INTERVIEWER: Dianne Zieman

DATE: March 21,1972

TIME: 1 hr. 40 min.

INTERVIEW:

1. Mr. Frank Cooke
2. Gracie Sternberg (Mrs. Cooke)
3. 95 Lakeshore Road, New Liskeard
4. 647-5114
5. Retired.
6. Mrs. Cooke - born in Cardinal, Ont.
   He was born in Muskoka - township of Oakley; lived 15 to 17 miles out of Bracebridge; left Muskoka and went to Rainy River at age 9.
7. His father was born in England and moved to Muddy York (Toronto) at age of 9; his mother was born in Canada.
8. Married for 61 years this coming August 15th - in 1911.
9. He was born on May 7th in 1886 - soon will be 86 years old. His father lived until he was 83; his grandfather to 86 and his great-grandfather died at age 82. Long-lived family - he can still go out and shovel snow.

THE PAST:

Impressions: When he first came to Cobalt in 1909, it was so thick with men that three of them slept in the same bed. Had to go out behind the barn to go "to the can". One could hardly get off the train in Cobalt - so many people. The first two or three years he was around this country, he was not in New Liskeard very much. He got the fever in the bush and spent three months up in the Lady Minto Hospital. Was in Gowganda - there were three banks in there at one time. Elk Lake was much bigger then than it is today. He did prospecting and assessment work - silver mining at Silver Knight - a mine in that area.

In 1909, he was only in Cobalt for about three days and then left - knew some people there - stayed at a hotel, thinks it has burned down. Stayed at Black Lake in Gowganda - had some property in there; then took the fever in

the autumn. The water came out of a little spring around the camp - don't know where they got the fever - perhaps from that spring, perhaps from somewhere else.

He came up with Bill Tribe - lived in the same township of Muskoka - they went to school together. Bill, who is dead now, probably was born in Fergus, Ontario.

Transportation: By train and money - travelled on the train at 22¢ a mile and no taxes. Not many sleepers in those days - could get along - meals on the trains. He came from Fort Francis - got on the train at the station there - they would stop the train if there were passengers. Came to Port Arthur by C.N., then C.P. to North Bay; and T. & N.O. to here. Probably took two days for the trip - good connections then.

After he got out of the hospital following his typhoid fever attack, he went back home to see his two sisters and two brothers - stayed home for a month, then back up to Gowganda. Returned to New Liskeard in 1910 - stayed at the Windsor Hotel for 5 months.

Employment;

He worked with Sam McLaughlin and Frank Curry - Dr. Bethune and George Murdock staked them. Dr. Bethune was a little red fellow - a doctor in Emo; saved Mrs. Cooke's life when she contracted diptheria. Mr. Cooke quit prospecting - a rough life. Got along pretty well with the other fellows - one had to. Didn't get to eat roast beef or steak - it was fish and sowbelly, fat pork. Would eat rice and some smoked meat but there was not a place to keep it in camp, so fish and bacon were the fare.

Started work with Hill, Clark and Francis on August 8th, 1917. Was a construction superintendent for 46 years. They used to call him Junior, but he was old enough to know what carpentry work was. His father was a carpenter

and his grandfather a cabinet-maker.

He worked in many different places - down in Latchford, he helped to build Donald McLennan's mill and at Pete Grants; worked out in the bush at McLennan's camp at Indian Lake as a jobber. Could do better in the bush cutting logs at 95¢ a day for two or three months. Worked in Pete Grant's logging camp fixing sleighs and doing repair work - Pete Grant is the father of Morgan and Hughie Grant. Good life in the logging camps - got good food. Most places had a good cook who had a helper and a chore boy to keep the fires on at night and to clean the camp. Might be 40 men at a time - could be more or less. Six or seven teams of horses - used to skid with the horses; sleigh haul after the cutting is done. He would get a job doing piece work - 7 or 8¢ a piece for cut logs. He made 35¢ an hour when he first went to work at Hill, Clark & Francis.

At Pete Grant's camp, fixed the water tank by corking and tarring it. Would fill the tank up, spray the road to ice it. Round runners on the sleigh-nners would go smoothly in the ruts if iced.

Entertainment at the camp - someone would have a mouth organ, violin or an accordion - one fellow could sing a lot of shanty songs and one would step-dance. The choreboy would come round and put all the lights out at 9:00 - if you didn't get into bed first, you went into bed in the dark. If someone had an accident, they would be taken out of the bush to the nearest doctor. However, if you cut your finger - you would put some iodine and a clean rag on it - had that in your kit - if you didn't, you did without as it was not supplied by the camps.

