Chapter 7, continued: Oral History and Narratives of Migration

by Deborah L. Rotman

Johnny Runberg
Tuesday, July 20, 2010
1:30-3:00 pm
His home on King's Highway

Conversation Summary: Johnny Runberg, the president of the Beaver Island Historical Society and a native of the island, welcomed Rhiannon Duke and Kasia Ahern into the McCann House, his home on the King's Highway (Figure 7.5). The sound recording is not great quality due to passing cars and other disturbances. Nevertheless, Johnny shared many wonderful stories with us. A transcription of our conversation is reproduced here with his permission.

(0:00) RD: "Something that came up today, we were wondering about electricity on the island, when that first came and even how it works now. Where does it come from?"

JR: "Well initially, it came to the island in the form of a stationary generator down in the harbor. And that was 1939. And if you, have you observed, you probably wouldn't have because it's not very long. St. James Marine is down on the harbor, you'll see barges, tugs, different vessels, at a dock. And then just beyond them, toward that end of the harbor, they're starting to work the ground up on what used to be the site of the old generator plant. And Great Lakes Energy, the electric company that has a cable over here now, has had for many years, are going to allow us to turn that into a Veterans memorial park. And so the guys have started on that. I don't know how far along it is. So that's where the generator was. It was two diesel, Caterpillar diesels, of fair size. And a local man, Jewell Gillespie, started, or he was the first island-based man that maintained the system—kept the generator running.

"Then some year, I can't tell you when the first cable was brought across, but periodically that cable would get damaged or break and that have to grapple and find a diver to go down and find it. And they would pull it up to the surface and they'd do a watertight splice with the power turned off on the mainland. And after that was done, we'd have power again. So that went on for some time.

Figure 7.5. Johnny Runberg in his home on Beaver Island. Photograph taken by Rhiannon Duke. Used by permission.

"Finally, they could, in the case of the cable breaking, run that old generator and they updated it a couple of times. So now, if you go to the Four corners—where the gas station is—to your left there's a generator. It's a 2000 kilowatts I think. That doesn't sound right, but, it's at least 2000 kilowatts per hour. And they run that occasionally to make sure it works. But the big cable coming across now […] is advanced, three-phase 440 voltage and it supplies the entire island easily. Unless the cable blows, in which case they can run the generator full time. Because that old one couldn't handle the summer influx of people who have cottages. "We go from 550 [year round] to somewhere between two and three thousand [in the summer] on a given weekend with all the cottages that ring the island. The old generator couldn't begin to handle that need for electricity, but this new one can.

(3:50) JR: "Back when there was no electricity, battery-powered tools weren't invented or available, so anybody that had the old-fashioned bit and brace, that you turned the handle with the drill on the other end, would come and drill holes all in your walls and run the wires and farmers became electricians. And I know the man who wired this house; he's about 90 years old now. He was a boat captain. Lawrence McDonough is his name."

Johnny then told us how his wife, Joyce, had started the Hospice on Beaver Island about 15 years ago. It is called Beaver Island Hospice and Helping Hands and it is in affiliation with the Munson Hospice in Traverse City. He explained that it addresses a great need in such an isolated community. Johnny then segued into a discussion of the health care on the island and told us a story of the medical center's once
(6:05) JR: "Crude means of dealing with people's medical needs. We saw a young man, broke his leg and he was laying in a patch of poison ivy down here [on King's highway?] a few hundred feet. We'd come up from the beach from a family gathering and anyway, Danny McCafferty broke his leg and he was lying in a patch of poison ivy […] that was very deep. Of course we all got poison ivy from it. They put him in a station wagon and they had an interior door, a wooden door, and they put him on the wooden door, carried it like a stretcher, put him in the station wagon, took him to the old medical center where they had a retired doctor, who was now our medical care, care for him. And it was not his bag to take care of emergencies. No one had paramedics or EMTs. Joyce and I became EMTs back in '85 but we resigned after about a dozen years.

"But we have about four paramedics now so when you see the ambulance, that one SUV emergency vehicle, they're well-trained. Far more than we were. We were basic EMTs".

(7:49) RD: "We were also wondering about, do you know…What kind of knowledge do you have about the house that we're excavating?"

JR: "Well I only knew the most recent resident, Peter 'Doney,' but his father and mother and siblings, his brother, I knew Peter and Lester. Let's see, who was the third one? Patsy, yeah, they called him Patsy. Patrick was his name. So there were three sons. And they did sustenance farming, I don't know to what extent. I lived among the fishermen down here [by the Harbor] with my grandfather and a couple of uncles. And south of town, you know, where the farms started, you could see the old farm fields, and there was logging going on simultaneously. So there was a three-fold economy and during the Depression years, they said the money just went around and around. But that's all I knew. Lester moved off the island. Patsy did. But they'd all come back for the summer. And the most recent one who lived there, Peter, he lived in around Lapeer, Michigan, which is near Flint—east of Flint as if you're going to Port Huron.

"They told a funny story. Well, Patsy, in the Depression years, the emergency aid was called 'relief.' And they would count heads and depending on how many people were there in the family that needed help, they would give the emergency aid, primarily food. And the father died and in the wintertime, they didn't have the heavy equipment to dig a grave, so they put him, the story goes, in the root cellar, which is where they kept

their perishables. And they must have dug a deeper hole to put him in, you can only imagine. But Patsy, Patrick, had kind of a battered face […] so they put him in bed and pretended he was his father to count him. So that's a Beaver Island story.

(10:56) JR: "When Beaver Islanders get in a group and they get recalling old stories, things like that come up. I've heard many tales from my mother, who had a marvelous memory. She would even do the old dialect as if she were there even though she wasn't.

"But the farm sat there. And Peter, in retirement, was the last one who would come up here. I knew him fairly well […] Then he died and his widow continued to come up here and I know they have children, but if I met them it was 30 years ago. You know, they made a deal with the Traverse Conservancy to acquire the property, and they could have the home 'til they both were deceased…

Johnny then discussed how the Historical Society has acquired the house and is in the process of deciding whether or not to move it to the Heritage Park across from the Community Library. Since the siding has been confirmed to be asphalt and not asbestos, Johnny said that the Historical Society will most likely undertake the project. Of course, as he mentioned, it all depends on the resources and funds available. They may be applying for grants.

(18:38) KA: "We have another question, out of curiosity. Do you know when that Transfer Station came in on the island?"

JR: "Probably in the early (19)90s. But if you want a precise answer, the man, Doug Bugai, who's the head of it now, is on duty there six days a week. He could give you a precise answer.

Johnny told us that a woman named E.B. (Ethel B.) Lang would be another good person to speak with about the transfer station if we were interested. She played a large role in its establishment on the island and she also managed it during its first years.

(20:24) RD: "You mentioned earlier that your mother had, she told lots of stories. Do you, do any pop to mind, that you could tell us? Any good stories from the island?"

JR: "Well she told stories about the family and some families would be offended but I wrote an essay in Volume 3 of the Beaver Island Journals about one of my uncles. And his friend, who passed away last year, said 'I wish you hadn't told that story about Emmett.' But she would tell tales that she recollected. For example, she knew where our great-grandparents on the Martin side…she and my grandfather who lived here was a McCann and his wife was Grace Martin. And her [Grace's] parents were buried in the Catholic cemetery with a flat stone that just said 'Father and Mother.' And the Martins up here didn't know where their grandparents were buried, but she [Johnny's mother] remembered.

"She could tell about this house. It was built in [19]'02 but I don't think they occupied it until the next year. And the family lived around the harbor. A fire occurred so they moved into it [the McCann house] very quickly. And the woodwork wasn't up and many things weren't finished. And so, let's see, James was probably three. There were eight children in the family here. But there were four bedrooms. So by the time the youngest ones were born, I believe the older ones were off on their careers and lifestyle.
"So she would tell, and told me, many stories and the great-grandfather, James, who had the general store where the Community Center is today. I just learned down at the Museum by microfilm copy that Joyce Bartel made […] and it named my great-grandfather, James. And I never knew his middle initial. It's 'C.' So I just learned that last week."

RD: "And what's his last name, sorry?"

JR: "McCann. In the 1860 census that she had, that's where I got this information, he and his family were living on Whiskey Island. Now that's very remote. But there was no electricity on any of the islands so you could live on anywhere that you had a big enough spot to have a house and a dock. But it was surprising that there were five or six members of that family living there. I had pictured that he and one of his brothers lived and fished from there but it was not so. The whole six or eight people were living there […] But he came here. He had a trading post around the harbor that he bough from a man named James Dormer who was from Buffalo, New York, and had vessels and trading posts all up the Great Lakes. And the vessels would go from Buffalo to the various—Cleveland, Detroit, maybe Alpena, around the Straits. They would stop at Beaver Island and other places and ultimately go to Chicago. And passengers, freight, products to be sold in the stores, traveled back and forth. And it was quite a lifeline for people on these islands. And as well as the smaller cities around the Great Lakes. But that was, 1800s."

(27:30) JR: "But, in a community like this, which was largely Irish Catholic in my mother's time and even my great-grandfather's. The Catholic priest had a moderate amount of control, unlike today. We now have three churches. But when reckoning time came in the spring, the pastor would read off the names of the people and how much they contributed for the year, that was crunch time. And according to a tale she told, Father Zugelder it might have been, he was reading it off, and the grandfather's name was read. They had moved here from Mackinaw Island, the whole family, and I just told you they had lived on Whiskey Island, but they came from Mackinaw, where they had settled when they came from Ireland. And he read off, 'James McCann," and his contributions must not have been up to standard, 'the Mackinaw Jew.' And my mother told me this. I didn't put that in the essays. That's pretty blunt.

"And I think the Irish who came here, many came through Montreal. They came here and found these great fishing waters as they came in from, not just from Mackinaw but from other places. And they'd write back to Ireland and say, 'there's wonderful fishing and there's farmland. You can get land.' So they came in great numbers. According to history, it's not legend, it's basically truth from a lady named Helen Collar […] She told that there were 17 families with the Gallagher surname that could not trace common ancestry. So they came from all parts of Ireland and all parts of Canada, the US, and maybe some of the generations that came over didn't have any information on their own ancestors more than one or two generations back, so they couldn't make those common thread connections.

"And they got nicknames […] The Gallagher family, the patriarch, the father or grandfather who had sailed on the ocean, they'd call them the 'Salties.' And in a fallen down cottage on the King's Highway was where the 'Salties' lived. It's down by, just before Sloptown Road on your left is this cottage in terrible disrepair. That's where they lived. I think there was someone who sailed in the far Pacific and I know they were called the 'Philippines'—the 'Philippine' Gallaghers. Oh and a man who came here from New York—his home was down the street, the third house this way from the school—the 'Bowerys.' (sp?) They called the whole family the 'Bowries.' And everybody knew the 'Bowry' Gallaghers. So that's the kinda way that you could keep people sorted out. There was a Phil Green. He was a big tall man and they named his son Phil and he was just a little guy. Eventually the son grew bigger than the man. First it was 'Big Phil' and 'Little Phil' and when the son grew bigger than the dad it was "Big Little Phil' and 'Little Big Phil.' That's how silly it got. But you still knew who they meant. So that's how you sorted them out. They didn't all come from the same place."

(33:00) KA: "Were there a lot of different McCann families?"

JR: "Well in the Catholic cemetery, there's a young boy of, between 10 and 11, whose tombstone is there, and he's not related to my family. But they moved away later and he married a Rose Connaghan, who probably wasn't related to these [Beaver Island] Connaghans. The people who knew, who are long since dead, told me who they were, where they moved. But the ones who came here would be my great-grandfather and he had two sons, John and Michael. John lived here and Michael ran the general store where the Community Center is. And he passed away around 1939. I've got reams of genealogy of the McCanns

and my own family, the Runbergs. And the Martins. The next Beaver Island Journal is on those early families that were here. And a cousin, on the Martin side, who was gonna write the Martin essay, he passed away. So I've got two to write. […]

"But if they were on Whiskey Island in the 1860 census, I know that by 1897 my great-grandfather had built the store where the Community Center stands. Two-story building like it is now. He lived upstairs and his son, Mike, lived next door here [McCann House]. And when my great-grandmother died, he [great-grandfather] would not move up here with them. They moved down there with him, up over the store. By then, some of those children were grown up and gone. Lightning struck the house next door and burned it. If there was a Fire Department, it would've had to have been pretty inept. So, but my grandparents lived here. First he died and then she died in 1946.

"Then the house here was pretty much unoccupied, except when we came up on summer vacations. My uncle, who was a DNR officer here on the island, his name was James, named for my great-grandfather, he lived here most of the time. And he started the Beachcomber tavern. And they drafted him, I think 1942. I have a picture of that […] so anyway, James, 38 years old with a wife and child, was drafted. By mistake. He was James E. McCann. Many of the people up here called the children by their middle names. He had a first cousin, James O. 'Omer' was what we called him. And that was the family that lived next door and his father ran the general store. He lived in Petoskey at the time. So they meant to get Omer. By the time James had been through basic training, he was out on the east coast—Florida, Texas, finally California. And he said that the desert maneuvers out there in southern California nearly killed him. Wasn't used to the heat and humidity. And they found the mistake and they let him off. But they had given his job to a handicapped man who had his arm off at the elbow, Keebler, for whom that Keebler Trail on the west side is named. It goes from Protar's Tomb all the way to Donegal Bay. They said, 'no, you have take your job back.' So he worked in a factory and a furniture plant in Kenosha, Wisconsin. And he came up here and he bought the old building next to the Community Center. It was up on big pine posts and he put a foundation under it. It took five years for the floor that was rippled to settle reasonably straight and he built the bar himself and opened a tavern. And he ran that 'til he passed away. And he wasn't a drinker. Cigarettes and coffee and conversation was his forte. He was like a second father to me when my dad was sailing on the Great Lakes […]

"But of the six boys that my grandparents had, some were sailors, two were boat builders—they never fished, they always built boats. The girls, there were only two. There was Catherine, and after her husband passed, she lived in the house across the street and my mother lived here. Diverse personalities. One was a night owl and one was early to bed. They couldn't exist under the same roof but they got together every day for lunch and dinner.

(40:00) RD: "What were women's lives like on the island? Your mother and her sister…"

JR: "Well, my aunt left at an early age and ended up working in Lansing for the State government. My mother left, despite the opposition of her father—the father ruled the family—and he was going to go to Charlevoix where she was working as a dental assistant. And she had message sent back to him that if he came over, he was wasting the fuel. She was not gonna come back. And she did not.

"But the women worked extremely hard. They had big families—big, Irish families. The uncle that ran the general store, Mike McCann, his wife was Annie. She would get her laundry out early on the line and my grandmother who lived there they were both trying to see who could get it out first. So, as the story goes—many things I say I have to appendage with 'as the story goes'—my grandmother put her laundry out wet Sunday night so she'd have it out before Aunt Annie Monday morning.

"The medical care was pretty scarce. A lot of gals in labor, they died, due to lack of medical care. There were midwives. There were doctors periodically. There was a doctor, he was Canadian, Dr. Palmer, Russell Palmer. He lived next to the little branch bank that we have in town […] His wife Sue, she was a nurse. And

she would have recitals, teach the young women manners, graces, things like that. But the one that was not drafted, when my uncle was, James Omer McCann, had appendicitis. And Dr. Palmer operated on him on a kitchen table. And you can imagine the lack of sterile technique. And he survived to live a good long life. Omer was later the President of the Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn. He was an accountant by his education. And he would come up here every summer and stay at one of those places down below the hill.

Johnny then described James Omer's brother, John Giles (?) and his military career in the Air Force throughout WWII. He remained in the service up through Vietnam. He served in three wars by the time he retired.

Johnny also mentioned how many young men from the island enlisted during World War II. A man on the board of the Historical Society has committed to memory the names of every person to serve in the military from the Civil War up through Vietnam.

(45:59) Johnny explained how the current priest at Holy Cross, Father Cauley, went to seminary at Notre Dame. Before he became a priest, however, he was a businessman and as such, according to Johnny, he has a different outlook from most other priests. He calls the bishops 'the red hats' because he does not like how they run things. Beaver Island is in the Diocese of Gaylord. Johnny told us that he has "gained a great deal of respect for the clergy through him, because of him."

(48:08) KA: "You mentioned that your grandparents were boat builders. Do you know anything about what their lives were like?"

JR: "Yes, they built boats here […] One of those pictures shows Ulysses, the designer of the boats in a Ford (?) inward motorboat. Looks like it was about 24 feet long. He was racing across the harbor at an incredible speed. That was Ulysses—he was in boats from the time that he was a kid. So one day my grandfather was standing on McCann dock downtown […] and he had his fish tug there. When I say 'tug,' they were coal burners. They had steam engines. They didn't have gasoline engines. My grandfather saw a boat racing across the harbor. It wasn't the one I have a picture of, it was one they built. And he said, 'Whose boat is that? Who's in that boat?' And they said, 'Well, that's your son.' Around the harbor, as far as you can go to what we call 'Kate's (?) Point,' is where they built the boat—Emmett and Ulysses. Never knew they got the lumber, screws, everything they needed to build it. And they put an engine in it. And that's the first [their father] knew of it. They were already off on their career. I think Ulysses was 18 when he started and he was only 47 when he died. But he was the designer.

"And I have an old lesson in marine math that he took from ITT correspondence courses. And that's where he learned his marine math used in designing boats. It shows you the score and the grade you got, so I treasure all that stuff.

"Then, later on, he built a couple of cargo boats. They were both about 64 feet long. The first one was called *The Idler* (?). It was a cargo boat but the design…It had a small cabin aft, a lower, forward deck that was quite long and a boom, just forward of the cabin, to raise, offload or load cargo. And they would haul anything you wanted hauled. When they built that first boat, they would put it down in Benton Harbor, St. Joe, and they would haul produce up to the north end of the lake. And it would be there…It was grown in the Benton Harbor area or at one end, say Illinois, Indiana, where the crops are harvested much sooner. *The Idler* (?) was on a trip from Charlevoix…They had a hired hand so it was a crew of three. And the boiler safety stuck in the _____ and the boat burned. And my grandfather, he was a very wise man, and he figured that by nine o'clock they weren't in port, something was wrong. No radios. No radar. No communications. Absolutely had no way of getting in touch with them. The course from Charlevoix to Beaver Island is a well-traveled course […] In the summertime it doesn't get dark until ten o'clock and even then it's not total

blackness. And [my grandfather] found them, clinging to the burnt pieces of the boat, unhurt, and he brought them home.

"So the next boat he built was called *The Seahawk* (?). Same sized boat and from my drawings that I have of his original sketches […] the only difference is that *The Idler* had a curved stern and *The Seahawk* had a squared-off stern. Other than that the boats were identical. And it must've had a good safety in the boiler because they never blew that one up."

Johnny spoke for a moment about sailing vessels on the Great Lakes and how so many have been lost in storms. Those that could not get to islands like Beaver were torn apart and lost due to the lack in communication capability. He mentioned that there are many books on the subject at the Beaver Island Marine Museum. These books document larger boats, like freighters, that went down.

(55:40) JR: "The big storms tend to come in April and November. Those are the worst months. There was a big storm in 1940 that hit Lake Michigan. The _____ was called *The Mary Margaret* and it was short, top-heavy and underpowered, but it had a full load of fuel. And it went around the harbor all night, which was a short trip. They couldn't tie it up at the pier because it would smash against it and would've torn the pier up. My uncle R_____ did the same thing with his fish tug and in the morning, Art Larsen, a Scandinavian fisherman, his boat was high and dry in my uncle's backyard. And it took two or three boats to pull it out. "The life of commercial fishing on the Great Lakes is pretty hazardous. Even some of the big freighters […] the famous one in your lifetime, *The Fitzgerald*, that went down in Superior. She was probably 700 feet long. It's pretty impressive.

"But Ulysses and Emmett probably built between 25 and 35 boats […] If you were in Charlevoix and you wanted a boat built, they would build it there so you could watch the day-to-day progress. Prod them along.

"There was a Cross Fishery in Charlevoix and there used to be a boat tied up at the dock there, long after Johnny Cross could no longer sail or fish. But he had a fish market and it was his boat that was the last boat that my uncles built and I think that was 1937. They built one for one brother, who was older. And they built him a huge speedboat, which he sold. So we called him the 'boat broker' because he bought the boat his brothers built and sold it for a profit.

"Wooden boats have a life of 35 to 40 years at most. A lot of boat builders who built their own. My uncles were just two who built boats. There was Smokey (?) down at the lumber mill. In my lifetime there might have been half a dozen boats that were Indian, part-Indian fishermen/boat builders on Garden Island who later moved to the Upper Peninsula. They built many boats. So if you were a decent carpenter and could build something that wouldn't sink, you were a boat builder.

