaps I'd better give my name as Maggie Orr O'Neill. The fall of 1880 when I was eight years of age, I went to my father's camp on Tamarack with an older sister who cooked for the crew of fifteen or twenty men. These men were mostly neighbors of ours or relatives or in-laws. As I'm the eighth daughter, all the other girls were married, of course, and had families. Our camp for cooking and serving meals was built of logs, notched ends to fit snugly. A room about eighteen or twenty feet long, a kitchen in one end, and our sleeping room, a long table and benches in the other end. Breakfast was ready at five-thirty and my father, or the brother who was with us, called the men by yelling, "Daylight in the swamp." The breakfast consisted of baked beans, hot sour dough biscuits, dried apple pie, gingerbread, and doughnuts and tea; we never had coffee those days.

{Why was that?}

No one had it. We never learned to use it until I was perhaps sixteen or eighteen years of age. It wasn't for sale in town here. I don't know whether it was in Stillwater. I hardly think so because I knew all the camps on all the rivers used tea. The dinners were taken out on a sled by a chore boy. We had hot mashed potatoes and fried salt pork, of course, our own raising, and well, everything we'd had for breakfast too, of course; perhaps something more.

The men's camp was very close to our cook camp. Many times I could peek through the logs where the chinking — the chinking was mud mixed with moss — the chinking had been picked out or perhaps some had fallen out. It was my delight to watch the Indians coming into the men's camp to dry their clothes in the daytime. Beautiful bead work on moccasins and deerskin shirts. And Old Wobbie, as he was always called, the chief, had always a red blanket around him. Long black braids with many colored strips of calico or other bright material woven or braided into them. My sister often let me take a pan of doughnuts or cookies in to treat the Indians. They never stole anything from us. All kinds of warm woolen clothing and socks hanging around the big iron box stove, also bunks with many nice warm blankets in, but they never touched anything that didn't belong to them. One day Old Wobbie took a playful hold of my two long red braids of hair and called me "Ninne-mo-zhay", which one of the Indian women told me meant "sweetheart."

The winter was full of excitement to me and passed all too quickly. We crossed the Yellow River on the 28th day of March and with teams and paraphernalia we arrived home on the third day. Again at the age of 14 I went with my mother to my father's camp. We cooked for the crew, and that was on Loon Lake. The buildings were the same as in 1880 and as I had finished, or supposed

to have finished our little country school, I was trying to study to get into grammar school here. We had no high school those days either. This winter my brother was with us again and we were so busy we were sorry when spring came. This time too we crossed the river, this was the St. Croix River, on the ice. The men went ahead of us with axes testing the strength of the ice. This was on the thirtieth day of March.

The third winter when I was 15 we had our camp at Sioux Portage near St. John's Stopping Place, and I believe that St. John was about the last man from Stillwater who had camps and crews in the woods.

My home was at Sterling, Polk County, Wisconsin. We lived on my father's homestead. He farmed in the summer and logged in the winter for many, many years. I then came here to St. Croix Falls to go to school and I taught in Wisconsin and Minnesota for six years. My parents had passed away and I had just about forgotten the logging business until the big dam at Nevers was being built in nineteen and five. My experience with Indians showed me that they were kind and pleasant. I went to school with Indian half-breed children and when I taught school I had a number in my first three years near Sunrise, Minnesota.

A little incident, maybe of no consequence, in the last camp at Sioux Portage. The Indian village was about a quarter of a mile from our camp buildings. The oldest son of the chief, Big John Foote, was ill with consumption. Medicine dances and drums were plainly heard at our camp. I used to take this boy something to eat quite often. A sewing machine agent from Stillwater - his name was Alphonse Doty - came to try to sell Big John Foote a sewing machine. But John said, "Squaw no know how to sew." So Mr. Doty came to our camp and persuaded me to go to the Indian village and teach Mrs. John Foote to run the machine. I did so. A nice nail keg, upside down, with a brilliant blanket on it, was placed at the machine. I sat down, but Mrs. Foote stood; she didn't want to sit down. She said, "I stand up, see better." I was not too long in showing her how to thread and run the machine. She thanked me, patted me on the back, put a beautiful handmade beaded band around my neck and gave me nice moccasins.

(Did you say that you still had those moccasins and the beaded band?)

Oh, yes.

