

Jennifer Palomaki's interview with Clifton Rogers

Interview date January 4, 1998

Me: Interview with Grandpa Rogers about Great Grandpa Rogers.

Me: When and where were you born?

G'pa: I was born on Heath Street, Negaunee Michigan, on June 6, 1919.

Me: Where were you raised?

G'pa: From the time I was 10 Months old until I started tenth grade I lived in a small mining location three miles out of Iron River, Michigan.

Me: What is your national ancestry?

G'pa: Both my mother parents and my father and his background were British. My mother parents were from the Cornwall area of England, and my father was from the Bristol area of England.

Me: Do you have any brothers or sisters? If so what are there names?

G'pa: I have one brother William Keith he's eight years younger than I am. He was always known by Keith to us, but was know by William at collage and at work. I do not have any sisters.

Me: What are your parent's names?

G'pa: My father was christened Henry Hail Frances Rogers and was known by either Henry or Harry. My mother was christened Ruth Roberts. She did not have a middle name, but went by Ruth Roberts Rogers after she was married.

Me: What country was he born in?

G'pa: My father was born in England.

Me: Where was Great Grandpa Rogers raised?

G'pa: He was born in a outskirts of Bristol, England in a area called Clifton and he lived there for his 21 years he lived in England. I think most all of his time in England was spent in that immediate area because at that time they didn't travel to any other areas.

Me: What was his early childhood like?

G'pa: When he was growing up in England during the later part of the 1800's all male youth were required to take some military training. His schooling and the military regimentation were intermixed. Of course, at that time he did start to work when he was still a very young boy in the age of 12 to 15 years old. He played with his two brothers and his sister around the cobble stone streets of Clifton. Also they climbed around and explored the caves and the cliffs under the Clifton suspension bridge, which span the Avon River or rather I should say River Avon, between Bristol and Clifton. These same caves have been hideouts for notorious pirates who played the area about the same time. At that time they had what was called a boy-guards and dad became involved in the organization which was influenced by, **Baden Powell**, who several years later started the Boy Scout movement. My father was one of the boy-guards and was inspected by **Baden Powell** who was later know as Lord **Baden Powell** after he was knighted by King George IV.

*we'll
look this
up.*

Me: How was he disciplined as a child?

G'pa: My father's mother died at his birth, and he and his brothers and his sister, were raised by an aunt or a grandmother. It turned out that the children were left to grow up pretty much on their own, because their father was busy as a gardener for the Clifton collage which was located near their home.

Me: What kind of work did great Grandpa Rogers do when he was growing up?

G'pa: While my father was growing up in Clifton which is as I said a suburb of Bristol, England the only specific work I am aware of my father doing was his working for an undertaker or what we call a funeral home. He started there when he was 13 or 14 years old. When he was 15 years old the undertaker put him in charge of making all

arrangements for an elaborate funeral service, consisting of all white carriages, drawn by all white horses.

Me: What household chores did he do?

G'pa: His home was near a grocery store, which was just down the street from him. His father as I've mentioned worked as a gardener at the Clifton collage, which was also near his home. Since they had to depend on relatives to keep the home up it was the responsibility of all the children to help were they could, to take care of their house and do the chores around the home.

Me: What was dating like for him as a teen?

G'pa: I'm not aware of his dating at all since he was set on leaving his home land as soon as he could travel on his own and I have no recollection of him telling us of his social life while he was growing up in England.

Me: What were his dreams as a child?

G'pa: It is apparent that his home life didn't appeal him. He was left to his own resources so much so that his aim was to leave the country as soon as he was able, also he had an ingrained desire to get more education and to learn all he could even if he had to do it on his own.

Me: What school did he go to?

G'pa: He attended his earlier schools in Clifton and went through what is equivalent to the eighth grade. It was either a church or a government school at that time.

Me: While working as an adolescent how much money did he earn?

G'pa: I have no idea what he earned while working but I am certain it wasn't much especially by today's standards.

Me: What religion was he while growing up?