(59:34) RD: "This isn't related to boat building necessarily but what do you know about different traditions on the island that were maintained that were distinctly Irish. Like any sort of folklore or music or anything like that?"

JR: "Well you'll hear this tale if you talk to enough people. They would have house parties. And in the museum we had a book and CD called *The House Party*. And there was a gal […], she had a grant and she did this project. And it described how people would go to a house that had enough room, they'd roll up the rug, shove it to the wall and the local musicians would come in and they would have a dance. Shove all the furniture wherever they could and dance 'til dawn."

Johnny spoke of a famous violinist on the island and how they have remastered copies of his work with much better sound quality than the originals.

JR: "His father I knew well […] and he sent me three copies of, the violinist that I speak of, of his music. And they were just fantastic because they were cleaned up so much and the sound was much better. And Pat [Bonner?], who died at quite an advanced age, he lived down at the extension of SlopTown Road, just before […] the Protar House. A hundred feet before you get to the Protar House there's a white house on the left. There's someone living there, it's a wreck now, but that was Patrick's house. And he was friends with Protar. And Pat played all these old fiddle tunes that are legendary for people that like fiddle music. Sometimes there's, in recent years since the Community Center was built, they've had programs there with five different fiddlers from off-island and on-island.

Our conversation was interrupted by the phone ring, which led Johnny to speak for a while about cell phone service on the island. By way of various discussions we got on the subject of manufacturing and inventions. (1:11:22) RD: "Are there any sort of Beaver Island inventions that you know of?"

JR: "Moonshine. My mother told me that as a girl, walking up through between the road and the water, taking a short cut, and they came upon a still. And the guys were pretty rough characters and she and her friends just kind of skirted around them and the men made believe they didn't see them. And I knew sons of one of those men.
"But the boat building itself was not an invention because boats were built thousands of years ago. There's a story of a vessel made for the King of Sweden, in his honor. And it was huge, decorative, great craftsmanship. And they launched it. And the boat builders were not engineer-minded people so the boat went out into the water and sunk. So they raised it within the last 20 years, I saw it on National Geographic I think, and as soon as you bring a vessel up like that that's been down there for hundreds of years, the wood starts to deteriorate immediately. So they soaked it in an enormous, maybe they had a way to bring it into a dry dock and then flood it, and they put […] some liquid, like an alcohol or whatever, and that stops the deterioration…"

Johnny mentioned a professor of agriculture at OSU, John Garish, who has a cabin on Beaver Island. Johnny was impressed by a horse-drawn wheat-cutting implement that the professor outlined in his book. The time and location of said invention was not discussed in our conversation.

(1:15:38) JR: "The men up here, the commercial fishermen, with the gill nets, used lead weights […] with a slit in them. Heavy twine fit down in the groove and you had to pinch them shut. And they had another tool that split them apart when they wanted to get them apart. So they handmade a lot of tools and gadgets to work with…"

(1:19:09) RD: "We have just one more question. How do you feel that your generation or your parents' generation or their parent's generation has felt that sense of Irish identity? Do you feel like it's gotten weaker as the generations have gone on?"

JR: "Oh sure, because it was an almost 100% Irish community. But the children would move away, marry different races. I always say my Irish mother met a Swede from Minnesota and Florida. So we're half Swedish. I have two adopted children. They identify […] with our identity but truly they're not. Only our oldest daughter who was here for the weekend is our natural child.

"Yeah, it certainly weakens. It weeds (?) the gene pool and that's a good thing. You wouldn't want, not so much intermarrying but it would be such a closed society not marrying people not from here. It would be an unhealthy situation. It'd be one of those goofy movies you see with some sect that controls people.

"Bless those nuns that came and taught us. You know that the public school here was taught by Catholic nuns. That would be a 'no-no' on the mainland but they were here for 92 years. And the community could not afford lay teachers and the bishop at that time sent the Dominican sisters up here. And one family had four siblings become Dominican sisters. I had a first cousin who became a Dominican father. So I'm proud

of that, that the sisters had the influence. And they were tough. The old McKinley school, at the site of the first school, it was two stories, just a big box school, nothing complicated about the design. And one of the coastguard families, we had a coastguard station, seven or eight men, one of the families, one the siblings, the oldest one probably, no, *two* of those girls were Dominican sisters. One of them taught here when I was in the fourth, probably fifth grade. And the blackboard was behind her, kids would be talking and not paying attention, and she would reach towards the board to get an eraser. And she was a tall, fairly solid gal, not stout but just muscular, and she would let fly. She wouldn't necessarily hit the offender but she'd get somebody. She'd surely get their attention.
"So, yeah, I think the identities change but you know, in the summertime particularly, well we're here, at least once a month someone is buried here who was raised here. Now that's a strong testimony to the feelings they have. And when a tragedy strikes […] we all feel it, we all empathize.

Johnny mentioned that all three churches on the island have pitched in to help support the family of a girl who began treatment for a brain tumor about a year ago.

JR: "So the feeling of community is very strong here. It's a good feeling. And even though I didn't live here all my life, to me, this is home. Always will be. But I know there are lots of people who do not have such good memories. [They] do not come back here, did not. One of the neighbor boys, about three houses down from here, moved away and did not come back. So he must've had some bad experiences.
"The economy here during the Depression was probably not as bad here as it was on the mainland because of the commercial fishing and the farming. I think I said to you before that the same money went around the community. Around and around from the lumberers to the farmers to the fishermen and back again…"

(1:26:30) JR: "There was a gal who was born and raised here who married a man who later became a Great Lakes captain. And education didn't really take here, it should've. She refers to people who have had a cottage here for maybe 10 or 20 or 30 years, she says 'them others.' And that's her feeling. But she raised her family in Bay City, like I did.

Johnny explained that he has made some great friends here on the island. He talked about one good friend who recently passed away at the age of 101. This friend played tennis and golf even at an advanced age.

The conversation concluded with a brief discussion of our plans for the rest of the summer and Johnny's explanation of how important it is for the young adults of Beaver Island to get off the island and start their careers. He told us that he encouraged all of his children and grandchildren to get an education and "make the break." He also explained that at one time, many of the "youngsters" would go away to school off-island, only to come back after one semester. There are now $500 scholarships that are awarded to students only after they've completed one year. Johnny said that most kids come back because they were homesick and could not cope with the tremendous change.

(1:33:12) Johnny then told one final story of an island man who "was off the island with his dad and when he came back he said, 'I don't like that other island.' He was talking about just being over to Charlevoix. 'I don't like that other island.'"

Fr. Dan Connaghan
Thursday, July 7, 2011
On the porch of the local historical society

Conversation Summary: Topics included family history, Irish immigration, summers on the Island, class division, Fr. Gallagher, Irish Catholicism, and Mormon history. Fr. Dan is a very knowledgeable local historian.

KA: Alright, so, we'll start off by stating your name?

DC: Ok. This is Dan Connaghan, and today is July seventh, two thousand and eleven. And, I am being interviewed by two nice ladies from Notre Dame, and they are doing a project in relation—in conjunction with Dr. Rotman's archaeological digs on Irish history.

KA: Thank you! So, my first question is when did your family first come to the Island?

DC: In my genealogy, there are three families on my father's side. Daniel and Catherine Boyle were my great-great grandparents. And they arrived on the Island—they were married in Toronto, which was then called Fort York, in eighteen fifty-seven—And they arrived here either in eighteen fifty-seven or eighteen fifty-eight. And there first child was born in eighteen sixty-one here on Beaver Island. Then, one of their daughters married an Anthony Malloy. Now, that is another great-great grandparent, Anthony Malloy. And his wife also came to the Island between the period of eighteen fifty-eight and eighteen fifty-nine. There-abouts.They lived in New York City. And they had immigrated from Árainn Mhór, as the Boyles did, somehow between the early fif—eighteen fifties, after the Great Famine of eighteen forty-six to forty-nine. Now, they stayed in New York City, and had two children in New York City, and then arrived here, as I say, about eighteen fifty-nine, or so. And then preceded to have other children in their family, of which, one of those men married the Boyle, Bridget Boyle, and they produced my grandmother. The third part of the family genealogy was my great-grandfather, Hugh Connaghan, a young bachelor of about twenty or twenty-one, who also came during that same time period with the Boyles. And he was—And that would've been eighteen fifty-seven to eighteen fifty-eight, somewhere in there. And he was a bachelor, and he later started a store, and owned a store on Sand Bay, just above—uh, I forget the road now—below CMU, where CMU is, somewhere along that—that Sand Bay area and there was a store because it catered to people living on that side of the island without having them to come up here. So, the three families were here within two years of the Mormons leaving. The Mormons left in eighteen fifty-six. And, as the decades moved on, more and more families from Árainn Mhór and that west coast of Ireland, particularly Donegal, kept coming and coming. And usually, they knew someone by relation who then told them about the island, and then they kept coming. And that's how it preceded all through the latter part of the nineteenth century. So, those are my three families. So, we go back on my father's side that far.

KA: Wow. Do you know anything about any of the bigger changes, like, from living on Árainn Mhór and then moving over here to Beaver Island? Do you know anything about the adjustments they had to make in, like, social structure, or..?

DC: The very interesting thing from them coming directly from Árainn Mhór to here, and I think this is a point that Dr. Rotman would agree with in terms of Irish communities, there was no integration in American life. They went directly by boat, and of course, they were paid to leave Ireland by the landowners, and the two routes were through New York City and then up the Great Lakes to Beaver Island. Some landed in the coalfields of Pennsylvania, and then later moved to the island. Some stayed in New York City for a year or two or three, and then came up. The other route was through Canada, which was then Fort York, which is now Toronto. They wouldn't have stayed there very long, but some of them might have stayed and continued to live in Canada. But the most part, they came directly from Árainn Mhór to the Island. So, there was no integration in American society. The other thing that's very important is that they all spoke Gaelic. There was no chance for them to learn English until after they got here, and decades later through the integration of the island with some of the traders and French-speaking people who knew English. And then gradually, there was pe—the old people were still speaking Gaelic well into the nineteen-twenties. Some of the older women and men were still speaking Gaelic. Certainly, when they first arrived, they were all speaking Gaelic. So, there was no integration of sitting in a city like Boston, or New York, or Philadelphia, or later Chicago, and then being integrated into the English-speaking community, so I think that's the major, major thing to remember about this transfer directly from Ireland to the Island. So…

KA: Great. Ok. And then, do you know anything about what life was like here on the island for your grandparents at all, or…? Could you talk a little bit about that?

DC: Yes. Um, my grandparents, Catherine Malloy, who married Hugh Connaghan, my grandfather, she was born in eighteen ninety-one and he was born in eighteen eighty-two. Most Irish men were older, by anywhere from six to ten years, than the woman. And, my grandmother at the time was eighteen. And, so, they married and my grandfather was a fisherman, and he started out that way, and he was born down on Sand Bay. As my—as his father, my great-grandfather, Hugh Connaghan, had the store. My grandmother's parents had the first meat market here on Beaver Island, which the building—the original building burned—the second original building was still standing and is now that little gift shop right on the…right up from the post office there.

KA: Oh, ok.

DC: And, he, um, he also owned a hotel in Escanaba, and then they came back here in the eighteen nineties, and then he started the meat market, and then he kinda retired in the nineteen-tens, nineteen-fifteens, or so, and one of his sons, Lawrence Malloy, took over with the meat market, and that was my grandmother's brother. So, you had certain trades that were going on, but primarily, fishing, which was--in this area was probably one of the greatest fishing areas in the world all through the mid-nineteenth into the twentieth century. Then, in 1902, you had the lumber—You always had lumber, various cuttings and so on, and so forth, but then it was organized by a company that came up from, um, around Freesoil, Michigan, just above Muskegon. And, they set up shop here, built docks, and a lumber mill, and then they established a railroad track on the west side where they were able to have camps, and then they'd cult, and treat, and chop alotta the lumber all the way down on the west side of the island. And then---and that lasted until about nineteen-fourteen, nineteen-fifteen. And then that kind of dissipated because they had taken as much as they could. And then the fishing continued, but the lumber continued on too because my grandfather worked in the lumber mill well into the nineteen-forties. They gave up fishing because it was difficult.

KA: Oh, ok.

DC: But, the fishing was a primary source of income and worked for a multitude of families, so, but those—that's in terms of my grandparents. The Boyles were farmers. They continued to farm. They had a farm out on Darkytown Road, which we now call Barney's Lake Road, and they had about a hundred and, oh, I don't know, twenty, thirty acres or so. And, but they also fished. So, and they had enough boys—They had nine children. Six boys and three girls. So, there was enough to help, and, um, the fishing would be in one seasonal situation, and then simultaneously, you'd do farming, so that you had a cash crop, which was fishing, and sustenance was the farming. And cows. (10:00) And you had a few cows and chickens and so on. So, you were able to sustain yourself quite well, you know, that way. And my great gran—great-grandfather Boyle, he, he—in fact, he went back to Ireland a number of times, which meant that he had some cash…

KA: Right.

DC: To get on a boat and back, and so on. And, he owned a boat called the Marianne, and, um, he died in nineteen-nineteen. And, then, my, um, my grandmother's father, he died in nineteen twenty-nine. And, um, Hugh Connaghan, my great-grandfather, died in eighteen ninety-four. He was pretty young. He was only sixty-four when he died. The rest were well into their eighties when they passed away. Alright.

KA: And then, how about your parents? What did they do here?

DC: Well, my father was born in nineteen-eleven above the meat market. He was the second of fourteen children. The first was a girl by the name of Marie. She was born about a year and a half earlier. And, then, he grew up on the island, and moved to Chicago in nineteen twenty-nine at the age of eighteen to find work. Now, nineteen twenty-nine starts the era of the Depression. Roughly nineteen twenty-nine through and including World War II. So, he moved to Chicago. And, my mother was Chicago-born, and she is a—she was of Polish ancestry, born in Chicago. And her parents had come from what was then Prussia. Uh, we don't know when they arrived, but Mother was born in nineteen-oh-nine (1909) in Chicago.

KA: Oh, ok.

DC: So, they married in the thirties, and they, um, worked in Chicago, and had jobs all through the Depression. You could find work, particularly if you knew how to operate a boat. Dad was very good on the water. He spent the rest of his life on the water. And you could always find jobs. There was fishing out of Chicago, of course. And there were other boat situations. In fact, his first job on a boat was Mayor Big Bill Thompson's yacht. He got a job steerin' the boat, or something. Doing something on the boat, steering or something, and it was owned by then Mayor Bill Thompson. So, that's that.

KA: Ok.

DC: And then, after they married, they came up here during the war and after the war, and we lived here in the late forties, from about forty-six to forty-nine, and my father attempted with his brother to reestablish fishing. And, we bought the—the, um, the old farm from the family, and I think his idea with his brother was to again do farming and fishing, but in the late nineteen-forties the fishing industry collapsed. By nineteen forty-nine, particularly the whitefish. The eel had come in through the Great—the St. Lawrence Seaway, and had decimated the whitefish. And by nineteen forty-nine, the fishing industry in the upper Great Lakes here collapsed, primarily because of the whitefish. So, Dad, um, we went to Indiana and then on down back to Chicago. And I grew up in Chicago from then on, but we spent our summers here, all through the nineteen fifties into the mid nineteen sixties when I finished college and then I decided not to come up anymore.

KA: Ok. And now you're back. (Laughter).

DC: But Mother and Dad then retired here in the nineteen seventies and my parents are buried here at the Holy Cross Cemetery. And, um, they retired. And they--they didn't spend the winters. They would just spend the summers. Six months summer, and then six months either in Florida or California, which a lot of people did. So…

KA: Do you have any stories from your childhood here on Beaver Island from the summer?

DC: Well, uh, what kinda stories? (Laughter).

KA: What would you do for—on a daily basis?

DC: Oh, What would we do? Alright well, we had a large group of cousins—(All laugh)

KA: Friends!

DC: We had a large group of cousins—Somebody's waving to us from the street. We had a large group of cousins. Age-appropriate. And, at some times, we had fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, you know, boys, girls, and really, summers were wonderful because we did nothing, but—we had a few chores around the house, but it was swimming, it was hiking, it was picnics, marshmallow roasts, hotdog roasts, and then when we got a little older we did do some more—My uncle Archie LaFreniere, who owned the Shamrock, um, sometimes we would stay with him and his family, and he would put us to work. Of course, we wouldn't get paid, but that was ok. That was to work on our room and board when we stayed with them, and you know, when we were in high school he had us haul beer from the boat, and take it back to the Shamrock, and then take the empties back to the boat, clean up, and sweep floors. Things like that, so. But, it was very pleasant to be here in the summer. It was just a very quiet kind of life. It centered around family. It centered around your cousins and your friends, and you know, nothing extraordinary. And, by the end of the first part of August, we'd be heading back to Chicago to get ready for school. Um, we usually left here around the first or second of August to get back for school, ok? I—I don't remember any incidents—Oh! Horseback riding was another favorite. Um, one of the young fellas had a riding stable which is now the Stoney Acre Grill.

KA: Ok, so over there you'd ride horses?

DC: Yes. And there were—He had developed quite a number of trails that had been used by the lumber company. The Kuebler trail and other trails. So, we were able to take the horses back on these trails and we'd end up on Donegal Bay and then you'd come around the road there, and then you'd come into town, and so on, so that was—that was alotta fun. And then, of course, when you got to be sixteen, you had a car, and then you started—Sometimes, you know, parties were basically after sixteen. Um, usually there was somebody who was able to get beer. (Laughter). And then there were—Then we would go to these old houses that had been somewhat abandoned.

KA: Ok.

DC: Um, I won't say which ones. (All laugh). And you know, just have a good time. There was always somebody that could sing, or play guitar. They were particularly talented, I remember. And, of course, then we—the Shamrock, we, as kids, that was our recreation, and then we had another place over on the other side of the harbor. Um, the Wantys (sp?) built a nice log for teenagers and we had, you know, jukebox, and dancing, and pop, and food and stuff like that. So, it was—Those were the things to do, so.

KA: Some nice summers!

DC: Yeah. And the weather was—the weather was like we've been having, you know, this—these last couple weeks. It could be cool around the fourth of July, but for the most part, you know, in the seventies, low eighties. Plenty of time to spend the whole day at the beach, swimming, something like that, you know. And, um, and at night, put on a jacket and we'd have marshmallow roasts, and a picnic or something. And they had--the Fourth of July wasn't that big then. We had August Homecoming, which was a bigger thing. And in those days, you would have parades for the August Homecoming. It's reversed itself. August Homecoming has kind of disappeared, and Fourth of July weekend is--is the big thing now. So…

KA: So, would you stay mostly in town when you were here, or..?

DC: Well, we had the farm, which was about two miles outside of town, and we stayed out there.

KA: Over by Sand Bay?

DC: Uh, no. Around what is now called Barney's Lake Road.

KA: Oh, right. Ok.

DC: So, yeah. You know, on the way to Barney's Lake. It was, um, rather primitive. We had an outhouse. And, of course, we were there, and we had electricity. And, we used to go to a neighbor and there was a pump in the field where you would go out and get water for the—for the drinking, and so forth, and bring it back to the house, and that was part of the chores. And, um…And then in terms of washing clothes, we had a great big rain barrel, and washing clothes in that. And we had, you know, we had a gas stove—propane gas stove, but the house had been an old, old house that had not been remodeled at all. In fact, the downstairs didn't have electricity at all, because when my great uncle lived there, you know, he didn't want any of those things. (20:00). So, it was a very simple, uh, house, and a great big yard, and then across the fields we had the barn, and just loads of acres of land. And, you know, trails, and blueberry picking, strawberry picking, you know, all summer. And it was really very nice. And then, we had bicycles to come into town. And, we'd meet our cousins and other friends here, and you know, go from there. And, then later when I was sixteen, Dad bought me a car, and that was primarily so we could get into town without any problem, and go to the store. Things like that, so…

KA: Ok. And then, do you know who built your farmhouse?