(What do you think the Indian chief's wife sewed on her sewing machine?)

Oh, they made all their own clothes.

(Did they use deerskin?)

Oh no, they used, well, 'twas six cent calico of the very brightest, yellow or red, or whatever color they liked and they had many ruffles on their skirt

and they were made very neatly. They always made them by hand until the chief's wife got the machine and then they did a lot of sewing on that.

(Did they wear blankets over them?)

Oh, no, they didn't. They might have had a blanket around their shoulders if they came to our camp to trade fish for some of our meat. They wanted kokush and sisaboequet salt and zebetagan sugar, and they wanted all sorts of things that they didn't have, and they'd trade fish for what we had and often times they'd want pork, but the Indians don't care much about pork.

(Did they have fresh fish, you mean?)

Oh, yes, always. They just about lived on fresh fish, although at that time too Big John Foote had men out all the time working at all the different camps - nice looking big strong Indian boys - and they always brought John Foote flour or whatever he wanted. I was going to tell you what happened to Big John Foote. He was murdered by a white renegade. This man caught John Foote asleep. They had been fighting for days and he cut John's head off with an axe.

(When did this happen, do you remember?)

It was years and years after I knew John Foote, must have been forty years. He lived to be an old, old Indian, but he was a very large man and very healthy and strong, but in his old age he got to be quite a drinker and then these white no-goods used to hang around the Indian camps and quarrel and one day old John lay down and went to sleep and this man he had been fighting with for several days cut John's head off with an axe. That was a dreadful thing. I felt badly because I liked John Foote. He was kind. Oh, he always brought us the nicest fish he had and very good venison. He did many kind things.

(You knew him then in 1885 - when you were fifteen?)

When I was fifteen. That was, I was born in '72, and I was fifteen the winter I knew John Foote. Of course, after I came down here and went to school I forgot a lot of these things, you know, or they just went out of my mind for the time being. I married and had my children and when my girls were in high school I went back to work. I taught school after I was married, several years, and I've always been very busy. I think that's why that even yet I hate to give up. Now my daughter wants me to go and live with her this winter but I feel that I'd like to stay right here at home as I did last winter until after Christmas anyway. I can stand what work there is. And, oh yes, I didn't tell you, but I wanted to tell you that I think the company in Stillwater that my father logged for was Walker, Judd and Veazie.

(Then he cut the logs and sold them to Walker, Judd and Veazie?)

Well, he'd go to Stillwater in the fall and make arrangements with whoever he was going to work for in the winter. Most always they'd send a scaler up. The logs, don't you know, were hauled and stacked on the ice on the rivers and the scaler would come and scale the logs and I remember my father's last log mark. They called it x rabbit foot x. Of course, the x was plain enough and the rabbit foot was made of four little dots and then x. It was the last log mark that I can remember.

When the farm work was done in the fall, father went to Stillwater and made arrangements for winter in the woods.

(Did he buy his supplies there?)

For a good many years, but later he got them nearer home -- perhaps here at the Falls -- or even at Grantsburg.

(Can you tell a little bit about how you got ready to go to the woods?)

Well, we saw that there was a good supply of blankets. Of course, father got those at Stillwater. And we tied many comfortables, I remember, and the clothing was fixed up. You see, no one came home from the woods until spring, unless they were ill or some other thing that they must come for. So everything was ready just to stay right there all winter long.

(You had blankets and comfortables?)

Yes. I don't think they ever took a pillow and their bunks were made one above the other in the bunk house, in the men's camp, and they had plenty of hay under them and then they'd pile the hay up for pillows. That's the way they all slept. They seemed to be very satisfied and happy. They were all anxious to get a job in the woods.

(They didn't use sheets -- just blankets?)

Oh my, no. And there were no white blankets. They were all gray.

(Did they wash the blankets at all during the winter?)

Never during the winter and I don't remember any of the men there doing any washing for themselves. Of course, we washed brother's and father's clothing, but as far as for the men folks, I can't remember that they ever washed any, not any. Their stockings, when they got too bad to wear, they put them in the big box stove and burned them and got new ones. You know, we had what they called the wanigan box, a great big heavy wooden box, that contained, oh, shirts, blanket shirts and blanket drawers, and socks, and tobacco. I can't remember what else men folks needed, but they thought they needed that.