G'pa: He was brought up attending the Episcopal Church, which is the Church of England.

Me: Did you travel much while growing up?

G'pa: Yes, I traveled but, my father wasn't as fortunate because I don't believe my father ever traveled away from where he was born in England until the time he left to immigrate to Canada.

Me: What were his interests?

G'pa: My dad always loved gardening and was an avid reader. He was always interested in governmental affairs and in politics and loved to discuss these with people. As I've mentioned before it was always his desire to educate himself and to learn all he could, so in addition to being a hobby, this was also a vital interest of his.

Me: Did he get a diploma or certificate from school?

G'pa: No, however since he didn't have the opportunity to get as much schooling as he would've liked to have, he did take corresponding courses after he came to this country and started working.

Me: Who lived in the same house with him.

G'pa: Since I've mentioned that his mother died at birth, of course, his father lived there, and I would assume that for awhile his aunt or grandmother, or somebody, stayed with them to help while the children were real young, but, in addition my father had two older brothers, and a sister.

Me: Did he have any siblings?

G'pa: Why yes, two brothers and a sister.

Me: What are their names?

G'pa: Florence, was the sister, Walter was his oldest brother and William was the next oldest.

Me: Where were they born?

G'pa: They were all born in the same house in Clifton, England.

Me: Where were his parents born?

G'pa: His parents were all born in England and I suspect in the area quit close to where my father was born and raised.

Me: Can you describe his native home?

G'pa: It was a brick structure known as a roll house, where each living quarters is identical to the other. All are in the same long structure with the front doors each facing the same street. There were about six dwellings in that same building each with two floors.

Me: What holidays did he celebrate in England?

G'pa: Please, remember in England as in Canada, the word holiday means vacation, so England celebrated the same Christian days as we do in this country, that being Good Friday, Easter, Christmas, etc. Many of the custom we associate with Christmas started inn England. They also have a May Day, but I don't know how universal it is celebrated.

Me: What are some ethnic foods of England that he liked the most?

G'pa: Of course we think of pasties when we think of England and dad always liked pasties. That being a Cornish origin but it was still known in the Bristol area. He liked plum pudding, fruit cake, dumplings, lamb, which is a very popular meant in that are of England, mint sauce, rice puddings, boiled dinners to name a few.

Me: What was his choice of career?

G'pa: Having worked for a funeral home he did consider that he would follow that as a career. Also he loved gardening, as his father was a gardener and, emigrated, from his homeland with the idea of being a farmer.

Me: What was, his and your mother's, occupations?

G'pa: My father occupation for thirty-nine years was with the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company. My mother was a housekeeper.

Me: Do you think he enjoyed working?

G'pa: Dad enjoyed his work very much and was always loyal to his employer. He did what he was asked to do and did it with out any complaints. Also he did as much or more than was expected of him.

year he left England?

Me: What kind of job did he do when he was here?

G'pa: While in Canada, he worked on a farm and he was there for two years, after leaving England. In the United States he held many jobs with the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company. But, before he started with the mining company upon arrival in The United States he worked as a carpenter for three years after moving to Negaunee from Canada, until he started to work for the Mining Company as a motor man, at the Negaunee mine November of 1912. He became shift boss in 1915 and was sent to Iron River in 1920 to take charge of the companies **Spees Iron Mine. In 1934 He was transferred back to Negaunee to take charge of the Athens Mine. From 1939, until he retired he worked as a safety engineer. Over the years he had on several occasions conducted special schools in Gwin, Negaunee, and Ishpeming for the companies employees, preparing there men in the fields of mechanical drawing, mathematics, surveying, and preparation of reports so the men would better qualify to become shift bosses for the Iron Company.**

Me: When did he retire from his job?

G'pa: Dad retired from the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company on December the 5, 1951 after thirty-nine years of service.

Me: When and where did he get married?

G'pa: My father married Ruth Roberts on May 14, 1914, in the Mitchell Methodist Church in Negaunee.

