

Ellen Sundin's interview
with Francis Sundin

me: This is Ellen Sundin December 26, 1984 The person I
am interviewing is Francis Sundin we are going to
be talking about the Herchis powder mill

Q. my name and... Francis Sundin 311 on the 3rd street
north 3rd street in Ishpeming and retired

me: How old are you at the present time?

Q. 77 ~~years~~ ^{years} of age right now In the spring if I
make it I'll be 78. (she laughs)

me: Where were you born?

Q. National mine

me: What year?

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Q: 1904

me: (clear throat) Where did you live at where did you live in National Mine when the Hercules powder plant was in was operating?

Q: Well, it was called Brooks Hill were we lived and then from there we moved to Mitchell Hill above the Mitchell Spring another from there ^{up} close to the school that house is no longer there it was across the road from the town the old Town Hall and that's where we lived when my father got killed at the powder mill.

me: But what time was the plant put up?

Q. what time was it blown up or put up?

me: yeah

Q: Well you see there has been 4 times you know (he was mumbling), there was a First there was a black powder ~~plant~~ plant it was just one building. And that building stood there for many years since it wasn't used to much you know. And then after that they started adding on. And they built a dynamite plant. and ah when I first worked there at thirteen that's after my father got killed. There was ah it was quite a large plant. It they built it a lot bigger then and ah they put a new mix house because that had blown up. and back house. No No At that time that was growing new ~~houses~~ ^{buildings} were being put up oh no and Kay's house there was a box of houses and I worked in there too. (he laughs)

me: How long did your dad work there?

Q: I don't know how long he did work I ~~don't~~ know he worked in there when I was seven years old

Q: But he worked there before that
 you see I had been living with my grand-father
 and ah oh ya after I started school well
 I had went to school for most of my time
 in kindergarden I was only 7 years old I lived home
 (he mumbled) and ah I used to like to go
 to school in National Mine because I was
 way ahead of the other children before I started
 school we were up at what we used to call
 the groove and there was a ^{we used to call mine} Bandstand
 there I was sitting up in the bandstand
 a two small woman came up in the
 band stand and one of them asked me if
 I was going to go to school and I said yes I'll
 be starting this fall that was in the summertime
 and she had an apron on and she took a
 notebook out of her apron pocket and wrote on
 a page one of the pages and gave it to me. She
 said bring that home and show it to your mother
 you know and she'll tell you who your teacher is going
 to be I looked at her and I said you wrote
 Emily Parks, Miss Parks. she said you read
 and write I said. And add and subtract
 ah ah so she got quite a kick out of
 that Oh she was a darling teacher
 a real little small girl and ah I liked
 school but I had a long ways to
 walk

G: walk you know It was about 4 or 5 miles. I had walked to school and it was alright to go to school with my aunts and uncles but when I went back home at night I had to go alone because they got out earlier see. thats how I got my love for animals.

me: about how many men were employed at the plant?

G: hm

me: about how many men were employed at the plant?

G: oh let me think. I'll have to start from the beginning in the office up there was 3, 4 in the office ^{men} 2 in the laboratory, 2 in the shell house 4 in the cardteners shop

G: 2 in the electrical shop, 4 firemen in the boiler house & 2 in the acid house, 1 in the dope house, 1 in the ~~wood~~ pulp house and 1 in the soda house. 4 men in the ^{we} then 2 men in the N.G. House, one in what ~~is~~ called the Brine house. 3 in the two pack Houses. and in the King pack Houses. and they take (he mumbles) to the hand pack were they pack the big stuff. Then there were two men up in the jelly what we called the jelly pack house.

there were two in there. 4 men in the case house ^{was the} were the powder was put in boxes. and one man haling the powder down to the magazine. One man working in the magazine. The floor house it was called you know. And one man in the box print house. Besides that there was labor let see usually about 5 labors. and an I think I covered it. Oh yeh one man like ^{there to} storekeeper you know. He would get suplys one out of the whole bunch was a women yeh she worked in the shell house

Me: How many men lost their lives when it blew up?

G: Oh, First time it was two, and when my father got killed there were 4. that's as many that got killed. There was no more explosions after that, see what time everything was connected pipelines and that: (he was mounding) you know because of heating and all that stuff. There was a big space between the building there were barricades built up around the buildings there they built a plank.

SO

Me: When your father died in the plant who took care of you & your brothers & sisters?

G: Ah there was a I had to take over my older brother went to work and my sister my sister went to work at the gazara to feed US kids and I went cutting pulp & cutting wood. And I had to supply the house. And I was in the weeds a lot.

6: Because we used a lot of wood
 the heater I had to cut about 3 cords
 of ~~the~~ wood a year. I sawed it up by
 hand with a buck saw. And in we
 alwaysed cut a year ahead. The wood
 had to dry you know. so it be dry. @ we
 grew we grew all our vegetables and
 everything my mother one year she
 wanted didn't want it. we had
 to replant. my mother didn't want
 to plant the potatoes out there that year.
 for one year. So she hired a man
 with a team of horses to ~~be~~ plow that
 when I was 13. He drove the horses and I
 had to handle the plow. and I was used to
 plowing with a single horse. and a half
 beaten plow he had one that hooked to
 the horse that would lift up the front
 end. you know _____ . We planted 100
 ten bushels of potatoes in the front yard
 right across the road from the old town hall
 In National Mine. In the Fall we dug
 up a 100 bushels. we had cows & a horse.
 We always had pigs we butchered in the Fall
 and kittens. _____
 Because a at that time it wasn't like today
 you know.

(9)

G: If somebody cause a near today you
hall them in ~~for~~ to them. We got a
very small from the company when my
father got killed. It didn't hardly amount
to anything. Mother used to go out and
work too.

_____. She used to work.
Everybody had to work in them days
there was no gettin away from it.
yup.

Me: Did the plant ^{being} out there change National
Mine any?

G: Hm

Me: Did the plant being out there change
National Mine any?

G: No, There was many people in
National Mine that worked in that powder
plant. Most of them lived in town people
came in from down south and all over
to work there you know.

G: let see The Hercules Powder Company
they worked other places for the first week.
and they'd get transferred from one place
to another. Mines up there you know
the upper shaft lower shaft and the
man that owned the building were
the gazard was over here. That used to
be _____ store he had a mine up there.
and he had a store up in National Mine
Right there across from where we played
ball. over across the road. It was a big
store you know. I worked there tearing down
them mine buildings. you know the shaft coverings
_____. Oh there was the number #2
pit where we picked apples + ~~some~~ that.
There used to be a.