(And they would buy those things?)

Yes, they bought those things.

(And I suppose charged them against their wages?)

That's what they did.

(Could you use the comfortables from year to year?)

Well, if the comfortables weren't too bad, they were stacked away with camphor, mind you, folded up with a lot of camphor in them and put overhead in the granary or in some outdoor building and, of course, they were all right for the next winter in the woods.

(You left them at camp?)

Oh, never. We brought them home. Everything was brought home.

(When you made them, did you make them of patchwork?)

Every one was made of patchwork. Of course, we could buy calico six cents, or ten cents or twelve cents yard and often times mother would cut that calico into strips to make a kind of a pretty pattern or something. People were fond of hand sewing in those days.

(Well, with all your family, I suppose there were enough girls to help with it.)

Well, the older girls were all married and gone. I think the one I went to the woods with in 1880, she was the only one that wasn't married. Oh no, there was still a younger one than she was. One was ten years older than I, one was eight years older than I, and they were unmarried, but all the rest were married and had families. Some of them had children nearly as old as I. Of course, none of them lived at home but the two unmarried ones and my two unmarried brothers.

(I wanted to ask you to tell something about the trip into the woods. Do you remember?)

Well, yes I do, I remember a lot of things about it, especially that first trip because I rode on a load of hay with my brother and had plenty of blankets and clothing to cover me. We went as far as St. John's Stopping Place -- that was on the St. Croix. We stayed there the first night.

(You started from the farm?)

We started from the farm and I'll tell you a sad incident. My brother used to sing a little ditty that he sang most all the way up to St. John's Stopping Place and I, lying all covered up with quilts and everything, cried many a sad tear because it was a song my mother always sang and it just made me homesick, of course.

(Do you remember it?)

Oh yes, I think I do:

Gospel ships are sailing, sailing, sailing.  
The gospel ships are sailing, bound for Canaan's happy shore,  
Glory halleluia, all on board are sweetly singing,  
Glory halleluia, halleluia to the lamb.

And he just kept that going and it reminded me so of mother. Well, after we stayed at the stopping place all night, when we started out the next day, I made up my mind that if he started that song again I was going to make him stop it, because I just couldn't have it. But we arrived in camp before it was really dark and, of course, my sister being there already, it was like coming home again. I just loved to be in that camp. You know, I'd like to be young and I'd like to go back and live my life over. There are some things that were sad and all that but most of my life I've had a happy time.

(You stayed at this St. John's Stopping Place overnight? Was there a hotel there?)

Well, it was called a stopping place. Oh yes, they had many beds and men and teams and everyone going to the woods and coming from the woods always stopped at St. John's Stopping Place. That was on the St. Croix. We attended a big Indian dance there once upon a time too when we were at Sioux Portage, right across the river, and that would be Minnesota, of course. They had a big plain field and we went down one afternoon; we heard the drums, heard the singing and dancing and there were piles of nice blankets and piles of deer-skins and everybody was so dressed up and had so many bright colors on. It was just like a circus for us.

(Who was in charge of St. John's Stopping Place?)

A man by the name of John O'Donnell. He was a Stillwater man. He and his wife and they had a cook with them from Stillwater, a big fleshy Irish girl by the name of Sadie Robertson. I remember them so well because my brother-in-law was in our camp that winter and often he'd say, "Maggie, come on. Let's go down to St. John's Stopping Place and spend a while this evening", and we'd go and I remember one night coming home, it was just before we broke camp. The ice at the edge of the river as we were walking up, just going to get off the river and walk up the side hill, the ice broke and I kind of went through, not too far, up to the knees, I suppose. My brother-in-law hurried me into camp and, of course, no harm done; I didn't even catch cold. But we never went down again because it was getting along toward spring and the ice was going to thaw pretty soon. So many things, even the smell of the woods, and the smell of our cook camp, the smell of doughnuts and ginger cookies and dried apple pies, and all the things that my sister used to cook, you know, sometimes it comes back to me. If I happen to run into any of those odors in my house anywhere it all comes back.



(Your sister must have been quite a capable cook.)

Oh, she was very good. Mother's children were all capable. The eight girls were <sup>all</sup> workers. They learned to do everything there was to do on the farm and, of course, with a big family everybody had to work.

(Did you have a sewing machine at home?)