Me: Why did your father come over to America?

G'pa: Dad left his homeland because he felt that there would be more opportunities to better himself in Canada or the United States.

Me: How long did he stay in one place until moving?

G'pa: Remember he lived in Clifton, England for 21 years. In Ottawa, Canada he lived for 2 years and in Negaunee for 11 years before moving to Iron River where he lived for 14 years. Then moved back to Negaunee for 27 years and died shortly after moving to Ishpeming.

Me: Why did he move again?

G'pa: All dads' moves were made because he felt that he could better himself in the new environment or he accepted additional responsibilities at the request of his employer.

Me: Was he surprised about the United States and the people?

G'pa: He readily adapted himself to the American way of living and to the mix of ethnic workers he was associated with and I don't recall my father ever saying that it was a problem for him to adjust to the American way.

Me: How old was he when he left England?

G'pa: He was twenty-one years old when he left England.

Me: How did he travel to America?

G'pa: For the fair of about seven dollars he sailed from Bristol, England to Ottawa, Canada. The fair was low because he had signed on to work at a farm that needed labors in the area immediately outside of Ottawa, Canada.

Me: What was his port arrival?

G'pa: I would say it was Ottawa, Canada but I'm not certain either they took the boat all the way into Ottawa or he took a train part way across Canada, I'm not certain.

Me: Did he ever return to England?

G'pa: He never returned to England.

Me: Do you have any family left in England?

G'pa: I would imagine there's descendants in England but none that I'm aware of but I would be certain that there are a family in the Bristol area that are descendants of my father's brothers or his sister.

Me: What were his reactions to the **millitarization of Germany, Italy, and Japan?**

G'pa: He was well read on the actions taking place of Hitler's in Germany of **Musulanies in Italy and of **Emperor Heroshieto** in Japan. Dad was very patriotic of first the United states as his adopted country and secondly of Great Britain his birth land. He did not trust the Germans, the Italy's or Japan during the thirties or forties when communism was so rapid in Germany and, or fascism rather in Italy and Hitlerism in Germany**

Me: Where was he when Pearl Harbor was attacked and how did that affect his political outlook?

G'pa: He was living in Negaunee at the time and dad felt that we all should support our government in the war effort. However he thought it was very wrong for President Roosevelt who was for warned of attending Japanese attack to let our military personal die when Pearl Harbor was attacked just to get the support of the American people in his was effort.

Me: Describe his activities during the war years? Was he politically active? In what way?

G'pa: He was not directly involved in the war effort other than his employment with the mining company. Dad was very politically oriented but he was not an activist.

Me: What was his mass work during the fifties?

G'pa: Dad retired in 1951 so was not employed doing much of the 1950's. He was a safety engineer and assistant to the director of safety for the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company when he retired.

Me: Did he work in the WPA or in other New Deal programs?

G'pa: No dad was fortunate and was able to get by without any government supported job so he did not work for any of those government agencies.

Me: What were his reactions to the Soviet-nazi non-aggression pact?

G'pa: As I've mentioned dad was an avid reader especially the news weather it be, newspapers or magazines. Please realize that **Staling** and Hitler both had the world believing that they were not or would not invade their neighboring countries even Prime Minister **Neville Chamberlain** believed this when he called on Hitler. Dad did not trust the intent of either the Soviets or the Nazis but all his information had to come from what the news reports had to say about the situation.

Stalin

Me: Describe his life during the cold war years?

G'pa: The cold war years were the later part of dad's working life and his retirement years. He still followed the news reports very carefully and was thankful that his two sons had come through world war two safely. He still did not fully trust either the Russians or the German government but he felt that our best defense was to have a strong military.

Me: Did you understand what was going on at the time?

G'pa: During these years I was starting to go ahead with my domestic family life by building a home and having children. I was **connacent** of the fact that principally the Russians and the United States were building up their military strength. Each attempting to have a stronger force than the other. I didn't like what was happening but felt helpless to do anything to change the situation.

Cognizant

Me: What difficulties did he have adjusting to America?

