

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Mining Project

Columbiana County, Ohio

O. H. 561

RUSSELL ENTRIKIN

Interviewed

by

Samuel Kirkland

on

May 3, 1981

RUSSELL ENTRIKIN

Russell Entrikin was born on May 13, 1902, to Homer and Ella (Switzer) Entrikin near Lisbon, Ohio. His father was a farmer and when Russell was six years old, his father purchased a large farm in Franklin Square, Ohio. Russell helped his father farm and tend the large, white house and barn along the Salem-Franklin Square Road. He remembers the old Franklin Square Post Office where the men would gather around the old water pump in front of the place, chewing the "fat", as well as lots of tobacco. He recalls, as well, the hotel and general store on the other three corners of Franklin Square.

As winters came and farming slackened off, Russell entered the mines to earn some extra wages. He would work the winter there and tend the farm he eventually bought in the summer. He began work in the Delmore Mine as a coal loader in 1924 and worked on and off there until the time it closed in 1935. It was located on the half brick and half dirt Leetonia road, approximately one-third of the way to Leetonia from Franklin Square.

The following winter after the closing of the Delmore Mine, Russell went to work for just one season at the Coalman Coal Company in Logtown, where the water and gas made work difficult. For this reason, Russell began working at the Sheppard Coal Company in Franklin Square the following winter, where he was employed until 1938. He worked there only two years, devoting the remainder of his time after that point to

his farm on the southwest corner of Franklin Square.

Russell and his family spent the majority of their lives in and around Franklin Square, Ohio, and the times he spent there yield fond stories of the farms, their crops, the floods, the old schools, the railroads' attempt to buy property, the streetcar and the Saturday night "in town". He tells, as well, of the four different mines and their locations at Franklin Square.

The latter half of Mr. Entrikin's working career was as a farmer of a 130 acre farm. He tended to wheat, oats and corn which was used primarily to feed his livestock. His "living" was made from the livestock as well as from a portion of his wheat. He explains that his father once bought a Ford tractor but he, himself, never was very successful with one. It is for this reason that he continued to tend his fields with horses until the farm was sold in 1970. "Besides," he says, "I could always turn a couple dollars trading in horses."

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INTERVIEWEE: RUSSELL ENTRIKIN

INTERVIEWER: Samuel Kirkland

SUBJECT: Franklin Square School, Mines, Mine owners

DATE: May 3, 1981

K: This is an interview with Russell Entrikin for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on mining in Columbiana County, by Samuel Kirkland, at Franklin Square, Ohio, on May 3, 1981, at 10:00 a.m.

When you were a boy where were you born?

E: Right on this side of Lisbon on a farm.

K: Where was your farm at?

E: Off of Route 45 on Tea Garden Road.

K: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

E: I had one brother and one sister. My sister is still living; she is 84.

K: What is her name?

E: Bates.

K: Did your dad farm?

E: Yes. He used to dig coal and then he got the farm.

K: Did he dig coal on his own farm or for a company?

E: Down at the Tea Gardens.

K: When you talk about Tea Gardens was there a little town down there?

- E: Not exactly a town; there was a town at the end of the railroad tracks and some of those coal diggers batched there. The coal back was right down the railroad track.
- K: How about the Tea Garden Mine down there; do you remember that?
- E: No.
- K: As a young boy you just worked on the farm and went to school at Franklin Square?
- E: I moved on that highway [pointing] when I was six years old.
- K: Tell me about that farm. How many acres was it?
- E: Dad used to have 135 acres. We moved here when I was six years old. When I got married I moved onto dad's place and I worked for him. Then I finally rented it and then bought it.
- K: What kind of crops did your dad raise?
- E: Just wheat, oats, and corn.
- K: Did you have any livestock? How many?
- E: He kept several head when he had both places. When I was there I generally milked them.
- K: What did you do with your wheat and that, did you sell it?
- E: What we didn't feed we sold.
- K: Where did you sell, in Salem?
- E: Yes.
- K: When you went to this farm when you were six, was the railroad there or the old tracks?
- E: There were still tracks. They put the third track in, but they never did put the fourth one in. Then they took the third track out; there are only two over there now. It is all stone in there.
- K: When you were a boy did that always flood in there like it does now?
- E: It flooded, but it got away. Now it doesn't get away. It leaves everything in the creek down there.
- K: What was it like living in Franklin Square in 1910? What

did you do for fun? What stores were here? Tell me about the schoolhouse.

E: There was always a post office here in town. We had a post office, and a store.

K: A general store?

E: Yes.

K: Did they sell groceries and feed?

E: Tobacco.

K: Where did the old gentlemen congregate to shoot the bull during the day, at the post office?

E: On the well right in front of the store. They would sit around there and shoot the bull. On Sunday they went to this barn towards the creek and played poker.

K: What did you young boys do in the summer for fun?

E: Saturday night we generally went to town and that was about it.