Yes, my grandmother brought my mother a sewing machine when I was ten years old and brought it up to our farm and gave it to my mother and right away I learned to sew when I was ten years old.

(Did you make your own clothes?)

Mother used to cut and baste them, of course. I sewed the seams.

(Did you each pack a bag of your clothes when you went to the camp?)

Oh yes, of course we did. I can't remember what we put them in. We didn't have grips or satchels or anything like that but we packed a big bundle of clothes and took them with us so that we had plenty in the camp. We knew we'd be staying all winter.

(Did you butcher before you went?)

Oh yes, we had beef of our own and we always had a barrel of pork and mother packed jars of butter, of course; we had our own butter. We couldn't carry many eggs. Isn't it queer they didn't use many eggs those days? Now-a-days, you know, they have so many eggs everyplace, any eating place. But those days we didn't have yeast to carry because we had sourdough.

(You didn't put eggs in your pancakes?)

We didn't put eggs in our pancakes. They weren't pancakes, they were flapjacks. They were the size of, well, almost the size of a dinner plate. We had a big long griddle and it only cooked three at a time. My sister would have a stack, maybe a dozen, on a plate at a time and two or three of those plates before the men would be called in and she would work just as hard as she could to fry flapjacks for the crew.

(What did they eat on the flapjacks?)

Syrup forever.

(Maple?)

No, just common syrup. I don't know what they called it then. \*(Have remembered they called it golden drip). We had so many syrups that were

\* Supplementary information given by Mrs. O'Neill when she corrected the interview is inserted within parentheses and indicated by an asterisk.

perhaps lighter in color and lighter in weight, but that was a heavy syrup and a nice dark color.

(Sorghum?)

No, we had that later, but it wasn't. It was just big jugs of syrup and they ate syrup on their beans and they used to take pork gravy and this syrup and beat it with their forks and it would beat up white and creamy looking and how they loved that on their pancakes and hot biscuits.

(Pork gravy and syrup?)

Yes.

(I never heard of that.)

Mr., it's good. I like it. Once in a while, just for myself I make that, just a little of it, of course. I don't suppose my children would want any of it.

(Did you celebrate any holidays in camp?)

Not a single one.

(Not even Christmas?)

Not even Christmas. I don't remember that we hung up a green bough, because the woods were green around us, way up to the camp doors. We never had a thought of Christmas. We thought about Christmas, of course, and wondered what they were doing at home, but no, we had no celebration in camp on Christmas time, not any. We generally cooked the very nicest things we could, fixed a nice dinner, but no celebration for Christmas or any other holiday.

(Did you have any regular celebrations?)

There was nothing but the Sundays. All the men were so busy -- they were all shaving and they were all hanging up their stockings and their wet clothes and everything. They had poles and poles over the big box stove and when Sunday night came those poles would be hanging full of socks and their red flannel shirts and red flannel pants. It was just a picture.

(Did they sing very much?)

Oh yes, and my brother whistled. Well, he still whistles, that brother that was here can whistle. I often tell him, "Oh, Jimmy, not quite so loud." Why, it's just terrific. The neighbors always hear him, the ones on each side that live so close to me.

(I'm sorry he went back. We should have made a record of his whistling.)

And you know he whistles -- of course, they were all fiddlers, even I dabbled in that, and it was all the old-time dance tunes. That's what Jimmy can't get away from, this brother that's here with me summers. He can't get away from those old-time dance tunes, square dance tunes - he just whistles them every minute he's awake.

(What are some of them?)

There's the "Devil's Dream" and the "Soldier's Joy" and the "Sailor's Hornpipe" and all those old, old things that they had when I was a youngster.

(I wanted to ask you -- you were telling the names of the old-fashioned dances -- did they dance a lot in the lumber camp?)

Yes, the men folks used to square dance in their own camp. Somebody'd play a mouth organ. One man who came from Stillwater played an accordion. They used to dance amongst themselves. You'd see the four couples getting up, all men, and dancing a square dance, someone calling off.

(Did you ever play for one of their dances?)

Oh, no. We had the fiddles up there. My brother and I used to play once in a while, but no, we never did.

(You didn't go over to their camp?)

No. I used to peek through and see them sometimes. We never went over and watched them dancing, but heard them -- they were rather noisy, you know.

(Did they dance inside their cabin?)