DC: Yes. My great-great grandfather, Daniel Boyle, and his wife, Catherine, built the farmhouse. They had bought—They had been down on French Bay, living in French Bay, and in the eighteen eighties, eighteen

eighty-four, she was able to buy forty acres of land on Barney's Lake Road there for back taxes, for ten cents. And then, around eighteen—And then, they had a very simple cabin on the other—on one side of the road with a dirt floor which was very common in those days. A log cabin. And then, they started farming. And he was also, as I was saying, later on fishing. Then, about eighteen ninety-five, they built a very nice two-story log house on the other side of the road, which was—downstairs was the main living room, which they would've used as a kitchen also, and then two bedrooms, and an upstairs with three more bedrooms. So, it as a very substantial log house. And, in a certain part of the house, you can see the logs that are twenty inches by twenty inches, which was very typical of the day, and then chink was used to fill in the roof. And then much later, in the thirties and forties, they covered it with siding. And then about ten or twelve years later, they added a kitchen unit on, with sheds, and so on, which, again, was very common. You kind of added on. And in the summer, you had summer kitchens that were basically outdoors, uh, type of thing. And, because they had nine kids, and if they were farming, you would've had help, and so it was a matter of, you know, having a large enough place to cook for that many people, and so on. And the house is still there. It's being used. Owned by another person, and its in very good shape.

KA: That's good.

DC: And probably be there another hundred years. (Laughter).

KA: That's great. Yeah.

DC: So, all the land, of course, has been grown over because of nobody…

KA: Was farming, or…?

DC: No one was farming and the trees just..go very quickly, especially the pine and some of the other hardwoods just, you know, just take over. And then, one time, cedar. There was a lot of cedar out there, and pine, and it just—it's all forest now. So, that's…what I remember about that. Yeah. And a lot of, going back to the fifties, there was still a lot of farms. Then, farming gave out also because the older people weren't able to handle it. They simply—A lot of their kids would have married and moved away, and, um, there was a continuum of that all through the fifties. And a low point was, I think, the population year-round in nineteen sixty was about a hundred and sixty-five or a hundred and seventy people.

KA: Wow.

DC: Yeah. It was about—That was a pretty much low point. And I think even in nineteen seventy, it was still around sixty to a hundred seventy year-round people. So, that was---But, in the fifties, uh, there was still a lot of nets and a lot of these sheds, um, the old dock, and, of course, the boats, and so on, which are all—You could see a lot of the photographs and so on. There are still a lot of homes and structures that are still here today that were there, you know, many, many years ago. They've been used for different purposes somewhat, but the principal businesses—The Shamrock is still here. The Beachcomber is still here. McDonough's Store is now a nice big modern Spartan McDonough's Store.

KA: Mm-hmm. Yeah, it is.

DC: And that was, you know, much smaller. We didn't have a fire department. I think we were protected by our guardian angels or something. Um, we never had fires of any consequence up here. And, uh, we had a small medical center, which is now a very beautiful, large medical center. The school, of course, was here. Grades one through twelve. The school is--an interesting point to make about the history of the school. The school was publicly supported, financially, but it was taught by Cath—Roman Catholic nuns. All through the three quarters of the century. All the way from about nineteen-oh-four (1904), when they arrived, to about nineteen seventy-six, that was at the main school. On other parts of the island, there were two other schools. One was Roosevelt School, which was right at the corner of McCauley and King's Highway, and another was Sunnyside, which was sort of right where Holy Cross Cemetery is, on King's Highway there. So that

was a rather unique situation, given the rural and the "islandness" of it, but it was publicly supported by the state, but the nuns were allowed to be the—the teachers. So…

KA: Ok. So, would your grandparents---would your grandparents have gone to Roosevelt, or..?

DC: Uh, my father went to Roosevelt down on King's Highway and McCauley Road, because he was working and living with the Vestys' down on—on Sand Bay there. He was working with Lawrence McDonough who's ninety—gonna be ninety-seven. He and my father are cousins. And they were both—Dad was on the farm, and helped the McDonoughs—the Vesty McDonoughs, so—Which was common, because if you had too many kids in the house, they had to kinda move out and work so that the other kids could (Laughter) grow up, you know.

KA: Yeah.

DC: I mean, there were fourteen children in his family. And my grandmother had fourteen children all by midwives, and she lived to be ninety-two years old.

KA: Wow.

DC: So…

KA: That's amazing. That's great.

DC: Yeah, so. But, um, yeah, he would've gone to Roosevelt school. I, briefly, in the late-forties, remember going to Sunnyside just for—it musta been forty-nine, just before we left, for a brief couple of months. You know, just—I must've entered school by first grade or kindergarten or something, and we left. We left the island, but I do remember that.

KA: Do you remember anything specific about how it was?

DC: Well, I remember, you know, it was a one-room schoolhouse, and I do remember that very well, with the different little grades by rows, and we went to sch—we were—friends of ours down the road picked us up on a horse.

KA: Wow.

DC: That's how we got to school. Horseback. So, it wasn't very far from the farm on, uh, Barney's Lake Road to Sunn—to Sunnyside there, so…Then, they closed those schools. There weren't enough people there. And, they also moved the Catholic Church from where the cemetery is to in town in nineteen fifty-seven, primarily, again, because there was a shift in population coming—Well, there was a shift of population with the drop, and there were so few people, especially out in Peaine Township, you know, going south. And, the people that were left were right here in town. So, you know.

KA: Ok. Yeah. And that was primarily because the fishing just dropped.

DC: Well, the fishing, again, just collapsed.

KA: Mm-hmm.

DC: And it—And, you know, it's remarkable because of the eel, it collapsed almost overnight. It didn't take long for the eel to decimate the upper Great Lakes fishing in terms of the whitefish particularly. And the whitefish was a very commercially sought-after fish, and brought in good money. And a lot of that was exported to Detroit, lower—lower Michigan, Chicago, you know, all over the place. Milwaukee, etc. So, a lot of it was…(Laughter). So, ok. Now, can we stop for a moment? I need to use the bathroom.

KA: Oh, absolutely.

DC: Yeah. Ok. Put 'er on hold. (All laugh). (29:31)

KA: And I wanted to ask, sort of, in light of the booming fishing industry, sort of late-1800s, you know, turn of the century, I was sort of curious about whether, um, any sort of class distinction or class division occurred when the fishing families sort of, did they gain any extra prominence?

DC: Interesting question. Ah, in all communities, there is a natural social pecking order. There's no doubt about that. For example, the men who were able to build boats, and then sell them to the fishermen were in a class by themselves because they could build the boat and then sell it for money. They ennobled themselves, so to speak, and one of the really great boat builders was James McCann, and he accumulated a good amount of money and built a very nice home, as did several other trades people. So there was a little bit of that, not very much, because pretty much everybody was on the same socio-economic level. Now, when you owned a saloon or a store, you also were able to accumulate more cash. Now, that didn't mean you got rich. My great-grandfather who had the store down on Sand Bay certainly did not become wealthy. There was just a way of maintaining a basic living with that. The fishermen themselves, which were-who were many of them, were in the same kind of, almost a little bit below, but they also were able to accumulate some cash, as were the farmers who sold cows or pigs. You could bring in some kind of cash, but very little. The basic was the sustenance level. The fish - now, you've got to remember, you'd go on out and spend hours pulling in nets, pulling in fish, put them in boxes, and you were getting eight, ten cents a pound, ok? So, that was very, very little in terms of that, all through the latter part of the nineteenth into the twentieth century. By the 1920s, from what my father used to tell us, I remember asking him how things were, this was a rather famous quote that I think a lot of people who grew up here in those days would have said the same thing, in a sense there was no Depression here because everyone was at the same poor level. Everybody was equal, everyone was poor, so there wasn't this noticeable change in terms of where you had urban situations, Detroit, the big cities, Grand Rapids, and so on, where you did feel the effects of the Great Depression, but not up here because everybody was poor. There was really no wealthy people. No one ever really got wealthy. I mean you had a few families that were able to build better homes, um, and there was a certain, and I think that Dr. Rotman and her investigation of Irish communities, you then would end up with a few people, and this gradually occurred in the latter part of the nineteenth and into the early twentieth, 'lace curtain Irish,' in which you accumulated some cash so that you were able to decorate your home in a very nice way, and the reason is the first thing you did was to buy curtains for the house, and my father, at one point---it must have been a summer or something--- worked in one of the lumber camps down on the west side, and he hated it and he said it was extremely hard work. And our display in the museum shows how difficult it was, and how little they were paid. And he had a thing about windows being covered with curtains, you had to have curtains covering the window, because in those lumber camps there was nothing, I mean you were lucky if you had a window, let alone covers, so he had this thing about that. But I would say there was a certain amount of social, but nothing very wide, everyone was really pretty much in the same boat.

KA: That's interesting.

DC: Obviously, you know, some were smarter than others. Some, you know, could pick up and make a buck quicker than somebody else. There were quite a few saloons here all through the latter part of the nineteenth century into the twentieth. Whiskey Point, obviously, is named because they sell whiskey there, and that goes back to the 1850s, and Whiskey Island. There was a lot of bootlegging in the upper Great Lakes in the 1930s during the Prohibition. A lot of it was homemade, and a lot of it was brought in from Canada by boat very easily and taken down to the major cities, Chicago, Milwaukee being the two big ones, and downstate Michigan and so on. There was a lot of bootlegging, and a lot of people made money, you know, through the 30s with selling whiskey.

KA: Do you know if your family did any of that?

DC: No, no, we didn't. By then, there were no boats. My grandfather Malloy (40:00) had the meat market, and then his son, and Grandpa was fishing or at the lumber mill and then when the fishing gave out in the 40s we had no boat, so. But there were others that would come in, and so there was quite a bit of that.

KA: Ok, thank you. I guess can we switch gears to sort of the history of religion on the island?

DC: Sure, sure. I think we've covered the family and the times, the insights I have that I got from my grandparents and my father, and so on. I think, recapping, it was wonderful for kids to grow up here. But after eighteen, there was no work. You had to go to school off island. Many of my cousins, especially the girls, then went to college as our generation did, the first generation that went to college, met their husbands, raised families, and then decided to come back after retirement.

KA: Right, in the summers.
DC: Ok, now let's go over to what - do you want a general question, or should we just go back to what - what specific questions about the church?

KA: Specifically, I actually don't have any..

DC: Specific?

KA: But maybe if you started with sort of the general history of, like, or do you know.-

DC: Give me a specific question.

KA: Well, actually, I was wondering if you knew anything about, like, Father Gallagher and his influence on the island?

DC: Yes. I've made a point of studying and reading everything that's been written about him. Paul Conner's thesis, of course, has a great deal of information about him. The Catholic Church on Beaver Island, now, we have to go back to the French trappers and traders. And this whole upper Great Lakes area was well known to French trappers out of Quebec and Montreal in the 1620s. 1620s to 1640s, you had a great deal of exploration by the French trappers and the missionaries, primarily the Jesuits and another group called the Recollects, two religious communities. And they would accompany the trappers and racing around in canoes all over the upper Great Lakes looking for beaver, and the missionaries, of course, wanted to establish missions among the Indians, many different Native American groups, and accompany also the trappers. And so, that went on a long time. In 1832, Father Baraga, who later became the first Bishop of Marquette, was sent up to this part of Michigan and started establishing missions. He landed here in 1832, and it was just a few Indian families on the island and a few other traders. This was pre-Mormon. And then he established a site, at Cross Village there, and there was a larger group of Indian people there, the Ojibwe and the Ottawa were there. And then in 1860, he had become the Bishop of Marquette and he established the parish, Holy Cross Parish, in 1860. And then he commissioned a builder to build the church in 1860 to 61, and they built it for about 250 dollars. And most of the present structure, the mid section of the present structure is that original building built in 1860.

In 1900-1905, they added on a little bit of the front and extended the back some more. And the first priest, Catholic priest, was Father Murray, who was here from 1861 to 1866. Now, the thing about Father Murray is he could not speak Gaelic. And as we talked about the early families coming over, my own and many others, they only spoke Gaelic. So, he had a difficult time those six years, five years. And he and the bishop were good friends, and they corresponded by letter, and so on. It took about five months to get a letter from here to Sous-Sainte-Marie and then back, about five months. So finally, he decided, and the bishop decided, that he would go over to Alpina, Father Murray, and then the bishop had to figure out who to bring to Beaver Island.

So, he had just ordained an Irishman from County Tyrone by the name of Peter Gallagher. Now, Peter Gallagher was not related to anyone on Beaver Island, and there were five or four, four or five Gallagher families independent of each other, not related, but they all shared the same name. He and his siblings and family came from County Tyrone and landed in Philadelphia, and around 1864, as it was customary, he was out this way and became a priest and Bishop Baraga, now Bishop Baraga, ordained him, and decided to send him here because he spoke perfect Gaelic. He was fluent in Gaelic and, given the Irish temperament for speaking and storytelling, he was very, very good, very, very good, and he was the pastor from 1866 to his death in 1898, thirty-two years. Now, he actually played a very important role, not only in the development and the continuation of the Catholic religion, um, some criticism of him as a priest---He had some very interesting---for example, he was a crack shot. He could shoot a bird off a tree at three hundred paces, or whatever; he was really a crack shot. He was also a boxer, and he got into several fights. But, he was a very good boxer. And, of course, he had some money, not only as the pastor, he used to get about 295 dollars a year as his stipend for being the pastor of the parish, but he also had money from his family. His family became quite well-to-do out in Philadelphia, particularly his brother, who became a very large liquor distributor. And so, he had money from his family, and his brother would also send him whiskey, uh, which Father Gallagher would not give away free. He would charge for it, obviously. So, he would loan money to farmers who needed money for seed or to buy some cows, et cetera. And he brought, I think, the first pair of oxen to the island, Father Peter Gallagher did. So he was instrumental in helping people get going in terms of farming.
Now, he charged six or seven percent interest and he made sure he got the money back. And he himself acquired quite a bit of land. We don't really know where his land holdings were, we'd have to, if we could we'd go back to the tax records way back. And he had some animals and so on and he acquired them. The rectory he used to live in, is sort of a run-down house behind kind of where the call house is and Lily John's house is, just kind of around the corner from here and up above [front porch of Beaver Island Historical Society building], which later was torn down, in terms of the house. But he lived there for many, many years. Whether he had his own house somewhere is not something that has been recorded. He used the rectory as his place of living. And then, of course, the church was up in the country at where we call the Four Corners there, the King's Highway there. And, of course, you just went up in a horse and buggy or a horse, whatever, you know, your mode was. But, he also was able to be kind of a political leader as well. He had some education, he could read and write, which a lot of them could not, so you always looked to the leader. And in Catholic - in Ireland, the Irish, in terms of Catholicism and being Catholic, would look to their parish priest as a potential leader. And he obviously had a personality that took on leadership qualities. And he sort of became a quasi-political boss also, and was able to settle disputes, bring people together, you know, and get some kind of a compromise if there was a situation. And in a way, he was able to kind of direct (50:00) and help the community.

You had, as far as civil government, all through the nineteenth century up until 1895, these islands were all one county. The Manitous, the Foxes, and the Beaver, were Manitou County, and we had three townships on Beaver Island. That changed in 1895 when it was reduced to two townships, and the islands were given to Charlevoix County and the Manitous and the Fox Islands were given to Leelanau County. So, he acted as a quasi-political leader through that whole thirty-two year period. And, you know, during that whole time it was a growth economy, uh, people did very well. The population census figures show that 900 people lived here year round, which was a very large group of people. And, um, so it went on quite well. A lot of funny stories about him, particularly with the two different bishops, um, one down in Grand Rapids. The Catholic diocese, we kept being shifted from Marquette, first we were in Detroit, which took up the whole state of Michigan, and then when Father Baraga was made Bishop of Marquette, he also took on Beaver Island. And then later, out of Detroit, Grand Rapids was made a diocese, and then we were attached to Grand Rapids, and that lasted until 1970. But there are a lot of stories about him, and I think the bottom line was that he was certainly able to help the island.

KA: Well I know Caroline is interested specifically in the Irish Catholicism. Do you want to ask?

CM: Yeah, well I'm just interested for my project, sort of given this influx of specifically Irish immigrants to the island, and, as you said, there wasn't a whole lot of integration before the 1900s, especially in terms of language, um, so I'm kind of interested in whether you know whether, sort of, specifically Irish Catholic traditions followed to Beaver Island, including, you know, even veneration of Irish saints and what kind of traditions surrounded that, if any?

DC: Yes and no. We have to go back to the period of the Famine, which devastated, particularly, the western part of Ireland. The statistics show that upwards of a million people in that three or four, three-year period died from starvation. Another million, if not more, fled and spread throughout the world. During that time, there was a modest amount of devotional situations that the Irish Catholics would have been following, but not the way we think of them in the twentieth century. The rosary was probably not as widespread, and the fact that devotional to saints was there, because there was a great oral tradition, and, uh, particularly Saint Brigid, Saint Patrick, and quite a number of others. But in terms of the state of the Church in that Famine period and after, was very difficult, very difficult. So, I would say that when they came here there was a little bit there, but gradually through the decades that increased. As you became more settled and as the economy, the fishing economy and the farming economy, allowed people to have a more settled communal life, which it was. It was very settled and the winter, I mean you had to go across with a sled and a horse if you could manage. So, the island became very, very communal, in that sense, and then you had a stronger Irish Catholicism developing. Father Peter Gallagher was able to help this along a little bit, but he was not, what you would call, a proficient proponent of that. The priest that followed him, Father Zugelder, in 1900, 1899, 1900, he was here for about six years, he was German in origin, he brought in a number of German Catholic families to the island of which their ancestors, their descenDCts are still here, Ricksgers being one of them, Schmidt another, and so on. He was the one in the early 1900s that was able to develop what we call devotional Catholicism among the Irish. So it took about forty years or so, or a generation and a half, for them to really get into that. Now, that carried well into the first half of the twentieth century.

When we were kids, everybody was Catholic. There were a few, now I can't even remember, there were a few Protestants, the Larsons I think were one, and these would have been Swedish or Norwegian descendants and so on, but for the most part they were all Catholic. And, for the most part, everybody went to church all through the twentieth century on a regular basis, received the sacraments, baptism, first communion, so on. Ah, there was devotional, the rosary being a very well developed one in the first half of the twentieth century, as it developed in other Irish communities and Irish parishes in the big cities, um, novenas, to some extent, not as much as you would have in a big parish, but to a limited extent. Um the rosary was usually conducted in homes. where the family or friends would gather certainly at least once a week if not more frequently. And I certainly can remember that as a child in the fifties where we would be in different people's homes and we would take fifteen or twenty minutes to say the rosary in the evening usually. And that developed all through the twentieth century and that became stronger and stronger. The Christian Brothers arrived here in 1929. The Brothers' Place, which we call, and it was a retreat center for the brothers, the Christian Brothers, primarily out of the Midwest, and that went on from 1929 through, I think, well into the seventies. Then, for various reasons, they stopped coming, and then later, the place was sold, but again you had a very strong identity with Catholicism because of them and all through the twentieth century, you had priests who lived here year round, took care of the parish, were here every day of the week, and developed various devotional things. The Franciscans alternated between the diocesan clergy of Grand Rapids and the Franciscan community out of Louisville, Kentucky. And from the forties on, we had the Franciscans, and that developed, lasted until the 1980s or so, and then we had diocesan, and before that we had diocesan, so it alternated between that. [24:25] Ok, so that's a good. The island---Catholicism in the twentieth century developed in major urban areas very well. And having lived in, for example, South Bend for three years, '50 to '53, we belonged to a very nice parish, a beautiful parish, Saint Monica, Catholic school, grammar school. I went to Catholic high school, as my brother did. And, you had the same devotional situation here on the island. It was very funny, we had a very nice… and as in Irish communities even today, you had little statues of the Blessed Mother and little grottoes in the yard, and so on to her. And we had a little grotto devoted to now Saint Martin De Porres, and he was a blessed in those days, and I cannot

remember why we had a particular devotion to Martin De Porres. He was the Dominican lay brother in the sixteenth century in Peru. He was a mulatto, and he was well known for his work among the poor. But where we got the Dominican influence was probably through the sisters, who were Dominican out of Grand Rapids. And I suspect that that was where the influence came. He was obviously a Dominican saint, a blessed, and he later became a saint, but we had this little grotto out in the woods in town here. It was very pretty, and we'd go out there and say a little prayer and then we'd go on our way, so that was--I always remember that. Any other questions?

(1:00:10) CM: Yeah, that's great. Ok so, essentially, you would say that a lot of the folk traditions that maybe would have been more pre-Famine era, you know things like Saint Brigid's Day celebrations, that sort of thing, those wouldn't have necessarily translated here, they would have been left back in…?

DC: They would have been left behind primarily because of this shattering of the culture because of the Famine. And then it took a while, and I think that Dr. Rotman, in terms of her research, you know… For example, having been doing my priesthood in Connecticut for twenty-plus years, large Irish communities in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, it took half a century for them to really, you know---and the Irish Catholic Church in the United States, the Catholic church in the United States was primarily Irish. Most of the bishops were Irish, most of the priests were Irish. The other large group of Catholics in the United States were the Germans, German Catholics. And then you had German bishops. And the builders of the Catholic Church were from the 20s on, after World War I. I mean that's when you had this boom, not only in the economy, vis-à-vis obviously the Depression and into World War II, but you had this tremendous boom through immigration of various nationalities in the Catholic Church.

