

Will Brideson

Interviewer: Unknown

Location: Gwinn, Michigan

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Start of interview:

(Interviewer) Ok how did Gwinn get the name of a model town?

(WB) Gwinn was built by the Cleveland Cliff Iron Company. It started, the idea took all the plan took shape about 1906 the Mr. Mather, William Gwinn Mather whose picture is on the wall there, Mr. William Gwinn Mather. Gwinn was named after his mother Lucy Gwinn before she married his father, Gwinn was named after the women. Decided that the Swanson Rang was going to be quite a large iron mining range, they had seven mines operating down the road and the town of Princeton you know that was the big main town of the Forsyth township at that time. That's where the company is working from, it was all undermined iron ore, Mr. Mather decided that he should have a community for his miners and for officials that didn't have any iron -- -- probably be moved. So he hired a man by the name of Warren H. Manning, who at that time was a man from Boston and most of the officials in the Cleveland Cliff Company were from New England states, Mr. manning was an outstanding architect of the day. Mr. Mather hired him to come out here and plan an area to build a town. So he came out here in January I think it was about 1916 and came out here and he and his general superintendent, a man by the name of Mr. Pratt, came out here to look around the area to look for a desirable spot to build a town. They went out on snowshoes and they came down in the island, between the concourse of the branch and the middle branch of the Escanaba River and he discovered that this land right where we are now is an island. And he said here is where I am going to build my inverted island among the plains. So he built this community and it was one of the earliest zone communities in the United States because Mr. Mather had gone to Germany and he had gone to England to look over mining towns that did look like the mining towns of the day looked like. He didn't want that, he wanted a nice looking town, so Mr. Manning gave out the community and if you look at the map on the wall over there that's the first map he drew of Gwinn. It isn't the one that they went with but this is called *A Plan For a Town* and that is a copy it was made by my son, who is an artist. He overlaid it with orange colors to show the way it is now but this was the first town that Mr. Manning designed and he counted the burden island with the plans here. He laid out all the streets, asked the zoning ordinance that no building, no business building could be built out of anything but fireproof construction and if you notice if you look around here all the buildings are brick. He laid out the streets putting the sewers and putting in a lot of works and he said you can't count on a wooden -- when it --- planting hourly decided it is what he named Gwinn after his mother. He said let's call it a model town and so the Gwinn High School basketball team are now known as the Model Towners and that's why it's called the model town.

(I) Has it changed a lot from his original plan? Or....

(WB) Yes he did, not too much. Although not too much he didn't have the Commons this park over here this Peter Nordeen Park. He didn't have the park over there and that was added and his hospital is in a different place, his school was in a different place but it did have fountains, drinking fountains placed here and there. Manmade horse stalls of course that was in 1906 and they started to build it about that time and in 1909, the fall of 1908 they opened the school, the high school. The first graduate graduated in the spring of 1909 the auditorium wasn't quite completed so she graduated right here in this room. This is where the first high school graduation exercise went on, this was the bank hall where they had large meetings and dances and so on. This was remodeled a few years ago, this is exact replica of the way it was painted was and the lights and everything except the roof leak we had a little problem there it has to be dealt with but this was remodeled to the exact same replica as it was in 1909. Of course the bank left and the bank sold its now the town hall, you know the town hall was across the street. But Mr. Mather decided that he wanted this community, it's an island you can't get here unless you cross a bridge and he was I believe to design company houses and houses for the officials and then they laid out lots and sold lots to people who wanted to buy them. They gave houses and land to the Swedish Methodist Church, the United Methodist church, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, and St. Anthony's Catholic Church, and the Episcopalian Church, and the Lutheran Church. So all these churches now being, and of course before the poor to Gwinn of course is Princeton and that was the Dodge City area. And it wasn't like Seney but it was pretty close and that is still in existence up there but I remember my dad used to holla talking about brothers now I'm talking about on Sunday afternoon they did ran two stores in Princeton and he'd come down on horseback to see how the community is getting along. They had one saloon, they only allowed one saloon, one bank, the bank of course was formed to pay Mr. Mather was president of the bank and they had one hotel. They wanted to be sure that they had the best of everything so they went to Ishpeming and hired the manager of a Norse hotel which is the biggest hotel in the county to come down here his name was Coronal Todd, to run the hotel. And as I said my two uncles and my father built this ready to cross, that was a practically a mall because it had a hardware store and it had a meat market and it had a women's clothing store and a men's clothing store and a grocery store and a sausage factory, which later they turned into a morgue because they also had a furniture store in the basement. My father had a right away, well he had done this up in the -- he became the funeral director. So they took care of you from birth until death that store. They had quite a few businesses in place here as I say hotel and a drug store and then Mr. Mather the company built a hospital. They had hired a young man to come to Princeton to be a doctor, doctor MacIntire came and ran the hospital he was an expert at being at taking and removing -- because up here in the Great Lakes area you know before Morten built, made with salt we had no iodine in our soil. So a lot of people had --- and he became quite efficient at taking old ---- out. Would you like to hear a story about that?