Yes.

(It must have been a very large cabin.)

It was a large cabin. That big box stove must have taken up about a quarter of it, and bunks on either side, but the front part of it, it must have been eight by ten, and they could dance a square dance in there nicely.

(What songs did they sing in the camp?)

Oh my, I wish I had thought about that because I did know. Oh, "Mary Across the Wild Moor" was one.

(I haven't heard that one.)

No, I guess you haven't. I think your mother hasn't heard it either.

(Is it Irish?)

Well, "Mary Across the Wild Moor", no, that was a poor girl who had gone astray and she'd been left with her baby and she came back home, and tried and tried to get in. "Her father was deaf to her cries. Not a sound of her voice reached his ear." That's two lines. I can't remember -- but anyway in the morning when he got up Mary lay dead with her babe in her arms. All the old songs were sad. Every old song -- "The Flying Cloud", that was a song about piracy. All the songs that they sang, you know, all had a real story and it was always a sad story, and "Johnny German", that was another one. Johnny German left his sweetheart and went away somewhere, perhaps to war, I don't remember now. Anyway when he came back, she upbraided him for being so cruel and he said that he had never forgotten her and he'd always loved her so everything was all right after awhile but all the songs, everyone told a story and finished the story too. Sometimes I think there are a good many things on the radio that are never finished. But those songs were always finished. I wish I had thought about it because there were dozens of those old songs, and of course everybody those days at home always sang them.

(They sang some of the same ones?)

The same ones. And there were very good voices in there too. My brother had a nice voice. Instead of staying in our camp with us, father, my sister and I, he would go into the camp with the men folks where they were singing and sing with them. He had a splendid voice. There were good singers and there were dancers that kept nice time, too -- you could hear the rhythm and all in our camp so plainly.

(Did they sing every night, or just once a week?)

They sang about every night. I remember the only time that everybody felt bad in camp. One of the men had gone down somewhere to some other camp or some place and had gotten the measles -- the black measles, mind you. Well, of course, they didn't isolate our camp or the men didn't stop work or anything. My father just hitched up the sled, put blankets in it, then brought this man to his home which was about nine miles up north of here. He had black measles and he passed away. None of the other men got it, whatever it was, and whether he got it from an Indian camp or some place that he'd been visiting, we never knew. I've never heard of any black measles since that.

(Did they have many accidents in camp?)

Ours never did. My father was a very careful man and we never had -- I don't remember ever any kind of an accident in our camp.

(You didn't have much sickness either, then?)

No, they were well, and strong and hearty and it seems to me that, I can't understand now that we had so many men, so many different men in a way, and yet there was no illness, no complaints of any kind. If a man had stomach-

ache, perhaps, from eating too many beans or something, he'd stay in camp a half day, or maybe a whole day, but otherwise no illness, no complaints at all. Just up with the dawn, and daylight in the swamp they were in the woods working.

(As soon as they went out in the woods, you had to wash up all the dishes, I suppose.)

Oh my, we had dishes. Sister had so much cooking to do and my mother too; the two winters I was with her just as soon as they'd be gone we'd wash the dishes, and she'd go to cooking because that hot dinner had to be sent out.

(Did you peel potatoes?)

Oh yes, peel potatoes, and picked over beans and washed rice and got ready to cook and picked over and cut out the little seed part of the dried apples. We were as busy as hornets, and just think of the salt pork we had to slice and soak. We soaked it in warm water so that it wouldn't be so salty. I doubt if they'd ever eat it like they did if it had been so salty. So we had plenty to do and we had our own turnips and our potatoes from the farm.

(Did they freeze in the camp?)

Never. The camp was made so warm that they didn't freeze, ever.

(Did the men like rice?)

Oh, they loved it.

(How did you prepare it?)

We just plain boiled it, is the way they wanted it, and then that was another thing they ate all that heavy dark syrup on. It wasn't as dark as sorghum but it was mighty sweet just like a heavy brown sugar.

(They ate it on the rice?)

That's what they wanted on their rice. I never saw men eat syrup on so many things.

(Somebody told me they ate it on potatoes sometimes.)

I saw them putting vinegar on their potatoes sometimes. They'd mash a potato on their plate and butter it or put some pork gravy on it, then put some vinegar on it, eat it that way, but I don't think I'd like it.