The Irish were the ones who led the boom from the latter nineteenth century into the twentieth. And by 1960, the Catholic Church was at, as they say, its pinnacle. We had--- all the statistics will peak in 1960. The largest number of priests, nuns, brothers, the largest numbers of parishes, the largest number of children in parochial school systems – it was something like three and a half million across the country. We had, you know, the second largest educational system, we had hospitals, we had just unbelievable social situations especially in the big urban areas. Francis Cabrini in Chicago and in other places, you know, they all were developed by that. So, the Irish devotional thing really reasserted itself very strongly in the latter part of the nineteenth into the twentieth century. And now of course we've had another wave on the downside of lacking that kind of devotional situation. Any other questions?

KA: Actually, yeah, last year one of the students was doing a research project about, um, sort of marriages on the island and she was looking at, or, she was wondering, one of the questions she didn't get answered was like what the Catholic Church here's position would have been about people marrying non-Catholics on the island, particularly during like the second generation of Irish or your grandparents?

DC: Alright, well, there wouldn't have been much of that because there weren't much non-Irish. There were a few French families, um, which would have intermarried. My cousins, the LaFreniere family, they, of course, were French and they came from, oh, just above Big Rapids, they came to the island in the late 1890s or turn of the century. And then, of course, before the Mormon time, there were French traders. (Fr. Dan on BI Marriage) On the island during the nineteenth into the twentieth century, Catholics married Catholics, and were duly recorded in terms of the marriage book. The genealogy history of the island is very well maintained because of the documentation in the baptismal and marriage books kept by the Holy Cross Church, which go back to 1860. So, you had a very, very, very good record of families in terms of their marriage, baptism, and death. So, basically, I would say up until after World War II, in Catholic circles, Catholics married Catholics, so…

Now, one of the interesting things about marriage here, and I've referred to this in several talks I've given, (Fr. Dan on Marriage) going back to the nineteenth century under Father Peter Gallagher, in Irish communities here, in the Irish community here as in other places, you had this age difference in the man and

the woman. Generally Irish men married later depending on the number of women in a community. Now, in my family, Hugh Connaghan, one of the three, his wife was married three times and I'll go back to what happened. She married a fellow by the name of Raymond McDonald and had two children. He died, I believe on the water, drowning or ship or boat fell in, or whatever it was. So she was left with two children. Now, what they did on the island and primarily through Father Peter Gallagher and his so-called Bachelor Club, they would sit down and they would figure out what available men were there that could marry this widow with her children and provide support for them. So, they picked my great-grandfather, Hugh Connaghan, who was in his forties, and she was in her twenties, and they proceeded to have another six children, six more children. Then he died at the age of sixty-four in 1894 of a heart attack.

Now, she's a widow now a second time with eight children of which the youngest was about five or six years old, Mabel, Mabel Cull who later lived next door here. So, for the second-third time, for the second time, Father Gallagher got them together and said "Now what are we going to do with the widow Brigid? We've got eight kids now because Hugh Connaghan just died". So, they went to---they found Larry McDonough, who was a bachelor, much older. He married her. They were beyond, or she was beyond child-producing, and they raised the eight children, particularly the last six because they were the youngest ones, and then she died a McDonough. So, she was married three times. Now, that's how marriage, in terms of the community, was looked after with a widow with children because in her position she was unable to take care of not only the children, but herself. So, she had to have a situation in which some man, so it was kind of a communal, community decision-making process. Who was available, who had the means to take care of them? Because Hugh Connaghan had a store so he could take on a widow with two kids, and then preceded to have six more, ok. So that's a very interesting footnote about marriage in a very small community like this. Now, whether that happened in other Irish communities, I think, would be an interesting point of Dr. Rotman's classes and so on in terms of further research. How was that handled in small cities like South Bend among the Irish community? How was that handled? So, that's an interesting point. Now, anything else on marriage? You had marriage, yeah, nothing else?

You know, in general, as I said, the Irish reestablished Catholicism in the United States to a very large degree. And then, you had waves of other immigration. Then came the Germans, which was very in the upper Midwest, a very large number of German Catholics after Bismarck. Bismarck, in terms of Prussia, was somewhat anti-Catholic. Then, you had waves, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, of Italians, 1890 to 1920, large numbers of Italians. The economy of Italy in the latter part of the nineteenth century going into World War I and then after. Then you had other groups. Then, you had Central Europeans, Polish, Slovaks, Czechs, that period. And then, of course, all through the latter part of the nineteenth into the twentieth you had large Jewish immigration coming into the United States from all over Europe, different parts of Europe. So, that was a continuum in terms of—and then today of course, the census showed that the largest, in some states, the Caucasian population is the minority. African-American, Hispanic, and Asian. So, what goes around comes around, what comes around goes around. So, again, you have this continuum in the United States in terms of our, and that's the only way to move an economy. You---you know, in today's world, in Western Europe and in Japan, Japan being the worst, um there's no young people coming in. You can't have an economy without young people, and that's going to be a major problem over the next ten to fifteen years, including the United States. (1:10:51) Does that answer? Yeah, that's good.

KA: Could I ask you a random—well, not random--sort of a bonus question?

DC: Ok.

KA: Well, I was wondering, you know we're excavating over at the Doney-Gallagher House, do you know anything about that house? Who lived there?

DC: I don't know really anything about that house. Bill Cashman would know a lot more of the history of that. You know, those were typical farm roads along that road and Paid Een Og's Road is another farm area, and, of course, Darkytown Road, where we had the farm all the way out to Barney's Lake, was another area

of farms. And those were all farmhouses in various ways, and there are things to be found because, even at our old farmhouse, my uncle Danny used to---they would throw the cans and pottery, and crockery. If something broke, they'd just take it out to the back of the house, and throw it into a pile. So, you do have things that would have been buried through the years. Various, you know, times, so, but no, I don't really know much about it. Check with Bill.

KA: Ok. Great.

DC: Check with Bill (chuckles). So, and, you know, it may be a pre-Mormon, or it may be a Mormon house. They'd had it. It's stil—The amazing thing about these log houses—If they're encapsulated in siding of some sort, they're—they're preserved.

KA: Right. Yeah.

DC: I mean, those logs do not rot.

KA: It's amazing.

DC: It really is. And when I think of our—when I go and look at our own farmhouse—In the late fifties, we put a—an asbestos siding, which was common. It was in squares. Kind of a gray thing. And, that's still on. And the owner redid the roof, but the siding is still on.

KA: Wow.

DC: Yeah. So, those houses stay, you know, a long time. So, any other bonus questions?

KA: Um, maybe. (All laugh). Really quick, do you know anything about the Mormons who lived on the island?

DC: Well, the—we have three, you know, three very well researched and written books on the Mormon history of roughly eighteen forty—forty-nine to eighteen fifty-six. The King Strang Mormons were an off-shoot. When Brigham Young—When Smith was killed in Novo—Novoo, Illinois in eighteen forty-eight—forty-seven, forty-eight—The Mormons were all along there and ready to move west, and then, Brigham Young said "Ok, I'm the new leader", whereas Strang said "No, I'm the new leader". And he supposedly had a letter, which later was proved to be forgery—forged, claiming that he was—was heir. So, Brigham Young took the main group and moved west to Utah, and history, of course, followed them. Strang had the small group and went up to a little corner of southeast Wisconsin, near just to the west of Racine, and established a community there in eighteen forty-seven or forty-eight, he found out about the Island, came up here to investigate, and thought "Ok, this is—You know, there were a few Native American families between here and Garden Island, High Island. Mostly between here and Garden Island. And a few traders, and then there was a settlement again on Whiskey Point, of course, there were some traders. And, um, so he, you know, moved in, around eighteen forty-nine with a large contingent, and by eighteen fifty, fifty-one, he had, you know, most of his followers up here, and they cleared fields and built King's Highway, you know, established a real community, and it was a short-lived community. He got himself elected to the state legislature in eighteen fifty-two or fifty-four. I forget which of the elections there. And then, people got kind of, uh, nervous down in Lansing about this fella here in northern Michigan, 'cause there were very few settlers in this small area, and of course, he had this large contingent of Mormons up here. So, the other thing about the Mormons, a' course, is you had ties to the Church and to him, which was ten percent of your property, every year, and that meant monies, foods, cattle, you know, etc. So, ten percent of your produce, ten percent of your wealth, not just once in your lifetime, but every year, had to go to the Church, using the old tithing situation. So, he became also a polygamist, which he did not start out to be. He really rejected polygamy, but then he acquired four additional wives, other than his first one. And then, in eighteen fifty-six, some of his followers were really kind of tired of 'im. And, two of his followers decided to assassinate him, which they did, and he died about six weeks later in July of eighteen fifty-six, and that ended the community.

KA: So, when the Irish came back to the island, is it possible that Mormon families still stuck around, or…?

DC: Very few.

KA: Ok.

DC: Very few. I mean, they were—they were exiled. They were—they were pushed off the island.

KA: Ok.

DC: Um, they didn't have much of a choice. One of the things to remember that when you have a cult-like situation, which Strang was, and the leader was no longer there, or gone, or assassinated in this case, they're leaderless. They're leaderless. (Seagull squawking) (All laugh).

KA: They're feeding the seagulls.

(1:17:20)

DC: They're feeding the seagulls. (All laugh). So, a lot of 'em left out of fear and then of course, the Irish came back from across the mainland, and just, you know, really pushed them off, and took over their farms, and you know, some of the historical stories, some of the parts are still warm. The Irish settlers—I don't think it was quite that way, but there was certainly a large number of people, which meant that there would've been a large number of farms and houses, and so on, and so forth. Now, when the Mormons left they took as much as they could, but I'm sure some of them certainly left their tools, and their farm implements, and their furniture, and you know, things like that, but they were—they were exiled. I mean, the Irish came in, and just kept, you know, going here. (Seagulls squawking. Boy yells). Crazy birds. (Laughter). Yep. So, yeah, they, um---and then the Irish, of course, took over. And, the Na—the Native American people, when the Irish and some of the traders starting fighting the Mormons when they first got here, they just quietly moved over to Garden Island. The Native American people. And then, when they came back, or when Strang was gone, they—they started coming back. Uh, and then many of them lived on High Island too. Much larger community. But, there was a fairly good size community up until the sixties and seventies then again, because of economic, they moved away.

DC: The three families here now are the same three families of many, many generations, probably going back three hundred years.

KA: Wow. Still here.

DC: Yeah. So it, uh…So, any other….

KA: I think you covered it all! You've been unbelievably helpful.

DC: Good!

KA: Thank you so much.

DC: Very good. Ok.

KA: Yeah, it's been great.

DC: Ok, we'll end that.

KA: Yeah.

DC: Wonderful.

KA: Yeah, thank you so much.

Alvin LaFreniere and Johnny Runberg
Friday, July 8, 2011
Porch of Print Shop Museum

Conversation Summary: Topics included family histories, fishing industry, Irish immigration, relationship between fishermen, farmers, merchants, and loggers, baseball on the Island, growing up on the Island/school experience, logging industry, Beaver Island identity, economy, transportation, and the Gallagher homestead. Both Alvin and Johnny are very knowledgeable local historians and very active in the local historical society (Figure 7.6).

Figure 7.6. Alvin LaFreineire and Johnny Runberg at the Print Shop Museum, summer 2011.

KA: Alright, so, today is July eighth, two-thousand and eleven, and I am here with Alvin LaFreniere and Johnny Runberg. And I suppose we'll start with when your families first came to the island. So, whoever wants to begin…Johnny?

JR: My great grandfather, because of the great commercial fishing and the waters around Beaver Island, came from Mackinac Island where they had immigrated to Whiskey Island and they lived there. Joyce Bartels comes up with these gems every year, State archives in Lansing. She gave me information this Spring that my great grandfather James McCann, his wife, Mary or Mamie lived on Whiskey Island with five of their children, and there were two single men who worked for them. They fished commercially, salted the fish in barrels---coop barrels I guess they had---and the fish, in all likelihood were brought by boat to Beaver Island to go on a schooner, 'cause they were all sailing vessels then, to go downstate, down-lake to some other port or maybe all the way to Chicago. (Car goes by). There was no refrigeration so they were in brine, salted, in the, uh,--at the uh, product—or, consumer end, they had to be rinsed. I don't know a great deal about that. Do you, Alvin? They had to—They musta had to rinse, and rinse, and rinse.

AL: Oh, with the salt and the fish. They would've had to rinse four or five times. Sure. To get the salt out.

JR: But, then they came here, and later years, they had a store around the harbor. It had been an old trading post owned by a man named James Dornan. And ships that would come up and down the Great Lakes. And my great grandfather acquired that trading post from him, and then later had the store built that is now the community center, and he lived upstairs. And later, Al's family, his grandfather bought it, and his uncles ran the store. One in particular ran the store. Then, had moved on to another family, so it's had several owners.

And now, all that remains is the face of the—the metalwork. Saved that, but the rest of it had to be torn down. So, (pause), when he—my great grandfather lived up there, his wife died early fifties, daughter Mary, then moved up there to live with him. When she died, again, quite young, her daughters were grown. His son Mike lived in the house next to ours, and he was stubborn, he wouldn't move, so that whole family moved down, and lived up over the store.

KA: Ok.

JR: The mountain and Mahatma kind of a deal.

KA: Mm-hmm (Laughter).

JR: But, I love the story about him milkin' cows. He went out to--when he was probably in his early nineties, he milked the cow, and came back in, and the bucket was empty, and his daughter, Mamie, Mary said "Where's the milk?". He said, "I gave it to the cow". So, she went out to check the cow. The cow was all white. The cow must've put her foot in the bucket.

KA: Oh!

JR: Kicked the bucket of milk and threw it on the cow. (Laughter). And there are some other tales that I wont repeat. But, he'd get pretty crotchety. And, you know, they didn't have a way to diagnose Alzheimer's or dementia. They didn't call it by those names, but I've seen his death certificate. It was something in there that implied that he had that. And it was in his late nineties. [It said senility in the death certificate].

KA: And this was your great grandfather.

JR: Yes.

KA: Ok.

JR: Yeah. James. His son, John, was my grandfather. The house we live in was his home.

Fishing Industry

KA: Oh, ok. And did he own a store, or what did he do?

JR: He fished.

KA: He fished. Ok.

JR: He was a commercial fisherman. My great grandfather…come up here to be the captain of a roughly seventy-foot long steam tug. Had a crew of about seven men. The fish were so plentiful that they would string the nets out. I've read and have been told four or five miles of net. Today, it's not true at all because of the scarcity of the fish. Then we had the introduction of the sea lamprey in the Great Lakes came in with ocean-going vessels in their ballast waters that they took on in the ocean, in fact on the European side, and it stabilized the vessels across the Atlantic. When they got into the Great Lakes, it was pumped out, thus, introducin' any number of species that you would not want. (Ferry horn blows). The sea lamprey, probably, they were found in the nineteen twenties and they attacked the lake trout, which are a smooth skin, like a salmon, but eventually they even preyed on the white fish. The lamprey would attack the trout on their spawning beds, and get 'em like a snake. And kill them.

KA: That's what ruined the fishing industry.

JR: Pretty much.

KA: Pretty much.

JR: Over-fishing by men like my great grandfather, grandfather, and even uncles certainly led to taking the numbers down.

AL: That was probably even more so than the eel. They say that by nineteen thirty-eight the whole northern third of Lake Michigan was just one big fishnet.

JR: Yeah.

AL: The northern third of the lake was like one gigantic fishnet. With the Depression on, the market was being suppressed. They're getting less money for fish, so the idea was "Well, we'll set more nets and catch more fish so we can supply and support our families". And the fish couldn't kep--just couldn't keep up at the same time that the eels came along. But, the overfishing, primarily because they were gettin' next to nothin'. In nineteen thirty-seven, when my uncle and my grandfather were fishin', they were gettin' two cents a pound for the whitefish.

KA: Wow.

AL: Two cents a pound.

JR: Sure.

AL: So, they had to set a lot of extra nets. And they—my grandfather had fourteen children so he set a lot of nets. So did everyone. Make up the difference.

JR: And they fished through the ice in the wintertime for perch, primarily. And they'd have a hole in the ice, and they'd push a pole to the next hole and pull the net across.

KA: Wow.

JR: And they would be under the ice. I did a little research one winter about twenty-two years ago, and took the bill books outta the cases down, and determined that there were approximately sixty-five, maybe even seventy guys that were catching and selling perch on the market. These were bill books. Little. The ones that they had. Two copies. With the carbon in between. So, they had---And, when I was a boy, there was still lots of perch in the harbor. Today, there are virtually none. No one catches perch out here. But, there are several reasons for that. Didn't the weeds grow up in the harbor in the tugboat area?

AL: I don't know.

JR: I was told that. There were—My mother said there were thirty-three commercial tugs when she was young. She was born in nineteen-oh-two. So, perhaps by nineteen fifteen or so, there was still a lot there. And you see the pictures in the Marine Museum the many boats that there were. Every shape, and size, and description.

KA: I bet. Yeah.

JR: There was one engine down there that they—well, they took a…a six or an eight cylinder, cut it in half, raised a plate on the end.

AL: That was Charlie Martin did that.

JR: Yep.

AL: I don't know what it was for. It was for his pound nets, maybe to…

JR: For lifting the weight to drive the—

AL: To drive—drive the, yeah, the nets in, or the pound net into the ground. The [stakes]. To drive the [stakes] into the ground.

JR: And that was Buddy Martin's father, who, now, you see the orange barge [Buddy's] with the tug around the harbor?

KA: Mm-hmm.

JR: That's Buddy, Charlie's son.

KA: Ok.

JR: They all had big families. I didn't know your grandfather had fourteen?

Alvin LaFreniere's Family History on the Island

KA: Yeah. So, when did you family, Alvin, get to the island?

AL: Um, (AlvinJohnnyFamilyFishHistory)from my mother's side, her dad's name was Connaghan. And he was born--it'd be Hugh Connaghan—He was born down at Sand Bay where the Jordan River flows into the lake—right there. His dad had a—a grocery store there. His name also was Hugh, and he came from Árainn Mhór. And h—My maternal grandmother was a Malloy. She was born here on the island. And her parents came from Árainn Mhór. So, they arrived here maybe in the eighteen seventies. And, most of them when they left Ireland, they went to Canada first, or some on the east coast. But, so it was sometime they were in Canada and then they got here about the eighteen seventies. Or, the late sixties. And, they had a grocery store at Sand Bay. That'd be my grandmother's side. Now, on my dad's side, his mother was a Boyle. And her, she was born here. So, three of my grandparents were born here, and her parents came from Árainn Mhór. So, you're familiar with Árainn Mhór. I know Dr. Rotman has been there. So, all three of my grandparents, relatives, all came from Árainn Mhór.

And, my grandfather LaFreniere, my dad's dad, was born down by Central Michigan, down by north of Grand Rapids, in Mecosta County, but his parents came from Quebec. They were—my great grandfather was born two days horseback ride from Quebec City. Quebec is so huge, that's how they measured distances, by how many days horseback ride it took from one place--so there was no miles given. It was two days horseback ride from Quebec City. That's a lot of horseback riding. And so, they were loggers. And they followed the logging industry. And, my great grandmother was of the Renault family. The Renaults in France. Aristocrat. And her—her parents had arranged marriage for her. That was done--That's the way it was done in French society. Well, she didn't like the guy that she was supposed to marry. She kinda fell for this lumberjack 'cause he was a good dancer, I guess, so, she wanted to marry him. And they said "Oh, no way, so, they had to leave Canada and go to the United States to get married. And he just followed the logging. And, they logged in downstate Michigan so my grandfather, he came over here across—He walked across the ice with his brother Archie in about 1904 to work here for the Beaver Island Lumber Company. And that's how he got here and he met up with my grandmother, Sofia Boyle. Where the gift shop is now, she owned a store over there. She sold, like, bolts of cloth. Women made their own dresses, and everything for yarn, for knitting for all that---that kinda work. And hats. Women's hats, and everything. Shoes. And all that. And then, they married. Then, expanded and had the grocery store. And then he bought the King Strang Hotel later, and managed that. So that's how they got here. To log.

But, my—and my dad's—or my grandfather's side, on my mother's side, he was a fisherman. And, so when he left the farm left up at Sand Bay, where the farm had the grocery store, and he took up fishin'. And that was a good job, good business until the Depression when the market just was so depressed, but he fished, well, all of his adult life, and his sons followed him, and they fished, and they would catch huge amounts of fish during the Depression, but as I said, there was a receipt—that was—He stayed at, during World War II, when my dad was gone to the Navy, my uncle Lester Connaghan, who fished with my Dad, stayed at my

folks' house, and my granddad was gone to the war, you know. So he—and Father Dan Connaghan, you've met him?

