

Transcription of Interview with Paul Brenton.

only Brenton in Cumberland Co. b. Bible Hill, Truro, 1906.

hardly knew his own family. father died. it was "Root, hog, or die" in them days. his mother had to go to the States. a sister of my father took me, and they were the only family i ever knew. ~~xxx~~ his mother died in the States in 1921. he never had anybody too close. his father b. out on Main Street, moved out to Rodney when he was five years old.

used to be four houses in Springhill before the boom.

his own father died and they took him in.

not an official arrangement.

growing up on a farm. started in these pits in 1926. 6-7 mines. in No.7 in 1926.

I can remember the old board ~~xxxx~~...Well, board walks. board walks in Springhill.

went to school in the country.

Teacher was the boss.

he quit school at 14. unionized labour in the pits--they were paying good money. 'That's what took the boys to the pits here.'

had living four miles out.

He boarded in Springhill during the winter--couldn't come in four miles. Board in private homes.

1926, \$3.25. started on the bankhead. started on the surface, dumping coal. then he used to have to stay there till a quarter to three. boys coming out of the pit at half-past twelve or one o'clock.

you'd walk up out of 6-7 in those days.

he 'kept after the manager'...considered an awful fine man.

once he got in the pit, he'd be off at half-past twelve.

turn in your lamp, wash and go home.

paid by datal rate--when the miness got what coal they wanted loaded, the datal men could go home.

one set of miners would be so intent on getting their boxes loaded that they'd inform the management on the bankhead staff if they didn't get their coal. didn't take off early...not 20 boxes but more. Miners would dictate how long bankhead staff stayed. [Miners were virtually in a supervisory position vis-à-vis bankhead workers].

difference between twenty and twenty-four boxes.

'How late you stayed at the mine would depend on the miners themselves? That's right. That's what we were all governed by.'

making up trips, slewing boxes and making up trips.

the mines went down and they hit a fault--Nos.6-7.

bord-and-pillar was where the inclines was that we were running for the men.

longwall comes to Nos.6-7 in c.1923 or 1929.

longwall did away with quite a few men.

six or eight men to a wall.

wintertime was when we got our good work.

steady time in the winter time. water coming into No.2.

split the time up in the 1920s.

"They split the time so the fellows would get enough to eat. If they didn't do that, I don't know what we would have done."

longest strike, came out in February and came back in June (1947).

change from Davis Day to Miners' Memorial Day.

claims that the dust settled pretty fast after the big AMW/UMW split in the 1930s.

he was broken up in the pit and the company was "good to me that way" in giving him other work around the pit.

give you jobs like tending a pump or watching a fan.

job nobody liked--stone dusting.

dust was white as flour, but heavier than flour.

paid regular datal wage for that.

wouldn't start out on boy's work--not at age of 20.

'When we worked here in the pits we all went pretty near to the same wash house, we all went down the pits together, everybody knew everybody. Well, now, you see, there's been a lot of...The young crowd growing up...Well, a boy grows up in town, you'd never know him, if he's from another part of town. But 30, 35 years ago, you would have known him, because he would have come to the pit....'

[new crowd moved in to work at the penitentiary.]

--reason why everybody said hello on the street: everybody's face was so black that you were scared if you didn't talk to them, it would turn out to be someone you knew.

--minimizes the election bitterness.

'That's only pit talk, see?'

religion in the 1920s--Orange Party. Catholic fellows playing in the Orange Band. Dan Gillis, called off at American States. Always got him to call off for their dances.

You could hear Orange Band all over town.

'That was a good town, you couldn't beat it.'

only one church in his district--Methodist/Baptists alternate.

check off system--benefit society, doctor, church, etc. also rent and coal.

[strongly suggests I talk to Freddie Schurman.]

company houses--some of them were good enough houses.

housebuilding: 'You got a lot of help, a lot of free labour. You'd all ~~th~~ be working together in the pit,...you helped dig the cellar, a lot of them were handy to help build the house.'

summertime--four days a week; you'd have Friday, Saturday and Sunday off.

hotels--they weren't supposed to sell it, but they sold it just the same.

married 1930.

Attleboro, Massachusetts. jewelry factory there absorbs a lot of Springhillers.

fellow called ~~Brown~~ Brook--hiring Springhillers after the bump for his factory.