(Kind of like potato salad?)

But more and more syrup. My, I wish I had those old syrup cans. Honestly, I just wish I had one of 'em to look at.

(How big were they?)

They held about a pint apiece. Maybe there'd be three on a table, one at each end, and one in the middle, and of all the syrup that those men did eat. It was good for them I suppose, too, it was plenty sweet and nice. Mother used to put it in gingerbread. She used to make the dark cookies with it and dark cake.

(You had to bring enough of that syrup to last all winter?)

Oh yes, a big keg of it -- a big wooden keg, that's the way we brought it -- had a spigot on the keg and it was easier to handle.

(I suppose it was a kind of a cane syrup, sugar syrup?)

Well, it must have been a cane syrup, but it was thicker and a little darker than the syrup we buy now. We buy that Br'er Rabbit, but that Karo syrup, if it was just a little darker, a little heavier, it'd be just like the old-fashioned syrup that the men loved.

(After you had sent the food out for lunch, did you have a little time off then?)

Well, just not very much. After I had taught Mrs. Foote to use the machine that winter, I used to go up there and she'd show me her beadwork and how to do things. She wouldn't talk. She could talk and she could understand every word you said, but I don't know, she was shy. It's a wonder she ever told me what "ninne-mo-zhay" meant. That meant sweetheart. But, no, they didn't want to talk English. They'd come down to the camp, and they'd sit down. Mother always gave them a basin of tea and cookies or doughnuts or whatever we had just then, and mother would talk to them and so would I and "Uh," was yes and "Uh," shake their head for no, and lots of signs. We got along fine. We visited with them always.

(How did the Indian squaws wear their hair?)

Parted from the center in the front to the center of the back and in two braids. And how they did decorate them. I remember one winter mother had some old red flowers off a hat. Oh, maybe mother didn't, maybe Maggie had them, but anyway they were in camp and "Oh, hm," how nice they thought they were and I gave them the flowers and they bound them in their big long black braids. The Indian men too, that first winter, they wore the long black braids with bright calico or bright strings of some kind, had to be very bright, braided right in their hair, looked very pretty. I know when our school had its first entertainment, they were putting on an Indian powwow. I knew just how to dress them up and you know, I made them caps of a woman's black stockings split up the legs and made big long black braids and braided the red strings and things in. It was just fine, and I had all kinds of peacock feathers those days and I got

chicken feathers, rooster feathers. I was rooming Normal girls and had them bring me feathers from the farm, big long white feathers from their chickens, and I made the chief's headgear, as they called it, and he wore it in the school play. I think my Carol has it now. I knew just how to fix it. And it was beautiful too. White feathers, I had colored all colors.

(Did Big John Foote wear that kind of a headdress?)

Oh yes, at the powwows and the medicine dances and everything, but not every day, not when he'd come down to the camp to buy "kokush" or something, he wouldn't but he had one for their dress-up medicine dances and everything like that, all the ceremonies -- when they put on their regalia. It looked picturesque. I always liked to watch it.

(Did the Indians sing songs?)

Well, no, it was a kind of a chant, just a chant, and how plainly we could hear them, just as if they were down at our camp from their village way up on the side hill from us.

(Was there any name for the Indian village?)

No. There used to be a name up north of here -- near Rush City. I suppose you know all about it perhaps, up on the St. Croix, on the Minnesota side. They called it Chengwatana. I spoke of it in my little booklet too, because that has gone now, and the mission, of course, that they had in the old days, that's a thing of the past. I think there aren't a half a dozen people who remember about it at all.

(You're probably right. I was thinking also about the singing. Did they sing in the camp any songs about the Swedes, or the Germans or the other nationality groups?)

No, not in those days. I think they did later. I think when the men were building Nevers Dam, twelve miles above here, I think they did. It was all funny songs, German, or Swede or whatever, or Irish. You know, the Swedish people used to be very much hurt when you'd say anything funny that they had done or said or repeat anything they'd done or said that was funny. They didn't like it one bit. But you just give the Irish all you wanted to and you could make all the fun of them you wanted to and tell everything about an Irishman and the Irish didn't care at all. I know we had a lot of Irish in Stillwater and around here, also.

(You had Irishmen in your camp?)