KA: Mm-hmm.

AL: Ok. He—his dad, his mother, and he stayed upstairs in the house, and my mother and my older sister, Loretta, and I were downstairs. I was fourteen months old when Dad left for the war. For the Navy. So, they lived upstairs and fished and years later I found this receipt from the Booth fisheries where he and Grandpa got two cents a pound on whitefish. Two cents pound. That's all. So, they just kept puttin' up more and more nets, and more and more nets, and…

JR: The more fish that were caught, it further depressed the price.

AL: Right. Mm-hmm.

JR: And my great grand-father was a fish buyer for Booth and then later for, I think it was U.S. Fish, or something out of Chicago, so he would buy the other fish [caught by other fishermen], but the company in Chicago set the price, what they would get paid. And the big, long dock where they would carry the nets (16:48) was all wood, and there was an icehouse, and a probably diesel-powered ice crusher, and they would drag, well, first slide down a ramp, as they cut the layers of ice down in the icehouse. And they'd slide it out on the dock, and there was so much friction from the boards that the ice would shoot into the lake, and they'd drag it with a pair of tongs, and break it. And with something they could lift, dump it in the ice-crusher, and the ice would spew out ice cube-sized chunks on to a heavy, steel plate, and they had a—it looked like a coal shovel—and they'd scoop the ice up with a shovel, and put a layer in these boxes that were made round the harbor at a mill. Gus Mielke's mill. And then the fish were not cleaned in "the round" [The fish were shipped in "the round". (Not cleaned at all)]. They'd go right into the box. Whereas today, what the fisherman round harbor, he dresses the fish, takes the innards out. So, I don't think some of those fish not dressed, packaged in ice, shipped down-lake to Chicago, probably weren't real good fish.

AL: Well, in the later years though, in the se—in the thirties, they would ice 'em down here and put them on the ferryboat to Charlevoix, and someone there would ice them down again, and they'd go on the train. They'd go by rail, then.

JR: Sure.

AL: To Chicago. So, they woulda been a bit fresher, but that's still long time before they get the fish to market.

JR: My grandmother taught me—And I was gettin' fish from my uncle, or his mother, my grandma, and she always told me "Check the eyes, and see if they're glazed, or if they're bright", 'cause they're bright-lookin', alive lookin'. That was a fresh fish. And we'd gut the whole fish. But, they did dress them right on the dock too, or coming in on the boat, they'd dress 'em. But I think in early years, in the round, as they said, they shipped that way.

AL: Well, when I gave the reference to my uncle and grandfather selling fish, that was to the Booth Fisheries. They sold them two cents a pound. It was in the round. That's without them being cleaned in "the round".

JR: Not semi-cleaned. But, it was a hard life and it was a dangerous one, but when they fish were—When the price was a little better, the fish were very plentiful, in the nineteen twenties, my grandfather would not set any nets in the summer. They would just fish in the spring and the fall. And they would take the—literally take the summer off. Then, in the wintertime, my grandmother came and would go in to Charlevoix and stay in an apartment. The house here had no insulation. And they burned coal in the stove in the dining room—the

wooden one in the kitchen. It was not a very comfortable place to be in the cold weather. I don't think anybody insulated houses 'til the nineteen forties.

AL: Well, nowhere—They didn't have insulation back then. Before that. I'm sure they didn't. Nowhere in America. I'm sure they didn't. It didn't exist.

JR: One of the first things they did was, in the insulation industry, and they took newspaper, newsprint, shredded it, and then later they fire-proofed it and sold it in great big bags, and that's what we put into our house up there. Boared holes through the siding, through the cellar. The boards underneath the cellar. Rented a machine from the mainland, blew it in to the sidewalls, all the way around, and then up in the attic. It was initially in there at least twenty inches deep, but of course, it settles. And it works pretty darn good. Do you have—What kind of insulation do you have?

AL: Fiberglass.

JR: Fiberglass. So it was construction fiberglass.

AL: Yeah.

The Transition from Ireland to Beaver Island

KA: Well, one thing I was wondering about was, for your families that came from Ireland to here, were there any big changes that— in their social structure or just the way they lived here, compared to on Ireland? Did they have to make big adjustments? (22:20).

AL: No, on Ireland—They---On Ireland they were all Catholic. Church was the center to their life. When they got here it was the same thing. They—When they were, like, in New York, or Boston, or in Canada, they were discriminated against. The Irish were constantly discriminated against. In Boston, there would be signs in windows "Help Wanted, Irish Need Not Apply". And signs on lawns, "Dogs and Irish, Stay Off the Grass". So, there was the great discrimination against the Irish, so when they got here, there was only a handful of French, a handful of Germans, and probably seventy-five percent Irish, so they--they were comfortable. They were—

JR: They'd fight with each other, but—

AL: Oh yeah. They would fight with each other all the time. But they had the Catholic Church that was the center of their social life, and house parties, there was no television. There was no radio, then. So, house parties was on Saturday nights someplace. A barn dance, or somebody had a good-sized parlor in their home. The musicians would show up and they would play music, and sing, and dance, so they had that camaraderie. You know, so—So, if-Well, then in Ireland, they starved. It was after the potato famine. And our people got off Árainn Mhór. It was sold. The whole island of Árainn Mhór was sold. And I can't think of his name, but its—They have it in there. And this English lad—er—He was from Belfast, or whatever. He purchased the island. He wanted to reduce the population. There was six hundred people living there, or whatever. He wanted to reduce the numbers greatly to re—to raise more sheep to sell, you know, to sell to England and the world, so, he imposed a tax. People had to pay a property tax on the land that they had, or they had to leave. So, for most of the people that had to leave, that came to Beaver Island, the tax would amount to one dollar. And they—they didn't have it so, they had—they were evicted. And then, they came in the coffin ships, and you know what---you know, the sailing ships. There was unsanitary conditions and next to nothing to eat, and whatever. A lot of people died on the way over. They would just throw their bodies over the side, you know, bury 'em at sea and say a few prayers. So, when they got here---and Árainn Mhór's a barren island. Did you go with Dr. Rotman when she went?

KA: We did not go to Árainn Mhór, no.

AL: There's no trees or bushes. It's—It's a barren. Just rocks, and grass. Enough for the goats to eat. The sheep. That's about it. So, when they got here, they had all the forests. They had farmland. The Mormons had been here. They'd cleared the land. So, they had the ready-made farms. The Mormons were gone, so it was—it was like goin' from Hell to Heaven. The Potato Famine, and the British oppression, and the lack of everything. And then here, the fish were plentiful, good farmland already cleared, timber, all kinds of firewood, and bushes and flowers. Everything that they didn't have in Ireland and more, so, I would think it was—it was like leavin' Hell and comin' to Heaven. Woulda been about the way it woulda looked to them. Plenty to eat. The lake was teeming with fish. And, in Ireland, they were starvin'. My mother said during the Depression—Now, she was from a family of fourteen children, and every now and then, her—her dad or mother got a letter from relatives back in Ireland, on Árainn Mhór sayin' "Could you please spare a dollar?" sent to us. If the Depression was bad in America, it was much worse in Ireland. Much, much worse.

And, Mother said that her mom and dad, they'd read the letter five or six times, and just didn't know how the hell, you know, during the Depression here, with fourteen children to feed, how they could come up with an extra dollar (26:18). And, you know, the pleas. The children, none of them would have shoes, you know. And it was so sad, but mother said there was no way that her mom and dad could even spare a dollar. When they'd go to the grocery store, my grandmother would count out—She knew the grocery bill would be three dollars and seventy-four cents, and she'd have to scrounge around the house for the extra money, and then she'd tell mother while the others were—"Go up to the boys room"—Some of the boys were older. They were fishin' or whatever—And see, all the boards had cracks like that,---See if one of the boys dropped a nickel. They needed another nickel to get whatever groceries. So, the girls'd comb through their older brothers bedroom and they'd find the nickel or whatever to—enough to get the groceries for the day, so…

JR: Well, my people [The Irish and others] came in through Montréal, Canada. St. Lawrence Seaway, of course, later. They came from New York, and they came from Philadelphia, and a few years ago, I was at a R-V reunion of a caravan when we went on to Alaska in ninety-six. And, there was a statue bein' made, Colorado Art Castings, at Louviers, Colorado. And, uh, it was a huge thing. Oh, bigger than, like, two cars side by side in size and it showed the immigration from Ireland, because the statue was going to Philadelphia, and at the beginning, there was a panorama, with a message. The young man had been digging in the soil. His mother is standing there. His hands are like this. No potatoes. Nothing. And then it showed the people walking up around this statue. Huge statue. And at the end, they are coming in through the gates in…Philadelphia. And were you to ever go there, you would see that statue. You always saw that lady. So, it was a tribute to, and memory of, the terrible facts. By the time my McCann relatives came to this country, the famine had passed. The potato blight that had caused a great deal of suffering, famine, was over.

In 1852, they came in one of those coffin ships he referred to. And it was a vessel out of Liverpool, England that stopped in Ireland, and it was the, um, John M. Stuart. I have a record of that. The passenger manifest. When my great grandfather who was just a child. He was ten or twelve years old. His parents came from the Old Country, and went to Mackinac Island, and the great grandmother—great-great grandmother was a Mary O'Malley. We used to say that we were related to Grace O'Malley, the woman pirate from Ireland, but, not true. (Laughter). And she married a John McCann, who was my great-great grandfather, and they were both buried in St. Ann's cemetery in Mackinac (30:24), but then their son, James and Pat came to Whiskey Island, and then to Beaver Island. Pat left. He was a lighthouse keeper at Waugoshance Lighthouse. The one that's out away from the shore, but they fished, because the fish were barely jumpin' in your nets. They were so plentiful.

They would write--People from the Island would write back to their relatives in Ireland, and tell them about this wonderful place, and so, one of our Beaver Island Journals from the Historical Society tells a tale that there were seventeen Gallagher families once on the island at the same time. And, they couldn't all trace—Most of them couldn't trace common ancestry, because there were that many. So, they all got nicknamed. There's a great tale from the journals about the nicknames. Really funny. The one about the father and son, both named Phil. The dad was called "Big Phil", and the son, "Little Phil". Then, the son would get bigger

than the dad got littler. So, the names got pretty hilarious that people had, but I always remember that one. [It became Little Big Phil and Little Big Phil].

Relationship between fishermen, farmers, merchants, and loggers

KA: That's really funny. Another question I was wondering about was in light of the booming fishing industry, I was wondering if any sort of class divisions were created? Like, between the different occupations? Like were the fishermen sort of in the class of their own? Or the fish buyers? Or the merchants?

AL: Not that I know of.

JR: There were the fishermen, the farmers, many of them German, south of town. And, the loggers. I would say the logging has gone on well over a hundred years.

AL: Well, yeah. The loggers primarily would come and go, but those that fished and farmed, you know, they were here generation after generation, but I don't—I never heard of any class divisions.

JR: There were friendly rivalries. I remember they would call the—the farmers "hayseeds" and the farmers would call the fishermen "fish-chokers".

AL: Now, even yet, on St. Patrick's Day, they always, right here in town, they have the big festivity the Saturday of the weekend of St. Patrick's Day. The big celebration would always be Saturday either right after St. Patrick, or before. But, they'd have a lot of activities here in town and one is the rope-pull contest between the hayseeds and the fish-chokers. So, it's boiled down—I mean, there was never, I mean, bloodshed or anything like that, but it was more or less, you were a hay-seeder or a fish-choker, but if you come down now, they have right here in front of the Shamrock, they have that. I don't know if you've—Well, if you've—Well, I've got copies of the Beacons at home, and the Northern Islander, it would show them. And that's what they call the people from the Peaine Township that would be on the one side and the people in town, even though nobody fishes anymore obviously,---I mean, just Skip Duhamel---but they would—they still get out there. And they would—And then the people come from the mainland for the weekend, they would "Come over here. You come over here." So, people who didn't farm nor fish, you know, they would pick a side, on one side or the other. It was all a friendly rivalry. (Whether there was any fists to get in power (34:27) back in the years, the fisher—I don't think so.)

The farmers out there grew everything. Everything they grew, they had a ready market here in town. There was hundreds of people here in town, and not everyone fished. There was carpenters, people buildin' houses, or whatever, you know. People workin' the sawmills, the loggers, whatever. But the farmers would sell everything here in town that they raised. They would grow extra sheep and cattle to be shipped off of the mainland, but all their produce, all their vegetables, their eggs, you know, potat---everything. And the chickens they raised, and the hogs could all be sold here in town. And so, it was, that was their customers, so I doubt very much if there was friction, or fighting, or animosity. Oh, there's bound to be a bar fight, you know---

JR: There were individual ones—

AL: Guys gettin' drunk in the bar, you know, gettin' physical, you know. There'd be a few occasions here and there.

JR: Sure.

AL: As far as fishermen warrin' with another fisherman, back and forth. And farmers come into town, buy the fish, and leave stuff. And my grandfather'd be, Grandfather LaFreniere came to work for the lumber company later, then he married my grandmother, what's now the gift shop there, they expanded and added a grocery store, and all the women out in the country would always make their own butter. They'd have their

milk, and they had butter, and they'd keep what they want. They'd bring the rest in and sell it at the grocery store, and bring eggs in, and you know, whatever. And there was---We had our own meat market here. Be my—my grandmother's brother and her dad had a meat market that's down what they call "Whimsy". That was the meat market, and that's where my grandmother's dad first—His name was Lawrence Malloy—And he got the meat there that his son, Lawrence Jr. butchered. And the farm was in great shape. They made sure the sheep—They'd bring the sheep in, everything, you know. The beef, you know, they wanted to sell there, at the meat market there. And, so then, they were—

And then on my mother's side, her Dad and her brother were fisherman, and, so that whole end of the family, after Grandpa did all the logging, and on his mother's side, my dad's mother was a Boyle. They were farmers. They lived out of the harbor. They were all farmers. The Boyles were farmers. And the Malloys and Connaghans were fishermen. And then my grandfather was caught in the middle. Well, he was a logger, then he ended up bein' a grocer, so you had carpenters, you had masons, you had every—you know, everything. So, not everyone was a fisherman, but the farmers all had a ready market, so it was—And then the Church was the center of everything, and the social activities were all at the Church. And then you had your house parties, you know. And then there was the drinkin', you know. And Barry Pischner would sing a song and he'd drink from the jar. That'd be moonshine back in those days.

KA: Right.

Baseball on the Island

JR: Gus Mielke had a mill. There was—He was German. And there were the Pischners, the Allers, the Mielkes, others, and they had a German band. There was a picture in the back of the print shop where the logging display is. I'm pretty sure that's where I saw it. And they had their own brass instruments that made horrendous sound, I guess. (Laughter). (ALJohnnyBIBaseball)There were baseball games when I was a little kid over at the ball diamond. It wasn't softball. It was slow-pitch. Today, it's not even a sport. They played hardball.

AL: Baseball. Regular baseball.

JR: There were at least two teams, and Coast Guard. Your dad was in the Coast Guard. Coast Guard played on the edge of town. Two of the Cornstalk boys, who were Indian, one was a pitcher and one was a catcher. And they were pretty good-sized strapping young men. And they could—they were good athletes. They still hold a game, slow-pitch, over Fourth of July. (39:07).

AL: Well, back then—Well, first his dad—his dad was---the baseball team they had back when they still had the Beaver Island Lumber Company, and his dad was the catcher. And they would go on fish tugs to play other teams on the mainland, and then, when Dad'd got old enough to play, it was the same thing. They would leave here on fish tugs. And Willie John Gallagher, he owned the house at the end of the street next to the Parish Hall. He was the manager of the team, and he'd have a couple, three fish tugs lined up, the guys are gonna take out. So, he would go around and make sure all the guys who would play ball had to get down and sleep on the fish tug. He'd have 'em down there about ten o'clock Saturday night. And my dad used to tend bar at the Shamrock. His dad owned the Shamrock. He'd be tendin' bar and Willie John would go and sit there, make sure he didn't take a drink, and soon as the bar closed, and Dad cleaned up the bar, right down and…whatever you had, you had to have it with you.

So, he had them all out there so they wouldn't be out drinkin' and partyin', and then they'd leave about six in the mornin'. They'd go to Mackinac Island or even to Harbor Springs. That was the short route, but Mackinac Island, they had to leave real early, ended up there, and there'd always be people there to meet them, take them to church and, get 'em something to eat and then right to the ballpark. They'd play a doubleheader, and then go back again, but that was the longest run I think they made was to Mackinac Island. That's—That's—And those fish tugs weren't very fast, so it was a long day, going, playing a double-header over there. Or, they'd go in to Charlevoix, and play there, you know, which is not that long of a run.

But, he said that the one game-- I'll never forget this---They went to Mackinac Island the one time, and their pitcher was a one-armed pitcher, and the other guys had, there was, you know, one of the Wassagesiks—Alex. Alex Wassagesik. It was Alex Wassagesik, was a pitcher. And he was good. And they went—That game went the full nine innings. And they—Our guys won one to nothing. Against that one-armed pitcher. And, I'll never forget that. That's the only thing I remember of all the games he played, and he mentioned things about different games.

JR: Sure.

AL: That sticks out in my mind. Was the one-armed pitcher on Mackinaw Island. And our pitcher was an Indian lad, and was born on High Island. And he was very good. So, our guys had won one to nothing in that nine innings there. And that's what sticks in my mind about him pitching there. And before that his grandfather played on the previous team, and he was a catcher, and he was good, so..But, see, they were---Back then, my grandpa was a logger, and my dad was in the Coast Guard, and had logged with his dad, and then the Coast Guard. So, they were all trim and fit, you know? And the fishermen, that's hard work. So, all the guys, they were athletic, you know. They wanted to put the [energy] in athletics. They had the physique for it, and they worked hard, you know, from--They had the strength. They had the grit, you know. And they always—Beaver Island always put out a good baseball team. And still do.

JR: But, it was a big deal, the Sunday baseball games over here at the diamond, because they didn't have movies, television, other activities here, and so the crowd really turned out. A lotta people were watchin' the games.

Growing up on the Island/School experience

KA: Growing up did you—like—Did you live mostly in town or did you--? Did you both? Then I was just wondering like how often you were able to, like, see people from the country?

AL: John was a city slicker. He only lived here one full year. One winter he went to school here.

KA: Oh, ok.

AL: Yeah, just the one year.

JR: That's not so.

AL: You only went once—one year to school, didn't you?

JR: Not one. I came here when I was six years old, and when I was about thirteen or fourteen, my parents moved to Bay City.

AL: Well, I thought you only went here one full winter.

JR: No, and then, when my grandmother was a widow, wanted to stay late in the fall and come early in the spring, I would go to school in Bay City seven months and two months up here.

KA: Would that be the school in town or?

JR: Yeah. Well, that old school was just a square box.

AL: They were torn down, the school.

KA: Sunnyside, or Roosevelt?

AL: Well, Sunnyside—No, no. They were out in the country.

KA: Country. Oh, ok.

AL: Yeah. Right where the present school is. That was our school. The school I went to, the McKinley School. Was that the school you went to?

JR: Yes.

AL: It was named after President McKinley.

JR: Two-story, square box, and there were schools all over the nation named McKinley School for the—They renamed Mount Denali in the Denali National Park in Alaska, Mount McKinley. And I referred to that after we had been in that caravan. Rudy, or Ruth Denny said "It's Mount Denali". (Laughter). Real emphatic about that. And she was right. She was a geologist by training.

AL: Then, that school, they quit usin' it, oh, about nineteen-sixty or so, but in about sixty-three or sixty-four, it was torn down, the McKinley School. And then they kept expandin' the present school, and what's up there now, and then all that was torn down about three years ago. What you see now is all brand-new, with the exception of the gymnasium. That's all new so, the schools he and I went to were thrown in the dumpster a long time ago. (Laughter).

JR: But, McKin—Not McKinley. Sunnyside was a grade school for the kids that lived south of town. When they came into high school, they came downtown. And the high school was little more than a lean-to on the Holy Cross Hall.

AL: What's now the kitchen in the Holy Cross Hall.

JR: Yeah.

AL: That was the high school for alotta years. But the, uh, Sunnyside school—You've been out where the carwash and Laundromat, is?

KA: Mm-hmm.

JR: On the other side of that is like that spin operation, Cary concrete. That building, that's the Sunnyside School. Then, if you went south to the end of the blacktop to McCauley Road, right there was a little schoolhouse called Roosevelt school, and that's been a private home for forty, fifty years or so.