(I) Mmhmm.

(WB) Alright, there is a lady in Chicago that had part of her -- she went to her doctor down in Chicago and the doctor said well we should be able to remove and you know there is one of two places to be done you go to the University of Michigan hospital. Or you can go to a new little community called Gwinn that little hospital up there and the doctor that is an expert. In fact Gwinn during the summers they had interns come here from the University of Michigan to be taught. So she said we are going to take Northwest of -- so she came up in the Northwestern in the it took her --- a pretty late into Gwinn. And Gwinn was new then there was no sidewalks the roads weren't paved and back to Dr. MacIntire how well he was quote famous to the area as a surgeon. Bed side manner is a big subject that needed to be attended to and she came up here and she wasn't at all impressed with the community or the doctor and the whole situation so she took, hired the --- stable here and got her ready to take her back to the three o'clock train out here in the depot, went back to Chicago and after she said no way. So he said go to the University of Michigan hospital it's quite remote so he made the arrangements and she left to go to the University of Michigan hospital, they were going to take care of her. And they wheeled her into the operating room and just before --- she looked up to see her surgeon and it was Dr. MacIntire again. Isn't that a good story?

(I) [Laughs] That's great.

(WB) See he had interns here and then after the automotive became plentiful and they plowed roads then they closed the mines in Gwinn then. They had a lot of trouble with ore they had a lot of suffrage some it wasn't passing or suffering or maybe one starting with a P .

(I) Phosphorus?

(WB) Phosphorus. In ore and in that time they, it wasn't cheap but they could mix it with other ore. Now of course they are mining that again and you don't mine any more property from the truck from Princeton even today, they sealed it off because someday it won't be in my time but someday they will come back here because the ore is relatively close to the surface. They'll have a --- someday. But they closed down and had another two operating off and on until dirt road two. But they closed the Gwinn hospital then and he took over, he went up to Ishpeming as a surgeon one of the main doctors up there and also was in charge of the Negaunee hospital, Cleveland Cliff hospital in Negaunee. His building is still there and it is now a dentist's office, and the dentist live there really remodeled it's a beautiful home now and then the Mrs. Mather from her estate, Mr. Mather built a clubhouse for Gwinn. He hired a man by the name of Abraham Garfield who was the son of President Garfield to design that building, he designed it the it's now owned by the township and it is still in operation. It's a senior citizens center and at that time it had swimming pool, reading rooms, ladies room, a theater, a billiard room, a pool and a very large gymnasium. They hired a professional to run it and he took care of all of the activities in the community, he arranged for, he was in charge of the, he didn't direct but he had a community band which is one of the finest bands in, they are practically professional musicians in order to come here. And horses and so on so they did concerts and then we had we call in

those days ---- -- people come in. Something for the miners to see, and in the summer days even sports programs like every miner or set of mines they had a baseball team and the town had a baseball team. They played every night and weekend and in the fall they had a little world series and every memorial, not memorial day... 24th of June all of the mines are closed and they have a track and field event for all the miners from all of these mines and they compete against each other. Then he of course at the hospital, at the club house he managed basketball teams and at that time... they type of activities such as tumbling, bar work and trapeze work but that was you know stuff like that. He was an expert, the last one they hired was the head of the Batter Creek ranch ca during World War One, his name is E.L. Miller. They named they gymnasium and high school after him, they used to call him Bob Miller. He was the last one they hired and then when they went out of business they gave the building to the school because the school used the gymnasium so the school took it over then after the school got their gymnasium they gave the building to the community. It is still owned by the community and they had an organization of local town people that still run the building and it is still open every day for kids and adults to make use of. So we come a long way.