In 1909-10, as you got off the train, there would be men on the platform who would ask you where you were going and if you had work. They were there trying to hire men who came off the trains - no problem getting a job in those days.

Never worked in the factory at Hill, Clark & Francis - didn't like it. First job was at the old creamery - he built bit of that in August, 1917. Worked on Wismer's Store after it burned; helped to put a piece on the first mill that they had (Hill, Clark & Francis) - it was 20' by 40' and then they put a piece on it. Helped on a job at the National Groceries - work in Haileybury and Cobalt - his wife has a list of all the places he worked on a card.

Went to Timmins and Kapuskasing for Mr. Francis - lived there for about 15 years. They did build some houses in Sudbury - he worked on another factory job; they built 11 houses; then forty the next year; then 75, then 15 of the big two-storey high houses. Apparently someone was cheating at Hill, Clark & Francis - the bookkeeper and his assistant would buy coal and burn it themselves. Things were going crooked.

Built the Sigma mill and crusher house at Val d'Or; then a machine shop. South Porqupine, Atikokan, Port Arthur, Kenora, Elliott Lake, Sudbury, Windsor Brockville, Cape Breton Island - all for Hill, Clarke & Francis.

Some jobs - worked for seven months with 40 carpenters and 25 labourers; at Red Lake for 16 months - got home once.

Would build wooden frame; then a platform - trusses and columns - knew the height and length of them - certain elevation, all depended on the rock. There would be six or seven men on the platform cutting them to length and put the trusses together. Had a derrick; and a gin pull. Had to build scaffolding. Everything as planned - some from his own experience. No architects then - specifications drawn up by the mine, a man from Dominion Bridge drafted the plans. Foundations at the Sigma Mine - Dominion Bridge put up the steel, and then they covered and finished it.

In Haileybury, built Frank Peters' house; and an addition to the Separate School; also worked on Jack Dunlop's house on Latchford Street.

Worked ten hours a day in those times - sometimes more. He worked for seven years and only had the odd weekends free. Never took a 30-day vacation. Would pay their board individually, sometimes they only paid part of it; sometimes none of it. The company would pay his transportation. No road to Latchford then.

Also up in Fraserdale at the Abitibi Canyon - built 14 houses and the recreation centre there. Built the National Grocers after it was burned in Cochrane.

Kirkland Lake - got in by wagon. When he went it, (by train), there was a clothing store, a barber shop, a post office and some grocery stores in 1918 - some mines there then.

Hill's would supply the lumber and nails - all depended on what the contract called for - they used to buy them. They had a big lumber yard - millions of feet of it. Just as good as any cut in Canada - a big manufacturing company.

He never cared where he lived - he was used to anything - when you lived for 16 months in the bush, 100's of miles in by truck and boat, could adjust to a lot.

Not the same today - in those days it was wood and steel. Today, you don't find a gold or silver mine - now it is an iron mine, open pit by big companies who manufacture their own steel products. Inside the office at Mill Creek, all metal - much nicer than someone's home - dry - well-made.

Years ago, Mr. Francis would talk plans over with him and then let him go his own way. Start at the bottom and finish an house - today there is about seven or eight contractors. Life has gotten too fast - cannot keep up with it. Hollinger Mill built a pebble bin - its pebbles would come from France or Belgium, today they use them from the Wabi and other iron foundries. Built the conveyor to it - by doing so, they cut off three men per shift, which meant 6 to 9 a day less men working. The plan was there and that was it - one man would put in a board and stop the pebbles. Hollinger wasn't getting any more for their

gold and had to get more work from the men they had so they introduced the machines.

Cold weather didn't phase them - he remembers working in 35 degrees below zero temperatures one February in 1918 at the lakeshore. He and a Mr. Snetsinger shingled a roof and thought nothing of it. A lot of people would go into the fire - worst place to go - just flap your hands about and get the circulation going. Once you started out in the cold in the fall, you adjusted to the winters.

Worked out in Kimberly, B.C. as well - went on to Vancouver and remembers seeing the snow on top of the mountains, a lot of rain. Up in Lynn Lake - good tourist country. Also worked in Ottawa. His wife calls him a "darn tramp" because he wandered about so much with his work. He liked the work - had no one to bother him. Could read his own plans. Learned the hard way through experience - no grade 14 or anything like that!

Mrs. Cooke stayed in New Liskeard with her two daughters while he was away. Moved into their present house after the fire.