AL: A long time.

KA: And, for Sunnyside and Roosevelt, those were just the kids who lived in the country, right?

AL: Yeah. And then, bit by bit, there'd be—once the fishin' went down the tubes, the farmers, their market was gone, so, they all start—Well, World War II, there wasn't much employment here. You know, the fishing was on the decline, so World War II, the young guys went into service. The people and the girls went away to work in the factories. So, then, by the time the war was over, the fishing was really gone so there wasn't even any reason for the farmlands to stay. So, World War II made that big difference. So, when the guys got back from the service, they hung around for a few months or whatever. Yeah. And then they had to go down to get jobs downstate too, 'cause work was really opening up by then, you know, in Chicago and Detroit, or they went sailing on the oar boats. But, there was just an exodus off the island.

JR: Yeah, farmers and fisherman—

AL: During the war---

JR: --Sailed on the lakes, on the big boats.

AL: So, the Roosevelt school, nineteen forty-two was the last year for that school. That's the one where the King's Highway intersects with McCauley Road. That—And it's still there that building's still there. It's a private home now. Seldom there used anymore. But, that closed in forty-two, and then the Roosevelt, or the Sunnyside School, about ten years later, ten or eleven years later. That closed. Fifty-three maybe, 'cause there just wasn't—there wasn't any point in that. They only had maybe fifteen students at the most, or maybe not even that many, so they just started comin' into town.

JR: When the early nineteen hundreds, or early part of the nineteenth century, say nineteen five to nineteen-what?--pick a number, thirty---the economy boomed within itself, and there were two dairies here. And milk, of course, was not pasteurized. For that and other reasons, tuberculosis was a health concern. There were at least one, maybe two families that the tuberculosis went through like a plague, and killed many of the people.

AL: Now, raw milk would contribute to tuberculosis?

JR: Yes. It could. It could be a factor. A long time ago. And I think one of my grandfather's brothers, James contracted it, and he was the one that my great grandfather had groomed to be the businessman of the grocery store and the fish buyer. And then sent him--he was twenty years old—to Denver to try to recover his health. That was a common thing to recover from TB. Higher altitude. But, he died out there. He didn't make it, and he's buried in Holy Cross Cemetery. But, we can both think of one particular family that tuberculosis was rampant. (pause).

KA: Kaitlyn actually had a question about logging. And maybe you could help her out?

The Logging Industry and its Effects on the Beaver Island Economy

KD: I was wondering—I had a couple questions. One is with your grandfather, you mentioned that he was involved in logging, and then he transitioned into the business and the grocery store. Why did he make that transition? Why did he stop logging?

AL: Well, the Beaver Island Lumber Company left in nineteen fifteen. (50:03), but when he married my grandmother, she already had the business here. She had what's now the gift shop right next door. And, as I said, she sold bolts of cloth and everything for sewing. And so, well, they got married, they started raising children right away, so she was home. The house that they lived in was right—was right in the building there, right next door to the Shamrock. So, it was that house there. That's where they were---No, first, I'm sorry, they lived upstairs over the gift shop—That's now the gift shop. They lived upstairs there first. That's where my dad was born. Well, she was startin' to have children and the store was sittin' there and there's no—not alotta money in logging. You know, they were gettin' two dollars a day, or whatever, for the logs so, he took over that, and turned it into a general store. And then after he made money—started to make a little money—Then he hired his own crews in the winter to log. Then he became the head honcho, and he would have guys log for him all winter long. And my dad quit school, and in the tenth grade when he was sixteen and down to join his dad at the logging camp.

Grandpa would go down and do the loggin', supervise in the winter months, and then he'd have somebody else run the store. The lady, Grace Cole, who lived in that house there, she would run the store for him. That was my Dad's first cousin. So, she would work at the store when he was down watchin' the loggin' operation, you know. Or, he'd have another one of my grandmother's relatives, you know, take care. So, anyway, Dad quit school, went down and logged for him. So, he would have got up—So, he didn't really get out of logging entirely. And—But, so he was involved in a lot of things. When you live on Beaver Island, you have to get involved in a lot of things to make ends meet. Not very many people would do just the one thing.

The fishermen would go loggin' in the wintertime, and the farmers would be loggin' in the wintertime, and you know, whatever to make ends meet. Or, you were a carpenter. In later years, when we'd do electricity, a lot of the farmers would take up electricity, and when they, in the winter months, when they were done with

their harvest and all that, then they would do their wiring or you didn't have drywall back then. You'd probably seen an old house torn done back then, the wooden lath, the little nails, you know, million--wouldn't last and a million of the little nails, and you made your own plaster, and spread it up there, 'cause they didn't have the drywall. Some guys—maybe a fisherman would be good at that, or a farmer, so you would do that.

JR: Plastering was a skill. I say, plastering was a real skill.

AL: Sure, yeah.

JR: You had to have a really good eye to get that plaster straight. We took—My son's a drywall contractor And he does other things, but we had him cover the old plaster with thin drywall on all the downstairs, up both stairways, down the hallway. We didn't have the bedrooms done. They were just wallpaper, but that's---covers up all the cracked plaster over the many years, but, you know, you were talkin' about them doin' different things in different seasons. It was extremely hard to make it, and the Martin family, my grandmother's family, that lived way down the lower east side, where Martin's Bluff is. They fished in the spring and the fall, they farmed in the summer, and they cut cedar logs in the winter, and the whole southern third or more of the island, is wetlands, you know, where the King's Highway stops. It's all wet all the way to the south end. So, when they—the wet areas froze over, they could get to the cedar logs and the trees, which grow extremely well in the wetlands. It was pretty interesting. What I was told. The Martins had three different occupations.

AL: Well, then alotta the farmers, everyone burned—well, most people burned wood. There was some people burned coal they brought over, but the train, the railroad, for one reason—I don't know why they didn't burn wood because they had plenty of it to burn, but they brought coal over, but other coal would be brought—Some people used it in their woodstoves. Coast Guard station all had—They had a coal furnace and so other people had coal furnaces rather than wood, but most homeowners burned wood. Well, in the wintertime, your farmers, well, some would have the heavy—the long, heavy sleds, called the bobsleds, and they'd go with a team of horses. Three or four of them would go out on a day, and they would cut their own firewood for themselves for the following winter, and then they would cut an enormous amount of wood to sell to other people on the island. They'd come into town, people who didn't have horses or sleds, to sell them their firewood. So, that was another way that they would make a living.

And some of the people who fished, like the O'Donnells, they were livin—the family home was right next to the school, where Mary and Edward Palmer live now. Mary's mother was an O'Donnell, and that was her grandparents' home. Well, he had, Willie, in fact, we called him "Willie the Woodchopper". He was a fisherman by trade, but all winter long---He had horses. He had a barn down there. And he would go out and cut firewood to sell to people in town. So, not many people had one occupation. You had, you know, you had to pick up other things, because there was no unemployment, and you know, when you weren't pullin' nets with fish or when you couldn't sell any sweet corn in February, you had to come up with another way to make money because there was no such thing as welfare or….

JR: No safety nets, as we have today.

AL: You worked or you went without, you know? (56:13).

JR: When you—if you were to go into the Marine Museum, you would see, on the display of the fishing fleets, a number of boats that had a big black smokestack. Those were all coal burners. So, since there were six or seven steam—steam engines, all were tugs. A vessel would bring the coal in, set it in big piles on the dock, and because my great grandfather owned the dock, the coal was his to sell. His sons, my uncle and my grandfather, they would bring coal home, and you would burn wood on a big square woodstove through the day, but at night, you'd put a chunk of coal in there to tide you overnight. So, you'd get up in the morning and hit it with the poker and it'd break open, and he'd throw a fresh supply of wood in there, but ninety-percent of what you burned was wood, which was an inexhaustible supply.

AL: Readily available.

Beaver Island Logging Company/Beaver Island Identity

KD: Now, when the Beaver Island Logging Company came, and logging sort of took off, did it---This is sort of a multi-faceted question, but did they—Did it change the land use on the island a lot once the logging company was here and did it change sort of the identity of some of the people who took on logging in any sense?

AL: I don't really know. (AlvinJRLoggingCo) Most of the people that logged came from the mainland. There was—They worked for that lumber company. There was a few local people, but they needed an awful lot of people to work that logging company, and they would have to have every single person on the island, fisherman, farmer, if they were to do that, so, most of the people that logged came from the mainland, and some stayed for five or six years. Some only three years. Some remained on and married and stayed a few—But, I don't---There wasn't a whole lot of native-born islanders working—I don't think.

JR: Generally--

AL: Everybody was fishin' and farmin'. Well, they might go out in the winter maybe and log a little bit, you know, to make a living in the winter, but a farmer couldn't hardly justify workin' for seventy-five cents a day or whatever they were gettin', and not—not farm. So,--

JR: Imagine, they brought the trains in by ship, and the mill that belonged to the Beaver Island Lumber Company, later Gus Mielke's mill. The trash, before the last blacktop job, you could still see depressions in the old blacktop where the rails had come across the road at Anderson's marina, just between there and the McDonoughs' store. So, the rails went down back in town, went through the Heritage Park area, where we were setting up an assimilated rail bed today. It went down the west side of the island behind Barney's Lake, and you can still walk back there and find spikes, and I suppose there would be some in the wood there, but one of my grandsons, years ago, he found a half of a shoebox full of spikes. And, they weren't very big. But, the rails, they went through the south, as far south as they logged, and they had small schools. They would build a room building, and they also provided teachers, or they hired islanders to teach school to the children of the loggers. And, anyway, they went further and further south, and when they were done cutting over, and the lumber company had bought huge acreage, particularly on the west side where the hardwood tends to be. And then, when they were done, they pulled the spikes, took the rails on flatbeds as they treated northward, leaving the ties behind, and that's why we, for so many years, could find spikes, and down near Camp 3 trail, it was what? A big chunk of rail stuck to the soil?

AL: Yeah. When the lumber company left they tore up all the rails. They took all the rails with them unless there was some that were bent a little bit, then they would just throw them off to the side. The spikes are in perfect condition, but they threw all of them off to the side. I don't know why they salvaged all the rails except the bent ones and they'd leave them, but all the spikes were in perfect condition, and they threw them to the side. We dug out dad's garage there a couple weeks ago, and he had a whole box of railroad spikes. Surprisingly, they are only that long. I thought they would be longer so they only went an inch and a half or so into the wood, but they knew what they were doing I guess.

JR: That's probably why they had the train wreck.

AL: I don't know but you know how short they were. They weren't all that long…but how many islanders [worked for the lumber company?] I don't know, but like I said my paternal grandfather and some of his brothers and his dad came to work and some of his cousins came to work and a lot of them over here and my grandpa was one of the loggers that stayed. And his brother Archie married one of the local girls from Garden Island I guess, and he stayed here for a while, and then moved later to Ann Arbor I guess, but some of them stayed, but most of the people that came and worked for the logging industry most of them left but some stayed on and did some farming and whatever, but most of them left in later years. They only worked

for a few years and left. Most of the island people had enough to work as it was; some of them worked for the logging company but not a lot.

JR: The Sendenbergs did.

AL: No, maybe in the wintertime. My maternal grandfather Hugh Connaghan of course a fisherman, and when he wasn't fishing he worked at the saw mill where the Beaver Island Marina is now, not the municipal one the first one, but the one down by McDonough's that marina. There was a sawmill there. My grandparents' house was just about two blocks away. So anyway, when he wasn't out on the lake he would work at the sawmill. So, there were many ways to make a living. And he worked for Gus Mielke, he was German, and he was Protestant but there didn't seem to be any rivalry either, the religious rivalry, didn't seem to be. My grandmother, she was Irish, Malloy from Árainn Mhór, would never vote, didn't believe in it. But my grandfather came home one day and said Gus Mielke was running for Schoolboard, and it was going to be a close election, and he said, "Uh Kate, Gus needs your vote." So, she went and registered and voted, and that was the only time she ever voted in her life. Was for Gus Mielke for the school board and she never voted again. And so, there could have been [rivalry]. Most of the Protestant guys married Catholic girls, and so there didn't seem to be that rivalry.

KA: Did there seem to be any kind of animosity when the French side of your family first came to the island?

AL: Some, yeah. When they first came they weren't Catholic. They came over in the 1640s or 1630s, and for a hundred years, they never saw a Catholic priest, and there was that little bit of animosity, but then when they started marrying all the Catholic girls around here and they turned Catholic. Then, all that ended too. Well, and then my grandfather's name was Narcisse and changed it to Nels and simplified it. And his dad was born in Quebec, two days horseback ride from Quebec City, so when he came his name was Narcisse, which was a common name in France, I guess, or in Quebec, but on Beaver Island it didn't gel, so they both became Nels.

JR: Well, there was a French family here the name was Brine, and at any rate they changed it to O'Brien.

AL: Oh, I didn't know that. You put an "O" in front of it and you're all set.

JR: I'm going to use the bathroom; I'll be right back.

KD: Speaking of folks coming from outside of the Irish community, like the French, do you know if there was …how the folks who lived here for a long time…how did they perceive the influx of folks from the mainland with the logging company. Did they perceive them differently?

Beaver Island Economy/Transportation

AL: I don't know. Like I said, some were here for only a few years. But I don't think there was any animosity. It was extra income with all those loggers. They had to eat, so what the farmers grew and what the fishermen caught, so the sales were there. And some people, such as my grandfather, worked at the sawmill from time to time when he wasn't fishing, but not that I know of, but then I was born much later, but I never heard anything of it. But in the Depression, what I was told there wasn't any money to speak of, but no one went hungry, and if someone was injured everyone else on the island would cut their wood for them and bring them food so they never went hungry, so you know, whatever they needed. And when you got better, and someone needed a hand, you were expected to help out.

Now my father, his dad owned the Shamrock, and during the Depression, there was practically no money around in the wintertime, so New Year's was the last day the bar would be open, and my grandpa would close cause there was no money and he would open up on Saint Patrick's Day. And at daylight on Saint Patrick's Day, there was a lot of Native Americans lived over on High Island, and there were a lot of maple trees there. And they were noted for all of their maple syrup and maple sugar they would make, and dad said

at daylight you could see all the Indians coming off High Island coming over here, and they would have their syrup they would go door to door and sell their syrup and sugar. The sugar they would sell in a little cube for ten cents, but the people couldn't afford to buy that. So, they would go door to door, and sell their syrup so they would have money to celebrate on Saint Patrick's Day.

So they would drop them off to Grandpa's, and he would save them until summer time, and, when the tourists came, they would have the ten cents to buy them…the maple sugar. So, they would do it that way. And a lot of the Native American women, they made baskets woven out of pieces of wood. Practical baskets and they would make bigger baskets. All the women on the island would have them to put their sewing in, or they would be laundry baskets. They would bring those over door to door to sell them. In those days, the Native Americans had relatives over here or someone they would stay with for a few days, and they would sell their sugar, and then they would get pots, pans, salt, you know, whatever they needed to take back, bolts of cloth, you know, whatever they would need, batteries for their radios. There was no electricity at the island until 1939, so people had battery powered radios. Probably about 20 percent of what was in Grandpa's store on the shelves was batteries. Radios, boy, that was the big thing, so everyone had to have a radio, and they needed batteries, and they weren't rechargeable. Well, there was no electricity to recharge them with anyway. So, they would sell birch bark baskets, the natives from High Island.

And my dad would tell me time and time again how they would make a lot of maple syrup over there, and sell it, and the Native American women would make their baskets, and sell them over here, and our women would buy the practical baskets, the plain baskets, to put their clothes in or knitting, and then they would make fancy ones with all kinds of beadwork, but none of the women here could afford them. So, in the summer time, if you come past the King Strang Hotel, the Indians would come on the weekends, Saturday and Sunday, on the porch and that would be a bazaar, and they would sell their baskets to the tourists. The fancy ones, because the island women couldn't afford them---the fancy beaded ones---but when I saw that basket in there [the Historical Society], I said that's what Dad was talking about. You know that was what they would make them out of, birch bark. They didn't buy buckets, and they wouldn't leak and that's how they would carry their water, their drinking water out of the stream, river, lake. Life was hard. There was no unemployment, no social security, nothing of that sort. You worked and when you got old if you were nice to people on the way up, they would take care of you when you were old and on the way down.

JR: Well, one of the stories about…there was relief. It was called sort of a welfare and government program administered by the county, and there was a story and I won't name the family…

AL: Is that what Lorraine was saying about the old pension check that comes to the door?

JR: Well, this was relief or emergency aid.

KA: When was this around?

JR: In the, probably in the 30s, and the story goes without naming names. The old man died and they put him in the root cellar till spring and that was the story. And the man came from the county to do a head count of the family. One of the sons was quite homely and had cauliflower ears and looked like a prize fighter who'd never won a flight so they put him in bed and passed him off as his father. Do you know who I'm talking about?

AL: Yeah I heard that same story.

JR: But it's only a story.

AL: His picture's still hanging on the wall at the Beachcomber.

JR: But the travel was very difficult here. On the east side of the island when you get south of town about four or five miles there is a two -rack road by the cottages that meanders, have you ever seen that? You

know, you've got the straight road down the east side and then between that and where the cottages are there is this road that is up and down the hill and around. That was the original road [AL agrees] in the thirties. Certainly, but my uncle had an old Ford that he bought from the Bundys, and it had isinglass windows that you snapped on and fasten somewhat, but he would drive over the top down and no side windows in the summer, but that thing would just putt, putt, putt, and sometimes, you thought it wouldn't make it over the next hill. Uh, when the lighthouse keepers, of which there were two, John Andy Gallagher who lived around the harbor and Burt McDonough was across the street from the Catholic rector. They would stay down for two weeks at a time at the lighthouse at the south end. There were living quarters there now there are apartments in there, there were several years ago. So, a trip from the south end to town was very long and difficult and in the wintertime must have been less than impossible. Then Turner had a double runner sleigh, and he was out Sloptown Road, near a road that goes to Barneys Lake, and his farm had about a hundred feet of lilacs. That was his farm, and when he came into town and I had to go to the store and if I happened to spot him coming, I could hop on the back of the sleigh and get a ride into town. Just traveling the island was difficult.

KA: So, did you mostly interact with people in town?

JR: Yes.

KA: Because of transportation?

JR: Yes. But the Catholic Church was where the Catholic cemetery is now, and during Lent, there were church services two or three times a week. Monday and Friday…

AL: No, Wednesday and Friday, and then you'd have the Sunday service. One Sunday morning and then again at two o clock in the afternoon.

JR: But that was a walk. Go up walk, but my cousin Bob McCann lived all the way around the harbor, the last house before you get to the (1:18:04) house, and uh, he had a big black dog who could pull a sleigh. The dog was powerful and he had a steel–runner wooden sleigh. He'd ride with the dog pulling all the way out to the church, and I'd hustle out and he'd slow down enough for me to jump on. Yeah, he pulled two of us.

AL: For us kids going to those devotions on Wednesday night and Friday night,---we were in grade school and early high school---that was a social event. We would have a snowball fight, pray, then wash the girls faces [with snow]. God, that was fun. The nuns would give you a good licking in school if you got caught, but at night going back to church, we'd get into snowball fights, and so it was part of the social. Playing all the way up and all the way down, then do the evening devotions.

JR: A large number of the nuns came from island families. One of my mother's first cousins, their name was Malloy, there were four sisters and all went into the Dominican order. Because the Dominicans taught here it generated a huge number of vocations. One of my first cousins, a brother of the guy who had the dog and the sleigh…he became a Dominican priest. His picture's in the back of the church, Father Jerome. One of the coast guard families…the Pop family…lived back of the ball diamond…they had a houseful of kids and one of the sisters, the older sister that I didn't know until she was teaching [as a Dominican nun] on the second story of the school, and I saw this happened more than once, if kids were talking down the aisle when they should have been paying attention, she had a big blackboard behind her and she'd reach back and get a hold of an eraser and she didn't always hit the one she was aiming at but she'd let fly and she'd get your attention…sister…the Pop gal…Sister Genevieve?

AL: No, Sister Genevieve was later. Sister Marie Genevieve, she was the principal when I was in 7th and 8th grade and 9th grade. So when we did something wrong…throwing snowballs at the girls, washing their faces, they'd tell on us. And she had a big ping pong paddle and you'd bend over and she'd give you five or six whacks with the ping pong paddle ever time you threw a snowball at one of the girls. God, my ass used to look like a waffle.

