



# The Gogebic Roots Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 5 Issue 1

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**In This Issue**


**The Savu Sauna**  
By Ed Sandene

**Pix From the  
Carnegie Library  
Archives**

The Gogebic Roots Quarterly Newsletter is a publication of the Gogebic Range Genealogical Society, Inc. The Newsletter is published quarterly in January, April, July and September. We are located in Ironwood, Michigan, USA. Our mailing address is P.O. Box 23, Ironwood, MI 49938.

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Membership dues are based on a calendar year starting with the date of enrollment. The expiration date of your membership is shown on your membership card. If renewal of the dues is not received by the expiration date a reminder is sent. The reason for this is twofold. First and foremost we value your membership and hope you continue to support us. Secondly, our Bylaws state that a member in arrears 30 days after the anniversary date shall be removed from the rolls. Please keep in mind that one reminder only is required in this same section of the Bylaws and is sent in hopes that your membership continues without a lapse. If any member has a question regarding this please feel free to contact us.

Thanks for your continued support.

**Life in a Finnish Community**  
**The Savu Sauna ( The Smoke Sauna)**  
**By Eddie Sandene**

I can't say that I remember my first sauna experience, but I sure remember some early ones. There were many warm, cozy, happy times that come to mind. The sauna was lit by a kerosene lantern, there were still-glowing embers in the fire and the sauna room was warm, really warm and had that lingering, smoky smell.

The sauna was large by today's standards. The sauna part was probably about 12' by 12' with a walkup seating area. We could walk up the three steps to another level which extended across the back wall. There were benches against the back and the end walls, and a railing across the front. Everything was all black from the smoke so the benches had to be rinsed off before we sat down.

The *kiuas* (sauna stove) was a big pile of rocks over a horizontal barrel which was the fire chamber. There was no chimney so it was literally a smoke house, (it was used for this purpose also). The fire was started in the early afternoon because it took a while to get everything hot. There was a tub of water on the *kiuas* which would get heated during the warming process and there were milk cans of cold water which would be used for mixing the bath water in pails and to replenish the warm water as it was used. This water was carried by hand, a distance of 150' or so, as the only pumped water went to the barn. The sauna was built some distance from the house in case of fire.

After the sauna got hot, actually when this big rock pile got hot, the fire was allowed to die down and two vents were opened to let the smoke clear out. The first ones in usually had to endure *kitua*, I cannot think of an equivalent word in the English language, but the eyes burned and there was this stinging smoky sensation in the air. After throwing cold water on the rocks to get *loylya*<sup>1</sup> the *kitua*<sup>2</sup> would gradually disappear. It was good sauna after that, the rocks would stay hot for a long time. Of course a *vihta* or *vasta*<sup>3</sup> would have to be used. These were made of cedar branches which I often got, even as a very young child, from the swamp which was behind the barn.

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<sup>1</sup> *loylya* - this was the steam caused by throwing water on the rocks. - the word was used in different connotations but that's pretty much what it meant.

<sup>2</sup> *kitua* - the eye stinging sensation that was caused by the smoke residue

<sup>3</sup> *vihta* or *vasta* - the cedar switch which one used to hit themselves in the sauna - the two Finnish words for this are from different areas in Finland



The photo on the left is mother carrying water to the sauna. I think this was taken in the 1940's because the sauna was moved about 1949 or 1950. Note the long wood we used to fire up that big pile of rocks around the 50 gallon barrel which was the sauna stove.

I can remember going as a family, I mean all 5 of us, father, mother, and us kids, as this was a common practice with the Finns and no one thought a thing about it. Of course as we got a little older my brother and I would go together, sometimes alone, sometimes with a friend or maybe with one of the *jätkäs*<sup>4</sup> that would be there. Many times family friends of my parents would come for sauna. There are memorable Christmas Eve nights when this would happen. After sauna there would be coffee and homemade biscuit which was something like the cardamom bread of today, but much better. Then of course we young broncos had to take a lot of *loylya*, get good and hot and then go roll in the snow. Boy it felt good to go back in and throw water on the rocks and really steam it up so that we would warm up. Then it felt good to sit in the dressing room and just relax. Often in the winter I would run that 150' back to the house in bare feet so that my shoes didn't get full of snow. Then after all of this on top of a few hours of skiing and barn chores I know that I slept like a log.