Oh yes, we had all kinds. We had a Swede one winter they called Cul Story. His name was Charlie Story and every man in camp called him Cul Story;

I suppose they were shortening Carl to Cul. Every once in a while they coaxed and coaxed Cul Story to sing a Swedish song. "You'll just make fun of it. I won't do it," but you just ask Jim Carrigan or any pure Irishman and he'd sing an Irish song for you and you could laugh all you wanted to. They didn't care, but that's true of the different nationalities.

(Can you think of any special Irish song they liked?)

Well, I don't know the name of one, but I know one Jim used to sing. I know just how it started out, but I can't carry it on.

(Well, start it out!)

Sounds terrible I suppose:

"As I was awalking one morning in May,  
I met a pretty female, and this I did say."

and so on, and that was the tune and about the meter.

(You don't remember what happened to the female?)

Oh, he got her.

(Oh, of course!)

He got her, of course. There never was an unfinished song those days. Everything was lovely at the end.

(I heard about a song the other night, of a raffle. Did you ever hear one about a raffle?)

"The Irish Raffle." Well, I've heard it, I surely have. I can't recall it just now.

(Someone was telling it to me, but he couldn't remember all of it either. I was hoping you might. Something about a raffle for the benefit of a woman and her children. They had a dance and they danced all night, and they had a fight.)

Sure. Wouldn't be Irish if they didn't have a fight. Then after the fight they'd probably go home arm in arm.

(Did they have any fights in the camp?)

Never a single fight in my father's camp. Father wouldn't stand for anything like that. And it seemed to me that they, all of them, in the three winters, that they were all real -- maybe they knew the women folks could hear, or it



might have been so many of them were our own relatives, too -- we never had a fight or disagreement and not a blow was struck, I'll say that. But my father was a peaceful man and he wouldn't keep a man that had any bad temper and was likely to do anything.

(Do you remember how much the men earned in the winter?)

Oh yes. Fifteen dollars a month. The cutters (I was going to tell you about it) -- the cutters with their sharp axes would go out, the first ones to start. They'd cut a big notch in the bottom of the tree on one side and then the sawyers would take over on the other side they'd saw and when they got to that cut of course the tree would fall whichever way the cut was. That's the cutters and the sawyers. Then they had trimmers. They had to go to every tree and trim off every branch and then the markers that put the mark on the logs. It had to be cut through the bark and into the logs of course. If the bark came off that mark would be on the log itself. And what else I thought about the other day? Oh yes, then these logs were loaded on what they called "scoots" -- low small sleds, stout sleds that they could roll those logs up on scoots to take them down and pile them on the landing, and the teamsters, of course. I mentioned the trimmers and the markers. The landings were made on the ice of the river. I was just thinking the other day -- my father never went up river in the spring to see about those logs or anything. They must have floated from the -- oh, there were so many, many small rivers and creeks and brooks, as they called them -- Chases Brook, and Toad Brook and so many small rivers up there that they logged on. You know, we had such deep snows every winter, every winter never fail, and in the spring the freshet would take those logs out and they'd go into the St. Croix from every one of these rivers and brooks into the St. Croix River, then on to Stillwater. But I was just wondering the other day and I wanted to ask my brother and I forgot. If the river drivers went farther than the St. Croix River? I don't believe they did. I don't believe they worked on any of those small streams but everyone of those small streams were logged on.

\*(I have remembered, the men did drive all the small rivers and streams. I remembered a song the river drivers, "red shirts" they were called, sang:

"Oh, I worked for Dunn and Crotty  
Upon the Sand Creek drive  
Where the mosquitoes were big as humming birds  
And nearly eat us men alive, etc.")

( No one from the camp stayed there?)

No one from the camp, \*(but men went up on the creeks and small streams and rivers and "drove" the logs into the St. Croix River.)

(How many teams did you take up?)

Well, the first winters we had two ox teams and a four horse team. I don't know why we wanted that. It seems to me they only used that four horse team to haul us up to camp and back from camp, but then they singled them out, you know, used them in the woods to haul the scoots and to get the logs down to the river and then they were stacked and piled, with peaveys, and that's what they called those things that they pushed the logs up to the top of each load.

(Did you take all the equipment up on sleds?)