JR: Do you know where McCauley road is, where it hits East Side drive? That log cabin hidden behind the trees was the Dominican sisters' cottage, and they would swim at the beach, and their bathing suits…you didn't see any skin. They were practically covered head to foot. But many years later, 30, 40 years ago, I was up here on a summer vacation, and Don Cole and Donald Topper McDonough and I went down to visit Pop, her last name was Pop, and they were working on that cottage. It was cedar logs and there was a log that was rotting and those nuns, three of them, they had hacked and cut and they had gotten that log out and they were putting a new log in. They weren't going to wait for some man to do it. They did it. They didn't hire anybody. And they had a little cooking room off to the side of the cottage, and we sat in there. I think she's passed away now. She had a sister who was also in the order, but we never knew her. See, the island back in the early part of the 1900s, the community couldn't afford to pay a whole staff of lay teachers so the bishop of Grand Rapids sent the Dominican nuns up here to teach, and the tradition continued into the early 90s, and of course on the mainland that would be a no-no to have a nun in her habit teaching in a public school.

AL: About 95 years I think it was public school, but we had nuns. The only place in Michigan that had all nuns in a public school. They only got about 70 80 dollars a month. 75 maybe a hundred at the most. They couldn't have gotten lay teachers back then the tax base was practically nothing. So uh the athletic program once a year the school would buy us a softball and that was it. You brought your own glove and bat. The softballs were just twine rolled up with a rubber cover on them and they'd last about three games and then the cover'd be off and then every time you'd hit it more and more string would be off and then the string would be twenty feet behind the ball. So fortunately one of my cousins, Jerry LaFreniere, his dad owned what's now the community center, it was a general store there, so Jerry would keep coming up with more softballs his dad would give him or one of our parents would buy a softball. The school board would buy one softball a year that was the budget for the athletic department. So uh we got by. Well we'd just buy our own softballs and if you wanted a bat you'd bring your own. But uh the school board didn't spend much money on the youth that's for sure.

[Barry Pischner arrives on Historical Society porch]

JR: We have here the island's best singer.

AL: He won't sing unless he has his guitar with him.

Barry: Can I interrupt you for one minute?

JR: There are some of his CDs in the back.

AL: They're interviewing us.

Barry: You don't want to be interrupted then.

KA: We're almost done.

AL: Go inside.

Barry: Ok.

JR: Uh, I talked to Mary Lee. Did you get that resolved?

Man: Yeah I want to get an exact price before you do that.

AL: Was there anything else?

KD: I think that's good. You were very helpful. Thank you.

Doney Gallagher Homestead

KA: Just one last question, do you know anything about the Doney Gallagher house that we are excavating? Do you know who lived there ever?

AL: Well the first ones who lived there were in 1847, so no (Laughter).

JR: Well the last family that lived there the last member was Peter Gallagher and now was the Doney name from one of their ancestors?

AL: Who we called Peter Doney, that was Mary's nephew. The house was owned by Mary Early and her husband. I don't remember him at all but I remember seeing her in church on Sunday, and she was about 100 years old or close to 100 when she died [Johnny agrees]. And Peter was her nephew, and that's why she left the house to him. But all of us knew Peter and Dolores. I've known him since I was a kid.

JR: They're both deceased, although she didn't die too long ago.

AL: No, about two years ago.

KA: What did they do for a living?

AL: Peter was born and raised here, and they had a family farm, and he went to WWII, and he tried to make a living as a lot of the guys did, but for the fishers and farmers the ready made market in town was gone as I mentioned earlier so he went downstate and worked in the factory and did a bit of farming. I don't know what he did there, but he worked in the factory for thirty years and retired and moved back up here, and his aunt left him that house and instead of going out to his family home, (Well, that burned down some time later anyway that was his parents home) so that was his aunt's home. I never knew Mary Early's husband. He died earlier, but they farmed there and they had that one child I think; that's what Deborah said. I didn't know but Dr. Rotman said that they had one son I don't know what happened there.

JR: Peter had a brother, Lester. Now, was there a third brother?

AL: Patsy.

JR: Oh, Patsy.

AL: And they had a sister Anna.

JR: See, I didn't know her at all. Lester used to come up for homecoming and be dressed with a suit and a pair of two-toned shoes, and he could do a solo dance. He was probably one of the better dancers on Beaver Island. He fitted in with one of those Irish dance troops…his feet just…

AL: He died about four/five years ago and my mother's maiden name was Connaghan, and she had nine sisters and they loved to dance all of them and they were called the dancing Connaghan sisters. And there is only the one left now, that would be my aunt Anna. She lives down in Wheaton, Illinois, and the year that Lester died, he died in March or April, she would always come up for the homecoming, that's always the second week in august. The year that Lester died, she said well I'm not going to come up. She came up in June for a sister's funeral and they asked are you going to come up for the homecoming and she said no there is no point in it, Lester's dead. She would have come up just to dance with him. Now she had a brother Lester that would be Father Dan's dad. He loved to dance and he was a good dancer. But the other Lester (1:30:50). She wouldn't come for homecoming cause Lester's gone.

JR: Did Peter farm the old homestead there in the summer time when he'd come up?

AL: I don't think so. He did the grass cutting and took care of the cemetery and cut grass for other people, he had a trailer, but I don't think he farmed. He had a garden, but I don't think he farmed.

JR: Just beyond where the Sunnyside school was, there was a farm where the Ricksgers family and one of the sisters Katherine, she's the last of her family and she comes up here every summer, and one of her nephews Bob, the one that has the truck driving, he's pretty serious about growing vegetables. Number one fairway runs parallel to the road and right across the street is Doney Gallagher's home, and my buddy hits a mighty drive off fairway one, but he slices something and uses the driver and his ball goes clear up over the road. And I'd say there's another one in Peter Doney's field. Can't get him to use the three wood way straight.

AL: What my dad did for a living after his dad owned the Shamrock…he took that over during WWII he and his brother bought…he went to the Navy…and when he came back, his brother bought the grocery store. (1:33:10) My uncle bought that and my dad ran the Shamrock for 35 years so that's what he did for a living. He was a bartender.

KA: Did your mother stay at home?

AL: She stayed at home and raised the kids and ran the motel on the shore up here, the Isle Haven. So mother took care of the motel. She had seven children.

JR: Then you had cottages there.

AL: Well yeah one big building, and then cottages. And he ran the Shamrock so that's how we made a living.

K and K: You've been very helpful thank you.

JR: Between us we have a lot of memories but not everything.

AL: With all the road traffic, I hope you got something.

JR: My mother supplied the dialogue, and I didn't know her to exaggerate, but she probably did to some extent, but the tales, the stories, the funny stories the events, the history, she really did remember. And our Martin great grandparents, who are buried in the Holy Cross Cemetery, we didn't know where they were buried, but she remembered, and used to put flowers on the grave. It is a flat stone on the north side of the old part of cemetery that just said father and mother so there never was a head stone. We all will donate to a common fund, and put up a headstone. My mother told me of a cousin who came up for a summer and died of meningitis…17 or 18 years old…and he's buried on that same site with no marker. People didn't have the money, so it didn't happen.

Joyce Bartels
Monday, July 11, 2011
At her home on Beaver Island

Conversation Summary: Topics included Beaver Island Mormon history, non-Irish groups, Catholic-Protestant relations, Irish-Native American relations, class divisions, Prohibition, Women's Movement, Civil Rights Movement, and tourism. Joyce is a very active member of the local historical society (Figure 7.7).

Figure 7.7. Joyce Bartels outside her home on Beaver Island, summer 2011.

KA: Today is Monday, July 11, 2011, and I am here with Joyce Bartels. The first question that I wanted to ask you was what you know about the Mormons who lived on the island, and if you have found anything in the archives that would indicate what their lives were like.

JB: Well, they were mostly farmers, and after Strang came with just a few other men in the fall of 1847, and there were several Gentile families living here on the island. The Mormons refer to anyone who's not Mormon as a Gentile, and there was a trading post at the North end of the island at Whiskey Point run by Alva Cable, and some fishermen whose permanent homes were on Mackinac Island or Saint Helena Island or St Ignus, very few homes, very little population in what is now Charlevoix – at that time was called Pine River. Strang and the other men who were with him worked for the Gentiles who were here during that winter, cutting cordwood, and doing the jobs that were needed to be done. And then the next spring they left the island and started bringing other Mormon families here, and they began to come in pretty good numbers. He had established a state at Voree, Wisconsin in the Burlington area. Joseph Smith had ordained him an elder and sent him there to do that, so there were already some of Strang's followers in the Wisconsin area, and those people came to Beaver Island. At first there was a lot of animosity between the two groups of people and jealousy especially when more and more of the Mormon families came to stay here. Strang began to feel more powerful as he had more and more of his followers here, and even though Brigham Young had excommunicated him and the time of Joseph Smith's death, Strang also excommunicated Brigham Young, and they and at least three other men were convinced they were the head of Joseph Smith's Mormon Church after his death.

The Mormons also fished and cut the trees to sell cordwood to sell to boats on the lakes that was their main industry – their main source of income. Farming, of course, was for their own sustenance, and they had some animals. Everyone who came brought what he could with him so there were farm animals. I think there were a few horses and a few oxen, not many. And also, there were many, many rumors about how the Mormons were pirates and preyed on the boats in the area, but there is no substantiating that. We only know what somebody wrote down back then. And although the majority of the Mormon people who were here were just common, ordinary, hardworking people who believed in what Strang taught there were a few renegades, and they seem to have Strang's ear, so there were some things that were done that were no doubt – some of the rumors were no doubt true.

In 1850, the Printshop was built – the building that is now our museum. And they (Mormons) had a printing press and they printed their daily newspaper the Northern Islander, which was first a weekly and then it became a daily newspaper. And it was the only daily newspaper in Michigan north of Grand Rapids at that time, and there is a plaque on the rock outside the museum put there by the newspaper association back in the 1940's and 1950's to commemorate that. Also, there were religious tracts printed there, and Strang became more and more powerful since there were more people on the island to vote the rest of the legislative district; Strang was elected to two terms in the Michigan Legislature and served well. He had to go by way of Wisconsin to get to Detroit because of the threats from the people on Mackinac Island that if he came by that way he wouldn't get any farther. But, while he was in the legislature, he introduced legislation to create a county called Manitou, which comprised all the islands in the Beaver archipelago – the Beavers, the Foxes, and the Manitou Islands. That county was in existence until 1895 when it was dissolved by the Michigan Legislature, and the Foxes and the Manitous went to Leelanau County and the Beavers went to Charlevoix county. Many of the old records are filed under Manitou county, and there are some in the Michigan State archives.

KA: Do you know why they split them up?

JB: Well because the people who were running Manitou county were not doing it legally, and the county seat was St. James. They had gotten themselves into a debt. There was a lawsuit against them that went to the Supreme Court, and Leelanau paid off that debt but Charlevoix didn't – they refused to do it. So, the Beaver Island people had to assess themselves taxes so they could pay off that debt, which was no more than right because they had run it up in the first place. The Mormon group were highly religious, and Strang was really dedicated to telling his followers how to run their lives, and he wrote the Book of the Law of the Lord, which was all his rules and regulations on how you should live, and they were mostly, really generally good, like health and that sort of thing, but one of the things (and this is fact and rumor) is that he advises sort of a trouser uniform for the women to wear, and the women call them bloomers. We know that is practical to wear pants nowadays, but back then women didn't like it, and supposedly two of the men were whipped because their wives refused to wear those bloomers, but also there were other reasons for their being punished. That was their punishment to be… so many lashes at the whipping post.

Well, two of those men got really upset with all of the regulations and the things that were going on, and it appears that with some collusion with the United States Government, plotted to get rid of Strang, and one time the USS Michigan had been sent here by the federal government and the captain sent for Strang to come to see him on the boat, and as Strang stepped on the dock the two men – Wentworth and Bedford ---who had hidden behind the barrels at Cull's store, which was across from the dock –-- jumped out, and they shot him several times, pistol whipped him, kicked him as he fell down and then ran aboard ship where they were taken supposedly prisoner, and the ship weighed anchor and left for Mackinaw City where they were turned over to the sheriff. Strang did not die immediately, and his inner circle and one of his wives took him to Voree, Wisconsin to his parents' home, and he died there seventeen days later, and he is buried there. The two men who had been taken to Mackinaw City were held in jail just a few hours, and then were released and treated as heroes by the rest of the population there. Then, those men and many others who had left the island because of Strang's policies, armed themselves and came and literally drove the Mormons off the island – just put them on whatever boat came on the harbor, and they went wherever that boat was going.

So consequently, the colony was dispersed. A few of them did get back together in the Wisconsin area where they had started. A few of them settled in the Boyne City area in Michigan, and there are still several hundred of Strangite Mormons in the United States practicing Strang's teachings – in Wisconsin, in Missouri. I don't believe there are any more in Michigan, but there are a few. Once in a while some of them come here to visit. Is that what you wanted to know?

KA: That was great. Can you tell me more about the exile of the Mormons? Were they able to take all of their things with them?

JB: What they could carry, and if there wasn't room on the boat, it was left on the shore. There is a really good article written by Garry Gordon, who was a descendent of Warren Post, who was one of the Strang's closest associates, telling how it happened to his great-grandparents at the time, and they lived several miles outside of town. Warren had gone with Strang to Wisconsin, so there was just his wife who was pregnant and the small children. They put what they could in a wagon, so that they could pull the wagon and got to the shore and then put on a boat. Warren Post eventually did rejoin them, but it was quite a while before he did. And this took several days to happen, but then they left food on the table, chickens in the chicken house, the pots were all planted, what few animals they had were left behind.

KA: I was also wondering if you could talk about in the post-Mormon era, the non-Irish groups that inhabited the Island.

JB: Well, the only non-Irish groups that I am aware of were some Germans who came during the time of the … after the Mormons left there were Irishmen who were fishing in the Great Lakes and were aware of the group on the island and when they realized they were gone, Black John Bonner, who was the first one, he had a fishing camp on Gull Island – which is west of Beaver – and he was told that Strang was killed and that his followers had left. He came over to the island and found the empty houses, and so, he sent word to his family in Toronto where they were living. They had come to this country before the big Potato Famine and the big exodus, and they were settled in Toronto, Canada. So his family came and some of their friends and more of their families settled on the island in the harbor first. Then they contacted all of their friends from Árainn Mhór who were established in New York City and some who was established in Pennsylvania where they were working in the mines, and they began to come gradually.

In 1870s, when there was a good size population of Irish here, a priest was sent here, Father Malone, and he was here a few years when Father Peter Gallagher – who was from Ireland but from the Philadelphia area and who spoke Gaelic – was sent here by the diocese to be the priest. He was not very highly educated and supposedly couldn't even say High Mass, which was different from Father Malone, but the Irish really loved him because he was just one of the boys and he spoke Gaelic. Well, when he died in 1898, the priest who was sent here was German, Father Zugelder, and because of him some of the German families came who were farmers, the Rickgers, well the Elders were not farmers but they were German and they came … I can't think of any of the other names right now. But, and of course they gradually became to intermarry with the Irish families who were here.

And then, when the Beaver Island Lumber Company started operations here on the Island, two Frenchmen – the LaFreniere brothers – and Marshal Griffin ,who became the son-in-law of---well, now it's LaFreniere--- crossed from Charlevoix looking for work with the lumber yard. They had been lumbering on the mainland, and were looking for work with the lumber company. And the two brothers stayed and married Irish women, and their descendents are still here. If there were really any other groups of non-Irish, there were individuals who came and were here for a few years and a few who stayed, but those were really the only groups of non-Irish who came to the Island.

KA: And they were able to…

JB: Be absorbed into the culture.

KA: And they were mostly Catholic groups, right?

JB: Yes, they were Catholic. The Germans were Catholic and so were the French. So the primary, there were a few Protestants families – but not many. The Island was primarily Catholic. There was just the one church until probably the 1940s, when more tourists started coming to the Island to build homes and stay. An Episcopal mission was established here – the St. James Episcopal Mission. Then in 1960s, and when they found out that the Episcopal mission was only going to be available during the summer when there was an Episcopal priest here, several families of Protestants who were living here banded together and formed the Beaver Island Christian Church, which was the third church. And now there is another fellowship, which

broke away from the Beaver Island Christian Church, and formed the Lighthouse Fellowship. So there are really four, established, religious communities on the island now, the Catholics being the largest.

KA: Do you know if there was intermarriages between Protestants and Catholics when they first came here?

JB: Yes. That's the Pischners. They were Protestant, but they did intermarry with the Catholics and were mostly Catholic from then on. The Pischners were another family, but one of them hit the saw mill, and Barry's father was an engineer on Patrol Boat Number One, which was a government boat that patrolled these waters to make sure the fishing laws were being followed.

KA: Would you mind talking a little bit about the boom in the fishing industry, because I was wondering if it had any effect on the social structure of the Island?

JB: Well, in 1885 the fishing in this area was the best in any place, in the whole United States from what I have read. But there were not that many people here at that time. It was after the Lumber Company came and more people came because of that, that the social structure really began to take effect….They had the hive of Macabees here, they had Odd Fellows, they had Hibernians, which was an Irish organization, and of course different societies of the Church held social functions.

The house that is next to the museum belonged to the (Penndy 21:49?) Gallagher and the upstairs was used as a social hall, a dance floor and a gathering place. They would refer to it as Gallagher Hall before the Parish Hall was ever built. So there were things going on before then, and the Parish Hall was built during the time Father Zugelder was here. But, in the old newspaper articles, it tells about different people who had entertained, the number of people they entertained, and what they served, and this sort of thing. And there was dancing and music – always dancing and music. The Irish have an innate musical ability, talent. Many of them have no musical training at all, but they are able to sing and play instruments and, of course, they all danced. Anytime they got together they danced.

The time of largest population was when the Lumber Company was in operation here. And of course, men who were not actively involved in fishing worked for the lumber company- the Irish and some of the Germans also. And then in the 1870's and the 1880's the State of Michigan started supporting the fishing industry, they built fish hatcheries and they also hired the island fishermen and some of the mainland fishermen to remove the eggs from the female fish during the spawning season and those they raised in the fish hatcheries. So, the fishing industry was actively supported by the state of Michigan from that time on. I don't remember exactly when they stopped planning the fish and stopped operating the fishing hatcheries but fishing had gradually begun to decline and then when the St. Lawrence Seaway was opened (and I don't remember when that was) and the Lamprey eel was able to come into the Great Lakes, and that really decimated the fishing industry.

So, by 1955/60, there was very little fishing done here. So the people who had been fishing left the island to, uh, find some other work and some of them became ship captains on the Great Lakes, uh Ray Powell for instance, had been fishing here, many of them went to Chicago where there were already family members living and found work. And, um, one of the women told me that they just knew that as soon as they graduated high school they had to leave, they had to go someplace to find work. So they went to, you know, Catherine Ricksgers went to Pontiac, where there was family, Grand Rapids, Chicago, a lot of people went to Chicago. Some of the islanders had settled in Escanaba earlier, earlier, some had gone to Wisconsin, but um, the ones who stayed here were just, did everything they could. The WPA was active here on the island during the Depression, and there was government help.

KA: Right, they would build roads, and stuff like that.

JB: Right, yes, mmhmm. In fact, we've got a few pictures, just a few pictures in the museum of some of those activities; working with the horses and wagons and they built the sidewalks and things like that. But then, fishing. The fish are---the state of Michigan then introduced salmon into the Great Lakes because of

the---then the eel rays came in and just really were---they died, and they were all over the beaches, and just really nasty, and so they introduced salmon to clean up the eel rays which happened, and then the whitefish, and the trout began to rejuvenate, and there were some more active, commercial fishing going on during those years in the 60's and 70's going on into the 80's. And then a federal judge ruled that because of the Treaty of the…a treaty sometime in the 1870s, only Native American fishermen could fish commercially in this area of the Great Lakes, so the state bought out the non-Native American fishermen and only Native Americans fish now.

KA: Ok, that's interesting. Did you know that if, when the Irish first came and started fishing did the Native Americans, like, what kind of relationship did they have with them, did they help them out in the fishing, or?

JB: Well, the early ones, that were here before the Mormons came, really treated the Native Americans very badly. That's where Whiskey Point got its name because they mixed up Ursat's (28:04) Whiskey with water, and a little whiskey, and, black pepper, and tobacco to make it sort of taste like whiskey, which they traded to the Indians for, in, you know, their work or for their furs and that sort of thing. Strang was very kind to the Indians. He stopped the sale of whiskey of course; Mormons are teetotalers He set up schools for the Native Americans. Um, Father Barraga had landed on the island in 1832 and started the mission, and baptized and converted some of the Indians at that time, and some stayed with Catholic religion, some didn't. But (audio lost from 29:09-30)

JB: …but then the state bought those islands--No, they were privately owned. The House of David owned most of High Island at one time, and then individuals bought those islands, and then the state bought them from those individuals, but not until 1940s/1950s. But I think the Native Americans left High Island mostly when---during the time House of David was there, and came to live on Beaver and there were many Indian families living here during the 1930s/1940s.