There were times when the sauna became a smokehouse. In the springtime when the Redhorse suckers were running we would go to Maple Creek and scoop them out by hand. When we had enough we would head back up me creek carrying gunny sacks with fish- that was no fun at all. Then we all had to help clean them and into the sauna they went to be smoked. The same thing was done with walleye and herring which was brought by the Lake Superior fishermen who would come around with their wooden boxes full of ice and fish. In the fall the pigs would be butchered and some of this was smoked also. Of course once the smoking was done we all took saunas because the heat could not be wasted. Now that was a treat, I wonder if we didn't all smell like we were smoked too.

After Dad had his strokes the sauna was moved nearer to the house. It was divided into two equal sections with the sauna and the dressing room taking up half of the building. A "modern" steel sauna stove, with a water jacket and a tank for hot water, was installed. By then we had installed a

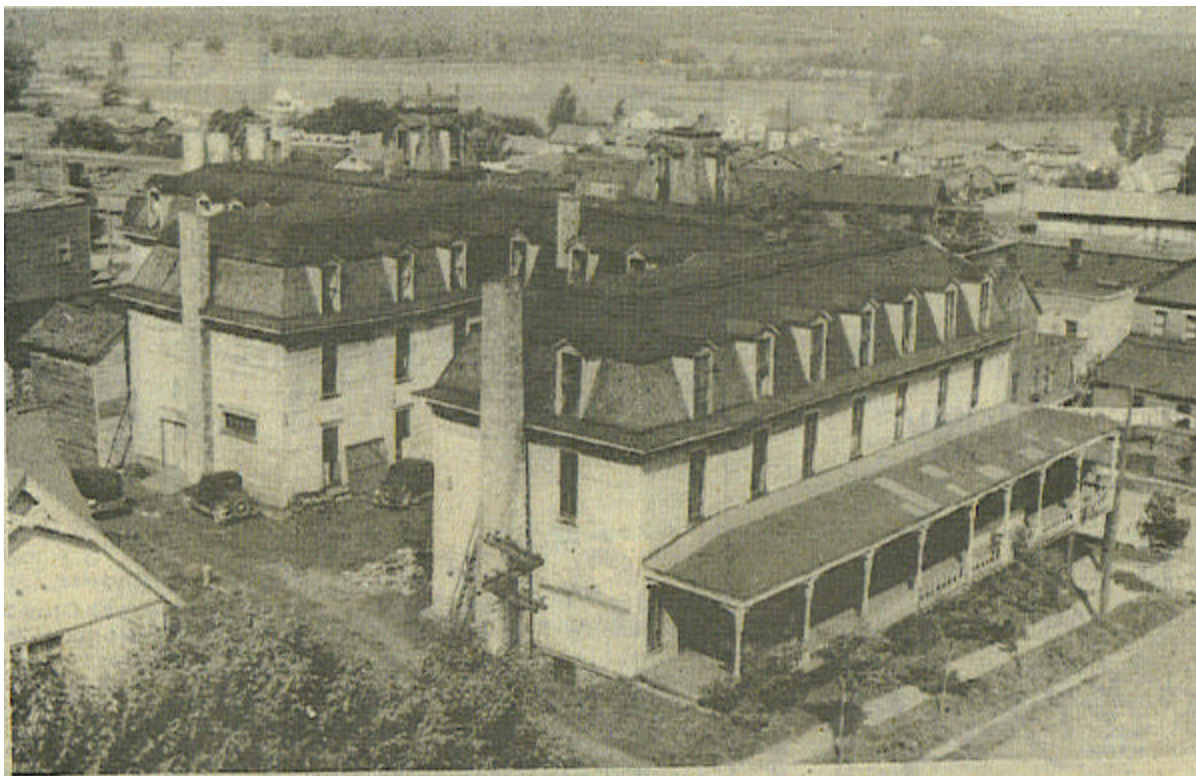
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<sup>4</sup> *Jätkä* - it's pronounced yatka with a sound as in pat. A term used for a lumberjack or woods worker and for those itinerant homeless fellows that used to chop our wood etc. They would work for a couple of weeks and then go to town to have a good drunk.

pressure water system so we could use a hose to fill up the water containers instead of carrying it or pushing the milk cans on a sleigh. Remember the sauna used to be about 150' or so from the pumphouse and there were often quite a few people taking saunas so a lot of water was needed. My brother and I appreciated this new "modern" setup.

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## Some Photos from the Archives



An early view of The Burton House in Hurley. The picture was probably taken from the belfry of St. Mary's Church. The hotel burned to the ground on February 2, 1947. In the early 1930's, Edna Ferber stayed there to research her book "Come and Get It".



