

Interview with Billy Bell, Elm Street, Springhill
June 25 1979

Mr. Bell declined to be tape recorded. He is the man responsible for rescuing the men trapped in the Moose River Mine Disaster and has a collection of photos.

He said that in the mine you were "pretty much your own boss." The overseer didn't bother you much "provided you do your work." He recalled music in the mines + horn gigs around the place he worked - the hoist rig empire. (The men involved would be company men). Mr. Bell liked the camaraderie of the mine. He said you didn't think about the danger or "you'd better get out."

He began work in 1916 as a trapper boy at the age of 14. From a family - father was a coal miner and had come to Springhill c. 1890 (just missed going through Explosion because he traded shifts). He had a vivid recollection of the 1909-11 strike - holding his father's hand and watching the mounted police. After working as a trapper Mr. Bell went to driving horses.

Mr. Bell was working approximately two feet from Mr. Malcolm Blue when he was killed in the mine in 1927. Malcolm Blue was flattened by coal cars which went down the rails when the rope broke. He had just been joking with

Mr. Bell about what they were going to do to him at that evening's meeting - when he was going to be advanced in the order of the Knights of Pythias.

Mr. Bell took out engineers' papers. In the 1927 (?) strike he worked in the salt plant at Nappan. After the strike they wanted him to stay but he preferred mining.

He told us that after the 1908-11 strike there was a strong feeling against the immigrants - he said that the miners had rolled them down hills in oil drums and "done everything else but kill them."

Not active member of union, no real union memories.