K: Did you go to dances?

E: Dancing and shoot a little pool. We would hop a slow freight going into Salem.

K: Do you remember prohibition?

E: You could get a bottle most anyplace if you knew the places.

K: Did they have any speakeasies around? Did you ever go to one?

E: No. The guy up the road burned his house down; he had a still in the cellar. It was a brand new house.

K: Do you remember any of the old-timers in town when you were a boy?

E: I can remember a lot of those old fellows. Some of them didn't do much of anything; some of them farmed.

K: Who were some of the farmers around besides your dad?

E: Old Grubbs lived where I did; he had a couple of boys.

K: How about up Franklin Square Road to Lisbon Road, did they farm potatoes there then like they do now?

- E: All of those houses were different farms. They farmed a lot of potatoes.
- K: How hard was it to plow with horses?
- E: Today I would rather work the horses than I would the tractors?
- K: How much could you plow in one day?
- E: If you plowed ten hours you could step right along and plow two acres. It wasn't very often though that you plowed that much.
- K: How did you plant?
- E: I had planters.
- K: Did you pull them with horses?
- E: Yes. I farmed with horses until 1970 when I had to sell.
- K: Didn't you like tractors?
- E: When I worked for dad he bought a Ford steel wheel. If you wanted to go out and do something in a hurry you would crank and crank and crank before you got the thing started. I never liked them then. I used to buy and sell horses and make a dollar or two that way.
- K: What was your best horse?
- E: I always liked the Persians. Nowadays the Belgians are pretty good horses.
- K: Do you remember when cars first started coming around? Who was the first in town to have one?
- E: I don't know who was the first, but the first one I had was a 1919 Ford. I had a lot of fun with that. I would get six gallons of gasoline for \$1 on Saturday.
- K: What about the roads?
- E: They were dirt roads.
- K: What did the school you went to look like?
- E: It was a brick building, two rooms.
- K: How long did you go to school?
- E: I started in first grade and went to eighth.

K: What time did you start and get out?

E: Nine o'clock until four.

K: What all did you study?

E: Arithmetic and spelling, geography, grammar, and history.

K: Who were some of the teachers?

E: John Prestly, Ross Davis.

K: Were the teachers stern?

E: They had two teachers. So many of the grades went to the little kids and so many to the bigger kids. Towards the end there wasn't enough for two rooms so they all went in one room. For a while they had a big, folding door and we would slide it up and have dances there on Saturday.

K: What year did you get married?

E: I think it was in 1922.

K: When did you decide to go into the mines?

E: I think I went in when I was twenty years old. I worked there in the winter time and I worked for dad in the summer time.

K: What did you start out doing in the mine?

E: Loading.

K: Hand loading and pick?

E: They had cutting machines.

K: How did you get in the mine, did you have a man trip or did you walk?

E: They hauled them in.

K: How did they pull it?

E: Motor.

K: How far back in the hill did they go at that time?

E: To where Patterson lives.

K: How was your air?

E: That's the worst part about the coal business, you don't have enough air.

K: You had gas in that mine, didn't you?

E: There was gas, but not like down the creek.

K: Before you set your shot off, how did you clear the gas? Did you just let the shot shoot the gas out?

E: That fellow that went in early in the morning, if there was any gas he would blow it out. That was about it for the day.

K: You didn't have any problems then?

E: No.

K: When you were a young boy what mines around Franklin Square were running, just the Delmore?

E: There was Synder's; that was pick work.

K: Were there any others?

E: Cherry Valley in Leetonia.

K: The Sheppard wasn't running yet, was it?

E: No.

K: When you first started at Delmore how many guys would have been there at that time?

E: There must have been 50 or 60 men. A lot of them lived in Washingtonville. They had a big bus that they used to haul the men down.

K: What was it like working in the mines, did you enjoy it?

E: I always liked it in there; it was warm in the winter time. You were pretty much your own boss.

K: How about money?

E: At that time when I used to ride trip I got \$7.50. That was pretty good at that time. You belonged to the union.

K: Was the work tough?

E: It was work; if you didn't work you didn't make anything.

K: How many ton could you load in a day?

E: If you averaged seven to eight ton you were doing pretty good.

K: What was a normal day like? What time did you start?

E: I started in at quarter to seven. I quit at quarter after three.

K: How long did it take you to get to the face?

E: Fifteen minutes.

K: Did you usually break for lunch or did you work through lunch?

E: You never paid much attention to that. Whenever you got hungry you ate.

K: Did you carry one of the old miner's buckets?

E: Aluminum.

K: Where did your dad work in the Delmore?

E: In the Tea Garden.

K: Did he ever tell you any stories about Tea Garden?

E: He never said much about it.

K: How big a mine was that?

E: That was a pretty good size at one time.

K: Was that a gassy mine?

E: Plenty of gas and plenty of water.