New Liskeard: Lot of the present houses weren't there; a school was located across from their house where the garage now is. Not a sidewalk all the way to the station - he put the woodwork forms in for pouring the concrete. George Kennedy ran the bus for the Liskeard and Windsor Hotels - got stuck up on Whitewood. The passengers wouldn't get out to push because they weren't dressed for the mud; the driver had to wait for someone to come along and tow him out with a wagon.

Armstrong Street and a lot of Whitewood - many of the stores disappeared later on. The old wooden bridge is gone now; came out pretty near in front of McCamus House, close to the Canada Hotel.

Mrs. Cooke came here in 1905 with her parents. Her father was working for the cement company which made the blocks for the Liskeard Hotel. The public school was where the library is now - a Miss Duncan and a Mr. Macdonald were teachers. High school was on top of the public school - no commercial school.

Mrs. Cooke worked in Carruthers' Store as a grocery clerk; there was so a milliner's shop; Wismer's Drug Store, and various other shops.

Not many houses in this area (Lakeshore Road). Remembers her mother sitting down and crying when they arrived in New Liskeard and her mother saw what she had to go into.

With the small children, she worked all the time at home. He bought her a car later on. There were shows, although she didn't get to them. Her children went to school in New Liskeard - they are now married, Mrs. Hilliard Cooke in Haileybury and Mrs. Len Williamson in Normetal, Quebec. There was skating for the kids and softball - her father remembers that Francis used to wear out more shoes than he did because she played softball.

Medical Facilities: Dr. MacNaughton and Dr. Fisher were the doctors - Fraser Farlinger now lives in MacNaughton's house. The big tenement near the bridge is where Dr. Fisher had his office. Dorsey was the doctor when Mr. Cooke was in the hospital with typhoid fever. Dr. Stallwood, Fisher, and MacNaughton, then McCulloughs, Farlinger and Dorsey.

When he was in the Lady Minto Hospital, had a private nurse, a Miss Sinclair. She had nursed Lily Thick, them him, then George Waugh. If it hadn't been for her good care, he would have died - she slept on a cot in his room for night after night for a week. He fooled her - she said she thought he would die. Put a cork in his mouth and fed him spoonfuls of water and a bit of whiskey. Didn't know anything about the whiskey until he came to. He had weighed 218 lbs. when he went in - was a walking skeleton when he came out - didn't eat anything, could only drink milk. His legs felt like ropes the first day he tried to stand.

Clothing: Good clothing, not like today; would wear and keep you warm. Mackinaw [illegible]rts, pants and sweater, rubbers, long woollen underwear.

Today: New Liskeard is the best twon in the north. A farming community, the Hydro and Dept. of Highways are here - have 15 to 20 acres above the station. Wabi Iron Works could fall; Lundia probably won't - they ship stuff from coast to coast.

People have too much education today - getting too darned smart - could be getting smart-alecky. The kids are dictators now in school.

Mrs. Cooke wouldn't live anywhere else.

Employment situation bad - fifty people might come in for a job whereas one person might find one job. Ever since he started to work, always had a job, always had a job when with Mr. Francis in Timmins. Used to keep time, etc. then the government wanted records, then a bookkeeper, then a timekeeper, and so on were hired.

Used to live near the beach - would go out through the bush, and could go skinny-dipping in the water - no one would see because of the trees (Mrs. Cooke's comment - "Shameless hussies!"). Then the government bought 60' of high water land - cut down the trees.

11. Changes: building the highway; sidewalks, no ditches. Schools, stores; a train a day and buses both ways.

13. In the last five years, this town has built 135 housing units. There are a lot of retired people who need houses. The government has spent money, a lot of money, foolishly as he sees it. The government could employ more handicapped people - mentioned an example of an incident they witnessed near Peterborough. A girl with a crippled arm, injured in an accident in a dry goods store, was working with a highway crew near Peterborough, holding a GO - STOP sign. She was there all summer long in the dust and dirt - willing to work.

Look at the waterways - need lots of improvements; could build trails for the tourists, like the Fire Rangers have done to take people through the bush

to see it. Lovely scenery. Apparently in Germany, if a tree was going to die, they would disect it to see what was wrong; then they would take out the roots so the disease wouldn't spread, and plant a new tree. Must conserve our trees - they are beautiful and not to be wasted.

Fishing for tourists - portage routes along the lakes, rivers and creeks. At Emo, below Fort Francis, lots of nice trails in the bush, they've built a sluiceway over the rapids with a hand winch to bring up the canoes. Could be done here to attract tourists - lots of roads to be built, improve the existing ones. The government has spent a lot of money foolishly this winter - could have done so many worthwhile things that would have given employment.