(I) Did Cleveland Cliffs build anymore of these type of towns that you know of?

(WB) Um yes National Mine is very similar isn't as large as Gwinn but they did build a clubhouse at National Mine too.

(I) Mmm interesting.

(WB) One of, the copy of the building that Mr. Mather liked was the Dayton, right outside of Dayton the... oh National cash register had its own community.

(I) Ohhh.

(WB) And he liked that there is a community in England and one in Germany but he did one in sixteen ton you know company started it.

(I) Yeah.

(WB) He did have double houses, mining houses you know all sold to the people now, the people bought their own houses. Then they had a... a land out on Bass Lake peninsula where they built a big clubhouse, a summer clubhouse where the miners could sign up and go and spend their vacations in the summer. They can go fishing out there, swimming they were charged fifty cents a month for the mine and fifty cents a month for activities at the clubhouse to run the i association and all that. He did a lot of things for the community, he really was very much interested in building it. Do you see that big radio behind you?

(I) Mmhmm.

(WB) That was given to the clubhouse in 19... probably 3 I think it was. It was a gift from Mr. Mather, he was never much good because these little pocket radios are much more around but we thought that was something. I got that as a kid I heard the first Dipsy Cooney played over that thing.

(I) Oh yeah? That's really interesting it's like keeping your workers happy.

(WB) That was the idea.

(I) Not much else. Yeah.

(WB) It didn't work. Because when that happened, that happened then the sociological aspect goes down. But it was a very, a predi-typical sociological undertaking under Mather's part. He has an estate in Cleveland it's a large estate, two estate because he he was an elderly man. Never been married and he had this land and this next estate that died and this widow and Mr. Mather became enamored so he cut a hole in the big fence and the whole vast estate with Iron Bay --. The whole vast estate was called Gwinn. I remember I directed the Gwinn City Band some many years ago and they had a big party for him at the little sports area and I had to take our green van out there and play for him because it was the Gwinn band and I had to have a picture taken with -- because it said Gwinn association band ---. But -- and when we had our bicentennial and his step son who is now in charge of the estate a man must have hired him, they had a couple thousands of dollars towards the stock, the activities stock they have a large credit union and big dunes. --- have this --- well I are there any other questions.

(I) I can't think of any you have really covered it very cleanly. Yeah you have.

(WB) Um the school of course is, they had a school here a high school and a grade school in Gwinn. They had on at the end of the lake and one out in the county from Little Lake and one up the road there is a little town called -- or just current road ---. And one in Austin and one in Princeton. Princeton was formed, it happened, Princeton was grew in started in 1872, the discovered iron ore there earlier than that. They ore is this place is mapped at the same time that Negaunee was when they discovered iron ore in 1847 and the chief called geologist over the whole Upper Peninsula of course was Douglas Houghton. Mr. Burke just discovered iron ore you know his compass going really teed up by Teal Lake. They had another man out here about hiring -- because that where you put a pin in the ground as the begins down the river and a man by the name of Smith discovered the first ore here. His mine was an open pit mine up near the river by Princeton and several mines started up there but it was later on in about 1906 when the Cleveland Cliffs came in and bought all the other companies and it started to form. But Princeton was started much earlier than Princeton and of course the earliest town was a Little Lake that was built of course during the civil war and they built the railroad from Green Bay to Negaunee in order to get the iron ore to make ships and guns and boats all for the North. Princeton was made for instance because a group of the men, young engineers that were graduates of Princeton University and they had a big fight up there, tensions --. One man was called Austin and he had

explored down the hill a little bit from Princeton said you guys going to have a little town named Princeton but I'm going to name this town after myself Austin. Still there still Austin, still Princeton. Austin, Princeton, Gwinn and Little Lake was really named Foryth originally after one of the officials of the railroad and another official who ran into was man by the name of Swanzy, -- the name of Swanzy so he had a hold station and a watering station going to a Little Lake and Negaunee called Swanzy and he named it O'Swanzy because a lot of people from --- because they couldn't have -- here. They stole the—this little community of Moose--- out there and they could have a -- out there they could have --- front buildings ----. But they did have something, they had an opera house and a big stadium right out there.

(I) Oh yeah?

(WB) Yeah and they hired that acts to come in from Chicago and Detroit. People from Gwinn went out there because those buildings out there really just one big building out there. I guess I said too much.

(I) No I think you did pretty good.