K: Did you ever have any real emissions where the gas would pop out?

E: If you would shoot you would get a little hole in the draw slate and if you stuck your light in there it would pop and make you jump.

K: How high was that?

E: It averaged three feet.

K: Did you wear knee pads?

E: Not very often. On your knees lifting the coal wasn't hard on your back.

K: How old were the youngest boys that you had working?

E: I think you had to be eighteen.

K: Was the Delmore Mine dry? What kind of roof did you have?

E: A good roof.

K: Was it a draw slate?

E: Yes.

K: How much land did you have on your farm?

E: 108 acres. After he sold that to the railroad he had 80 over there in the bottom.

K: Did the water bother him much?

E: Once in a while the spoil caught this end of it.

K: Where was your mother raised?

E: Toward Salem.

K: Getting back to the mines, you left the Delmore and went to Coalman Mine, right?

E: Yes. Then I worked over at Weikart's a winter or two. Weikart ran the Delmore after Sterling Coal Company quit.

K: How was Delmore?

E: It had plenty of sulphur, but not much clay.

K: Did you get paid for loading rock or slack?

E: Not much in the rooms.

K: When you prepared your shot what did you use to drill with?

E: Posts, thread bar.

K: What size hole did you drill?

E: We used stick powder out here like dynamite.

K: You didn't roll your own powder?

E: At first we did, but then we got so that we used the stick powder. It is a little bit handy.

K: Was it fused or did you use squibs?

E: Squibs where it was dry.

K: Did you ever get hurt in the mine or do you remember anybody ever getting hurt?

E: Not real bad.

K: Any roof falls hurt anybody?

E: Nothing to speak of.

K: How did you hold your roof up?

E: We had to set posts in the roof.

K: What about the entries, did you timber them?

E: We never had to.

K: You must have had pretty good top at Delmore.

Who was mine foreman and superintendent there?

E: Weikart brothers. One of them had the outside and the other the inside.

K: What about your fire boss? You said he was an English fellow.

E: He worked on the roads. He would do it early in the morning and he would work his time. He was smoking his pipe or had his light hit and stuck his head in and it singed his hair off.

K: The Coalman Mine at Logtown had a lot more?

E: Yes.

K: Did you have to be careful shooting there?

E: No.

K: How was the coal down there?

E: It was good coal.

K: Was it three feet height?

E: Some rooms had a little dip and it would be higher.

K: What about water?

E: At some places there was too much.

K: Did you pump it or work through it?

E: You worked in plenty of it, but they tried to pump it out for you. Some of them rooms were pretty wet.

K: What about the Sheppard Mine?

E: They didn't take much coal.

K: How far in the hill does it go back?

E: [No response].

K: Why did they shut that down, because the brothers couldn't get along?

E: I don't know.

K: What kind of equipment would they have used there?

E: They had a cutting machine.

K: A cutting machine and the rest was hand loading? Did they have any gas?

E: Nothing to hurt you.

K: What about at the Delmore, did they have a fan on that fan house?

E: Yes.

K: Was it really dusty?

E: Cutting machines are always dirty and dusty. A lot of times we would have to get a powder keg and tell the motorman to fetch us a keg of water in to dampen the hole.

K: You never had any real powder fires?

E: No. We had an explosion out there before they had the cutting machines. It killed a couple of fellows.

K: Yes, I think that was about 1907.

How old were you when you left the mines and decided just to farm and not to bother mining anymore.

E: I worked down here a couple of years and then I started to work on the farm.

K: Was that because the mines pretty much shut down?

E: They still worked a little after I quit. They didn't go in there very far.

K: What was your best crop on the farm?

E: We generally raised corn, oats, and wheat. We fed most of the corn and oats. We sold a little wheat.

K: You pretty much made your living off of the livestock?

E: You fed it to the cattle, hogs, horses, and chickens.

K: Do your kids help you quite a bit on the farm?

E: Yes.

K: What do you think about how Franklin Square has changed?

E: It hasn't changed much.

K: Are people about the same?

E: We have some new families.

K: When did they pave these roads through here?

E: This road to Leetonia was just half of a road, brick. I think they put that in in 1917, the same time the railroad was here.

K: Do you remember them laying that brick?

E: Yes. They laid it by hand too.

K: Would they put sand underneath that as base?

E: I don't remember what they used, but they had a pretty good foundation.

K: Where did everyone generally do most of their shopping and go to town? Would they go to Leetonia mostly?

E: We didn't much; we generally went to Salem. Some of them went to Leetonia.

K: Looking back at the history of Franklin Square, is there anything you would have liked to see done differently in town, like keeping the schoolhouse?

E: I don't think there's anything.

K: In the Delmore Mine did you lay your own track in the rooms?

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E: We didn't have to, but we generally did. That was the roadman's job.

K: How far did the trolley wire come in, just to the room neck?

E: Just along the entry.

END OF INTERVIEW