KA: Ok. Do you know if like maybe later in the earlier 20th, later 20th century---like I know there are still Native American families here, I think---I'm sure the relationships have gotten a lot better. Or?

JB: Uh, yes, now especially. Um, there were times when it wasn't very good and, of course, the Native Americans were mostly pretty interested in alcohol. Um, Archie LaFreniere, had a special room with an outside exit and entrance for the Native Americans. They weren't allowed into the Shamrock, as general, in general. But, um, there some really bad things that happened with the young girls---but, um, now there certainly isn't any over discrimination in any way. It's like any place else, there always under cover kind of things. But now, there are three parts of three families still living here on the island. Well counting Skip, there's four, Skip Duhamel, who's fishing. Um, Maudries, and the Naponts, and the Kenwabikises. And, of course, family members visit over the years. George Anthony, who wrote the book The Elders Speak, is married to one of the Kenwabikises' girls, and his family was from Garden Island, Anthony's.

KA: Where was he from originally?

JB: Garden Island.

KA: I mean, um, what's his ethnicity?

JB: Well, they are Chippewa and um Ongawa.

KA: Oh ok, interesting. Going back to sort of the late 19th earlier 20th century in light of the fishing industry and everything, everything was going underway. I was wondering if any sort of class divisions ever occurred on the island?

JB: Um you're right, the--well, yes. I don't believe many of the people who worked for the Lumber Company really warped sort of into the social, at least the reports in the newspaper were the names were mostly Irish, when they entertained and that sort of thing. So, I think probably the majority of the people who

came here to work for the Lumber Company didn't really. Unless they happened to marry one of the islanders, and that happened, but then most of them left after the lumber company was closed. There was a distinction between the people in the country and the people in town, for even into the 1930s and 1940s. The people I knew who grew up during that time said that they didn't even know the people who lived out in the country unless they came into high school because hardly anyone had an automobile and it wasn't easy to get around on the island. There were quite---there were several automobiles here in the early 1900s. In fact, in a hundred years ago columns we're hearing about people getting automobiles. In fact, in this July issue tells, or yeah, the July issue tells about the captain of the ferryboat bringing his automobile over, and driving it around the roads, so it was the first automobile on Beaver Island.

KA: Do you know what kind it was?

JB: It didn't say (Laughter). It might have said earlier what kind he bought, but I don't remember. I didn't put it in my memory bank (Laughter). Uh, I also remem-, Well, yeah, I don't have a lot of, my only information from that time is what I read in the newspaper articles, or what I read from the articles that Mrs. Collar wrote and Paul Conner. And Paul Conner got his information from newspaper articles, but uh, and Mrs. Collar got hers from older Irish people who she knew as a child. But she came in 1915, so it was memories from that time. And now of course there are the hay-seeders and the fish-chokers on St. Patrick's Day, and they have the tug-of-war, and the fish-chokers always win (Laughter) for some reason.

KA: Is there any reason or?

JB: Well, there's more people living in town than out in the country, but I really don't know. One time, my son-in-law tied the end of the rope to the bumper of a truck, and they still lost (Laughter). But it's all in good fun.

KA: Right, more of a friendly rivalry.

JB: Right. Well, I've heard stories of people's barns being burned, and things like that when there was a feud type of thing going on. And, probably the islanders wouldn't like to hear this, but…

KA: It happens.

JB: Yeah, it does happen.

AL: One thing we're interested in as archaeologists is development of the homesteads, and the buildings themselves. Like, we know that once the Mormons were evicted, that the Irish came in and took some of the houses.

JB: Just moved in.

AL: Yeah? Were the majority of the houses on the coasts? On the shore?

JB: Not the Mormon houses. There were quite a few of those out in the country because they were farming, and they had cleared land. In fact, there were people living down at the south end of the island. There was a third township called Galilee. There were houses here in the harbor because of the business of the fishing industry and the cordwood industry. And, of course, the museum was built by the Mormons, and we're pretty sure that next two houses, the Cull house, and the Gillespie house started out, the main part, as Mormon buildings. And the other house could very well be. There was one little cabin on Barney's Lake Road--I guess it's fallen down—That was a Mormon house. Joy Corbett lived there. It was just a small cabin. Most of the homes that we see, that are still standing in any form, were built by the Irish, after they came.

KA: Do you know if, when the Irish came here, did they keep the general structure of the Mormon houses?

JB: I think so. In the beginning, anyway. And then, built some additions. Now, Dr. Protar's home was—The logs supposedly were there somewhere, or available. The Mormons had gotten them ready before they left. And, the Connelly family used them to build their home. However, there was also a summer kitchen type of thing, and a woodshed on the back of Protar's home. And whether the Connellys built that or whether he had it built after he moved in, I don't know if anybody really knows, but that was still standing when I first came to the island. It's since fallen down. There was a log house, and a log barn across the road. The Bonners had the log house and the log barn, before they built the house that's still there. The modern house, but those have since fallen down, too.

(40:06). Tight's hill, where that barn structure is still standing. There's a house there. And, there's still a log barn on the west side of the island, where the Burkes now live. Burke's daughter. The name doesn't come to me, but that was a Gallagher home. But, whether it was built by the Mormons, nobody knows. The only one we're sure was the print shop. The museum. The others could very well be, but there's no way to anticipate that. We have some archaeological reports in the files. I don't know if Bill's ever mentioned those to you. But we've had--some archaeologists have been on the island. Have you read James Fittings article in Volume I?

KA: I think so.

JB: That's probably why Dr. Rotman wanted that.

KA: Yeah.

JB: But, in, oh, I don't know--nineteen-forty, somewhere, sometime not too long ago, there was an archaeologist here, and did some digs on several properties, and we have those reports in the museum. Dr. Dietrich from CMU did a geological—That's geological. That's not archaeological—a geological tour of the island. But, we haven't had a lot. CMU hasn't done a lot of archaeology of recent years.

KA: More biology?

JB: Right. And geology.

KA: I remember one time you gave me a really great overview of the more prominent families over the history of Beaver Island. Like sort of how they rose to power, and stuff like that? Would you be willing to debrief us on that?

JB: (Laughter). Ok. Well, of course, Bowery Gallagher, William James Gallagher was the really prominent person from the late nineteen hundreds into the early—I mean, late eighteen hundreds into the early nineteen hundreds. And, also, I think it was his brother, Neil Gallagher was the prominent fisherman. And huge lifts of fish. But, when the state instituted closed season law, and law that determined the size of the nets they could use, he—In fact, he sued the state, and I think almost to the Supreme Court, if not the Supreme Court, over this decision, but he lost. So, he left and went to Escanaba, and established whatever business he was doing there. But, he had a great influence during that time. But, Bowery stayed here, and he was the township supervisor for many, many years. St. James Township Supervisor. There was also a Gallagher family, the Tight Gallagher family who were supervisors in Peaine Township for quite a few years. But they were farmers, They weren't as prosperous. They didn't have the financial means that Bowery apparently had.

KA: Do you know why they were called the Tight Gallaghers?

JB: Well, the story that I heard was because when he first came to the island, [he wore] the fashionable peg-leg pants that were tight on his ankle. That's the story I heard. Whether it's true or not, I don't know. Salty supposedly had been an orphan seaman, a saltwater seaman, before he came to the island. The original Salty Gallagher. Harlem Gallagher came from Harlem, New York. Let's see. Who were some of the other Gallaghers? Well, anyway, back to the prominent families. And then, James McCann came from Mackinac

Island, and took over—Well, there was a man named James Dormer, who was from Buffalo, New York, who bought all the property up at Whiskey Point in the eighteen seventies, and established—Well, he had a trading post there. He had a store.

He built some cabins and rented those out, and he also had fishermen, who were fishing for his company. And, had the idea to build a hotel, and have that be sort of a tourist resort. He lived here for a short time overseeing all the business, but decided that—Well, his wife didn't like it here, and he didn't like being so far from the rest of his business, so, he had a manager, and Bowery Gallagher was his manager. And, we have some letters that Bowery wrote to James Dormer during that time telling him about someone who hadn't paid his rent, and different things like that. But, after he died, James McCann came and took over. Oh, a man named John Day came to the Island and was buying the store from James Dormer. Then he decided to build in the center part of town, right in the harbor, where the Community Center is now. And, so James McCann took over the one out on Whiskey Point.

(47:00). And he was a fisherman also, but his enterprise began to grow. James Dunlevy came from Chicago, and built the building that's now the—It's gone out of my head. The bar.

KA: The Beachcomber?

JB: Beachcomber. Dunlevy's Store. Yeah. And so, there was enough business for two stores because of all the people here with the lumber company and everything. The population was probably eighteen hundred to two thousand people at that time—Well, we have the census, so you could count 'em out. But, the school had a lot of students. We have pictures of some of the school groups, and they were quite numerous. But then, James—The lumber company went out of business, and closed the mill in nineteen fourteen. And, it's my guess that most of the people who were working at the lumber company left at that time. There wasn't any pension plans or anything like that back then. If you weren't working, you weren't getting paid. So, the population began to decrease. James Dunlevy died, and his building just stood empty for quite a while. And then, James McCann's store was prosperous. The company store, down where McDonough's is now, was purchased by John Grill, who had been working in the store for the lumber company, and he operated that until he sold it to McDonoughs in the nineteen thirties. So, there were two stores all that time. And, there were several taverns around. Right where the post office is now, there was a tavern at one time. There was one down in the area where the Parish Hall is at one time, that Billy Boyle had. But, the Shamrock wasn't built until—Nels LaFreniere built it in the nineteen twenties, I believe. And, it was on the other side of the road, and it was called the Village Inn. Now, whether it had a bar, I don't know, but it was a restaurant. The King Strang had served meals until (50:00). Well, Ray Gilden was still serving meals there, so there was the King Strang restaurant. But, the economy was gradually decreasing after the lumber company was gone, and the fishing began to die off. So, well, after Bowery died, then it was the McCanns. And then, Nels LaFreniere who had come to work for the lumber company, married Sofia Boyle who already had a store, where the hardware store is—the gift shop of the hardware store now is.

KA: She ran that?

JB: Yes. Her brother or her uncle set her up in this store. And then, after she married Nels, then it was expanded. And, Nels began to buy more property, and expand their—his--well, I already told you about that. And, then, the McDonoughs, and then John Grill sold the store to McDonoughs. And then, the McDonoughs began to prosper. And, have I left anybody out? McCanns, Dunlevys, Gallaghers. But then, Bowery's sons, many of them left the island. They fished as long as they could. James H. Gallagher was township supervisor for quite a few years, also. And, he fished. James W. Gallagher—I don't believe he was ever supervisor, but he had a farm, he farmed, and he delivered ice during the Depression. JO O'Donnell is his daughter, and she told me about that. Worked for the WPA. Anything that could be done. And then he ended up being manager of the boat company on the other side. So, the Gallagher families died out as far as prominence, affairs and things. And, the Dunlevys lived on. They didn't, many of them, stay on the island after James died, and was no longer running the store. But, the McCanns stayed, and John Runberg's grandfather fished. And his

brother, Michael, ran the store, but then during the Depression that was run down. And then, Nels LaFreniere bought the store.

KA: Then, the Gillespies came?

JB: Yes. Now, the Gillespies were not until—The Gillespies were always here. And, Jewell's father was a cook, and he sailed on some of the ships on the Great Lakes, but never any political involvement, until Jewell came along. And then, he began to be more involved politically and economically.

KA: He set up the—

JB: The telephone company. Well, it was kind of an outreach from the civic association, but he was part of that, and he investigated, and found a company that was willing to come. And then he ran the power plant, also, after that was built. He was more mechanically minded than any of the other islanders. I don't think he ever fished, but maybe he did. I don't know.

KA: So, would you say the sort of rise in prominence of the families maybe correlated with the economic needs of the island? That general trend?

JB: Yep.

KA: Interesting. That makes sense.

JB: But, Bowery Gallagher was able to buy a lot of property on tax sale, so he owned a lot of property on the island. And then, during the Depression, outsiders began to buy property from tax sales. And, that's how Henry Allen accumulated all of the Donegal Bay area. Port St. James, and Trout Island. Henry owned Trout Island. Warren Townsend, who was an outsider, owned High Island, or at least part of it. Some non-Native Americans owned parts of Garden Island, and I believe there's still some small parcels, but they're owned by private owners. The state owns the rest. And, of course, owning property, then they're able to sell it and prosper that way. (56:05).

KA: Another question I had was considering the relative isolation of the island from the mainland, I was wondering how things like, movements like Prohibition, and even way later on the Women's movement, Civil Rights movement, how did that play out on the island?

JB: Well, Prohibition wasn't very—It was enforced here, but there were many people who were bootleggin' liquor. And even a man who lived in Chicago, who came here and brought property, and married an Island girl was a bootlegger, I've been told. Believe it or not, back in the--was it the early nineteen hundreds or was it before? The early nineteen hundreds, because it's been in the Hundred Years Ago column. There was a movement across the state of Michigan--maybe across the whole country, I haven't done any research into that—for Prohibition. And, they enacted something called local option where the local governmental group, or you know the townships, or the cities, or counties could vote whether they wanted to have liquor or not. And, Beaver Island went dry. If you can imagine it, with all the Irish here. (Laughter). They voted to—And consequently there were arrests of not observing the laws and that sort of thing over the years. But, it's coming back into the news in the Hundred Years Ago columns because other parts of the state are beginning to rethink this. And, whether or not this was something that had to be voted on regularly, I don't know. I haven't gone into it that much. Just what I read in the newspaper, but I couldn't believe it when Beaver Island went dry. (Laughter).

KA: Wow. It's hard to believe.

JB: But, I don't think there's been any general women's movements here on the island. The women have always run—It was the women who kept things going. And, whether the men believed it or not. Irish mothers doted on their sons. They could do no wrong. (58:58). In any way. No matter how bad drunks or anything.

They were nothing but wonderful as far as the mothers were concerned. And the mothers were the same way. They just put up with what they did. I don't know if it's that way much anymore, but it might be. Certainly, it's not. But, of course, the nuns ran the school, so.

KA: So, were there a lot of women who ran businesses, like--?

JB: Well, Sofia Boyle. Also, there was—Let's see. Who was that? Some relative of Manus Bonner—I think she was a McCafferty. Had a little store out on the harbor where the Reima Todd (sp?) lives now. But, during the time the Beaver Hotel first opened, my neighbor told me about Mamie O'Donnell, who had a little store along the area where the Beaver Gems t-shirt shop is, along in there somewhere. (1:00:20). The superintendent of schools was a woman, back a hundred years ago. Mary Stuart of the county, and she came here to oversee the schools. Check on the schools. From the Beach---James McCann turned the building that had been the Dunlevy Store into the Beachcomber, and after he died, his wife ran it. She was still running it when I first came to the Island. And, there have been many women who've tended bar here and worked in the restaurants. Eva McDonough worked in the grocery store, right along with Lloyd. Skip works there now, and so does LuAnn.

KA: So, they've always been pretty industrious.

JB: Right.

KA: That's great.

JB: But, as far as any general movement, I don't know anything. Certainly not by the Irish. Some of the outsiders probably have instigated things at times, but, yeah.

KA: Yeah. That's interesting. In terms of your own personal experience on the island, when did you first start coming here?

JB: Nineteen-sixty.

KA: Nineteen sixty, ok.

AL: Well, since you first came in nineteen sixty, what would you say is the largest social change, or just the largest change to the island?

JB: Well, the tourism, of course. The tourism had barely started. There were—The Allen family had built some cabins out on Donegal Bay that they rented. They had a few cabins down there on the shore that they rented. Carl Felix had built the Rusted Villa (sp? 1:02:41) cabins in the nineteen fifties. And, Ed Wojan had built Harbor View Motel down on the shore. I don't think Harbor View up on the harbor was built when I first came, but it was soon after. I can't remember for certain. I don't have any real memory of that. So, the tourist business had—And of course, by the time the Beaver Hotel was open, people came from all over to stay to spend time here on the island at the hotel. They came from Rock Island, Illinois. Friends of Dr. Protar's came to stay for a month, or maybe all summer. And then, some of them brought property and built houses there. Summer houses. I know Dr. Ruth built a summer cabin right down where Harbor View is now. And Miss (unclear 1:03:38) had built the house that's way outta town where the stone pillars are. That was her summer home.

On the back beach, there were quite a few. Helen Collar's family had built a place. And several other families. Mrs. Heflin's family had built a place up there, so there was some tourism. There were some summer visitors for many, many years. Judge—Oh, haven't heard that name in so long. He was from Pontiac area, came and brought property, and he started a Laundromat here on the island. A laundry. It wasn't a Laundromat. It was a laundry. It was called the Tepee Wash 'em. And that was operating when I first came to the Island. There were some little gift shops. That's how people had started. There was one called "The

Pink Poodle" in what's now the hardware store gift shop, but it only opened in the summer. And, Dick LaFreniere's wife had a gift shop in the building. It was called the Sheleighleigh. That's gone. Long gone, now. It had been a restaurant and ice cream parlor.

But, when Henry Allen sold all his property to the American Central Land Development Corporation, and, they came and cut all the roads through down in Port St. James, and subdivided it all into sixty foot-wide lots, it was a lot of high pressure salesmen, and they flew people to the island to show them the property, and they had dinners down in Lansing, and different places, where they'd invite people to come to dinner, and they'd sell them property. And they sold all the lots, but very little building was done out there until, oh, I would say the nineteen eighties, probably, is when building began. Now whether that was result of the general economics of the country, it could very well have been. Before that not very many people could afford to build a second home. (1:06). There were few contractors when I first came, but then some of the island young people began. Ronnie Wojan went into contracting, and Ed's Dad, Walt Wojan was a contractor. And, some others came and went, but that was really when it started. The Beaver Islander was built and went into service in nineteen sixty-two, and that was quite a lot bigger than the first Emerald Isle. And the first Emerald Isle was the first boat that was built specifically for this run. Every other ferry had been adapted from some other use.

KA: Ok. So, to finish up, do you have any of your fondest memories of when you first start coming, or any good stories?

JB: Well, there's a lot involved around my good friends, Phil and Lillian Gregg. And, we camped when we first came here. We had some pleasant times with camping when the kids were little. And, for a long time, we would come from New Year's. Be here for New Year's Eve. And we, together with the Greggs, had an open house. A big party at Greggs. And that was always fun, and everybody came. And the first of the "Close the Center" parties, which just started because Matt Han (sp? 1:08), who was the director, wanted to use up the food that was left in the freezer when they closed down for the winter. The buildings were not winterized, so they didn't—They just closed it down for the winter. Drained everything and closed it down, so, they decided to have a party. And, they cooked what was left in the freezers, and Island people brought a dish to pass, and just tended to have a real nice time. Well, then it got so popular that the administration started coming too, for the "Close the Center" party, and it changed completely.

So, I haven't been in many years. Of course, I have not been here at that time, as you know, it was always around Halloween. And then the Christian church puts on a big Thanksgiving dinner, and everybody's welcome to come. Deer hunters. Anybody who wants to come. They cooked the turkeys, and everybody brings a dish to pass. I've never been here for Christmas, but there are really, especially in recent years, many, many things going on at that time. The Christmas Cantata, and Santa Claus coming to visit.

KA: Aww. What was coming for New Year's like? In the winter?

JB: Well, for many years, the ferry made at least one trip after Christmas, and we often were on that trip. And it would be like the twenty-sixth or twenty-seventh of December, and at least one time--in fact I have a slide in my slide program--where the front of the ferry's just covered with ice, and they had to break ice to get into the harbor. But, often it was wide open, too. But, we haven't done that for a long time. Now, the ferry stops very early in December, and I think that's because of the insurance. But, we were here one time for New Year's and Charlevoix got nineteen inches of snow, and the Island didn't get a bit, but we had to stay three days longer 'til they got the airport cleaned out, and then when we got there, we had to shovel our cars out of the snowdrifts. And of course, through the Greggs I began to meet people, and got to know more people. I guess I don't have any really most important things. Just a lot of fun memories.

KA: You've enjoyed your time here. That's great.

JB: Yes. But, I've always said and you've probably learned that Beaver Island is a place you're either crazy about or you can't stand. (Laughter). And no in-between at all.

KA: That's great. Well, thank you so much for your time.

JB: Well, you're welcome.

KA: It's been amazing!

JB: You're welcome, and I hope I was able to do what you wanted.