We took them up mostly on wagons. We went up the first of November. The latest we ever went was the fifteenth of November and that winter we waited for heavy snow. Then we went on sleds and we perhaps <sup>from home</sup> had one, two, three, four or five -- because we took loads of hay and loads of feed and paraphernalia for our camp and for the men's camp and the big wanigan boxes, 6 x 8 x 8 size. We must have had them, I don't remember but two ox teams, but I can't remember how many horse teams. We must have had three or four, maybe more. My father's nice big fat horses! Horses from the farm, of course. He was easy on his horses and then the other men, the neighbors or our relatives that were farmers around us, they always had their teams too. So they had to build a place for the oxen. They never had the oxen in with the horses, you know. The horses had a nice big clean -- I said "Twas just as nice as our camp." That was for the horses. Then they had a nice big leanto for the oxen built onto the side of the horses' barn. That was all made of big logs. They'd hack a place in each end, then they'd let the next log fit into that, and outside on every corner were these notched logs sticking out, maybe ten or twelve inches. And I just loved to see it! I wondered when I was out at Delta looking at the log houses and camps that were out there and they said they had a log village and the houses in all the village were made of logs like they used to have them and in that whole village there were just a few who had the notched logs and the end of the logs sticking out like that on every corner. That was the beauty of it to me.

(There's a little old house still standing at Marine, isn't there, with logs, made that way?)

Yes, that's the way they used to have them.

(Did the Indians live in round wigwams?)

Oh yes, they lived in wigwams. John Foote had a kind of a log house that they put up, small logs, you know. It wasn't built like a camp would be, but whenever the logs were cut in any place and camps left, some of the Indians always would move into the camps. They did that a great deal.

(Oh, you mean when the camp was left?)

Yes, the camps, of course, were all left there. Just think of it! I'd like to see them now after all these years. You see, I'm 83 and my last winter at camp was 68 years ago.

(There weren't many children who went up to camp, were there?)

Oh no.

(Yours was quite an unusual experience.)

Mine was very unusual. The older sister who was going to stay with Rachel became ill and had to go back home. It was her first baby and she stayed about three or four weeks and couldn't stay any longer. She went home and her baby was born prematurely, seven months' baby. Father wouldn't leave my sister Rachel up there alone although she was eighteen years old then so mother said, "Let Maggie go up and stay with her." So that was the winter I was on Tamarack. For eight years after I was married I had no children. I either taught school or dressmade or worked in the department stores. My husband worked; he was a carpenter and stone mason.

(Then you had three children?)

Yes, then when I got to be over thirty years old, I thought if I'm ever going to have children I should have one now and I'd been told by a doctor in Minneapolis that I couldn't have a child, that I shouldn't or couldn't. I'd had an operation for gallstones. But I made up my mind -- well, my mother had thirteen. She had eight daughters and five sons and I was the eighth daughter, I was the twelfth child, and I made up my mind if my mother could have thirteen, I was going to risk it and have one. I just hoped all the time that baby was coming it was going to be a boy and going to be just like his dad because his dad was so used not to having children that I didn't know whether we were going to get along nicely with the baby, but, oh dear, when he came and he was a curly red-headed Irishman, why his father just went crazy about him and spoiled him entirely.

(Is he the one who lives down at Eau Claire?)

Yes.

(Is he still red-headed?)

Oh yes, his hair is just as thick as ever and I tell him it's curlier, and you know, he used to feel badly about having that curly hair because there were so few boys in high school here that had curly hair, and he used to put water on it and straighten it out and then he'd take one of my socks and pull the leg and try his best to wear plain hair. Might as well have a nigger try because that would be just in a fuzz again. Then I had a daughter about three years later and she had red hair and then my sister was living with me, one of my older sisters. She said, "Well, I hope this time, Maggie, now those are both O'Neill babies, they're both Charlie's, I hope this time you can have one look a little bit like yourself or like our folks." Sure enough, when the third one came, the one that lives at Lindstrom now, she did look like our folks, with color of our folks, and had hair like our people.

(But your hair was red.)

Yes, indeed it was, and my father's hair was so red and curly. It was just beautiful when I first remember it. Mother had black hair and my father had curly red hair.

(How many years did your father go to the woods?)

Oh, my goodness, he began when I was a baby. And he went to the woods until 1889. I think that was the last winter. Now you can see that was a long time. It was '72, oh, he was in the woods before that too. He was in the woods before I was born.