This picture of four-year-old Bonnie Burton is from a Bonnie Mine stock certificate. The mine opened in 1886 and was operated by the Bonnie Mine Iron Mining Co., Milwaukee, a Burton property. It later became part of the Newport Mine. Alice Denison Hackett, Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, wrote to the Ironwood Historical Society that the picture was that of her mother. The mine was named after Bonnie Burton, as was Bonnie Street in Jessieville. Bonnie's father, John E. Burton built the Burton House and owned several mines on the Gogebic Range. Bonnie Burton died on March 10, 1969 at the age of 87.

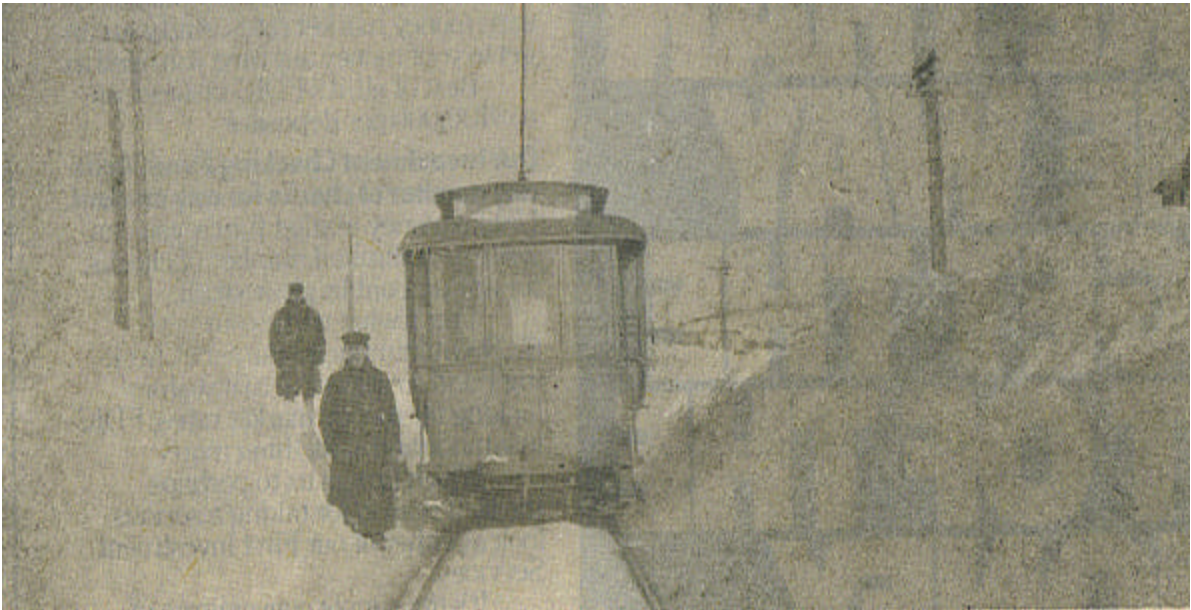




Annabelle Miller, daughter of Frank Miller, 325 Lake Ave., was Ironwood's Winter Carnival Queen in 1928. The family later moved to 125 E. Pewabic Street, Ironwood. Annabelle moved to Detroit shortly thereafter. Her father was in charge of compensation and employee relations for the entire Oliver Mining Operation on the Gogebic Range. Nothing more could be found about Annabelle after her father's death in 1948.



This picture of John Oliver was taken about 1925. He is standing in front of his cabin in Wakefield Township. John passed away in the county infirmary on May 30, 1934 at the age of 76. He lived at the cabin at Connor Camp No. 2 for several years. It was known that he came from a prominent Scottish family.



The streetcar between Ironwood and Hurley, March 20, 1899



In 1899, we got pelted with snow. Businesses in Hurley had to tunnel their way out of the door. In this picture, courtesy of [Rooted in Resources](#), Judge Griff Thomas (with moustache) and a newsboy survey the damage of the high winds and blizzard conditions.



### **Our Officers are**

**Gary Harrington, President**  
**Diane Egan, Vice President**  
**Andrée Carlson, Secretary**  
**Eddie Sandene, Treasurer**  
**Carol Schleker, Membership**  
**Dwight Filippini, Cemeteries**  
**Tim Egan, Librarian**

**Our board meetings are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month  
from 10 am to noon at the Bessemer Historical Society**

**Everyone is invited to attend.**