G'pa: I don't think that he had any significant difficulties adjusting to the American way of living. He kept himself occupied with his work and with his goal of improving his educational status by correspondence and independent study courses.

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Me: Did he live in a neighborhood with people of the same ethnic background?

G'pa: When he first came to Negaunee he lived in a rooming house which catered to emigrants who came from principally countries of Finland, Italy and the Scandinavian countries as well as England to work in the mines.

Me: What were his earlier opinions about America?

G'pa: He was appreciative of what this country had to offer and was thankful that he had made the decision to come to the United States.

Me: How does the reality of America fit with his ideas?

G'pa: Dad was seeking a country where he could be free to follow his own dreams of improving himself intellectually and of improving his status in life while making a decent living standard for himself and his family. He thought that the United States would be such a country and he wasn't disappointed in the way things turned out.

Me: What did America have to offer him?

in context
G'pa: It gave him the opportunity and the inspiration to constantly better himself without in any way jeopardizing the opportunities for others to do the same. He used the knowledge he gained through his own **initiative** to work with and train hundreds of others mostly emigrants to also better themselves. He did most of this by conducting classes for the mining company in Gwin, Negaunee, and Ishpeming for their employees.

Me: Did anything surprise him about the United States and its people?

G'pa: He found that the life awaiting him upon arrival for this country to be what he hoped to be.

Me: What advantages did England have over America?

G'pa: He remained proud of his English or British birth right and remained faithful to England as long as he lived but his first allegiance was to the United States.

Me: Describe how he became an American citizen?

G'pa: He was born on November 10 of 1885 and immigrated to Canada in 1906 and then on to Negaunee in 1908. In May of 1914 he married Ruth Roberts of Negaunee and he got his certificate of naturalization to the United States of America on the 7th of December 1914. His interest in that document also not only gives the year 1914 but it gives the year of the independence of our country it's the independence year was 138 years he was 29 years old at that time. Dad had never attained a birth certificate, so, when the United States became involved in World War two he thought it may be advisable to be able to show such a proof of birth, also when the time came to retire in 1945, he'd need such a document for him to collect social security. He wasn't certain of the exact birth name given him so one March the 28th 1942 he sent the following letter, to the register of birth and death, Bristol, England. The letter read, "Will you please send me a copy of my birth certificate. I was born on or about November 10th 1884 or 1885 at Oakland Place or road Clifton. I understand that I was christened Henry Frances or James Henry. My father's name was Richard Steven Rogers and my mother's madden name was Long, I don't know her given name. Will you please send the certificate by airmail? Money order enclosed. The certified copy of an entry of birth was sent to him dated the 22nd of April in 1942. It showed that he was born November 10th 1885 at 30 Oakfeild Grove Clifton, and was christened Frances Henry Hail Rogers. His mother's name was Emma Mary Hail Long, being her madden name, Rogers.

Me: What can you tell us about England?

G'pa: England is a beautiful country and people there live at a much slower pace then we do in this country.

Me: What are some lessons he has taught you that would be helpful to the current generations of ridicules in America?

G'pa: He taught both his children first to be a good father and husband. Next to be honest and dependable and to get a good education. He taught us to be willing to work hard for a living and to have faith in God and not be afraid to express our faith. He also taught us to be considerate of ones fellow man and to realize that non-of us or better than our fellow man as long as he is a law abiding citizen and he taught us to appreciate our country and our freedom and our heritage.

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Me: What visions did he have of your life?

G'pa: He always encouraged both my brother and myself to get all the education we could but he did not attempt to tell us what field of work we should go into.

Me: Can you tell me a little bit about him?

G'pa: He was a hard worker who always fared to those he worked with as well as those who worked for him. He always kept himself respectable in appearance, attitude and actions. He often gave financial help to those less fortunate families especially during the depression with no desire to ever be repaid. He was a good father to both my brother and myself, and was a good husband for my mother.

*You will have to establish how your grandpa knows about me
dad*