

Fieldwork Recordings—Dictionary of American Regional English
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Transcript of DARE Interview (1966): Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan; Primary Informant MI004 (Tape 0659-S1)

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INTRODUCTION: The following was recorded from Dictionary of American Regional English tape zero six five nine, side one.

FIELDWORKER: This is a recording of Mr. James [beep], made in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, on the thirtieth of September, nineteen sixty-six by [beep].

- 5 INFORMANT: Good afternoon, this is Jim [beep] from Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. Glad to tell you a few things about our lovely city. We had a meeting here, two or three weeks ago, in which I had to expound on some of the fine qualities of the Sault, and I think the Sault, unlike most towns of its size, is more metropolitan than other cities. For instance, we have boats, ships from all over the world come past our doorway. Another thing, we have a, the gigantic country of Canada.
- 10 We're the only city on a thousand miles of international boundary line touching Canada. And of all of the cities, approximately six hundred in the state of Michigan, only two others besides us have something in common, uh, in a big way, we touch on Canada, Detroit is one, and Port Huron, of course, touching at Sarnia is another. Only we, uh, occupy the position for the entire length of Lake Superior separates the United States from International Boundary line other than a water-
- 15 covered boundary line. And from here all the way down to Port Huron. So that that is somewhat unique. Another thing, we have, um, vast galaxy of governmental agencies, such as the Coast Guard and radar base, an Air Force, and, uh, other governmental establishments, like the Weather Bureau, virtually continuous here since eighteen hundred and twenty-two. And, uh, Border Patrol, Customs, Immigration, and, uh, numerous other governmental agencies. The, the
- 20 locks itself is almost like an industry. Then, somewhat unique, uh, while we haven't any plants of any c-, great consequence at the present time manufacturing goods to be shipped, we do, however, manufacture and ship out electricity. We're connected with the Lower Peninsula with a, a s-, cable underneath the Straits of Mackinac, so that we can bring in electricity if needed, or ship it out if necessary. We supply cities as far away as Manistique, Michigan, with electric power and electric lights, we supply Mackinac Island with electric power and electric lights. Drummond
- 25 Island and quite a, a good many farms and small towns in the eastern end of the Upper Peninsula. We do have a small plywood plant here, manufacturing plant. We have a dry dock for ships, repairing ships, and we have machine shops that uh, are, stand in readiness to supply industry.

Course the dolomite plants at Cedarville and on Drummond Island are somewhat equivalent to
30 being in the Sault. Then we are getting to be an educational center. Old Fort Brady twenty years
ago was converted into a, a branch of Michigan College of Mining and Technology and now is an
independent college, or is fast on the way to becoming an independent college and not just a
two-year school, but a four-year school. It won't be, uh, follow the pattern of other colleges in
that it will be a liberal arts college, but more one that fills in the neglected area of uh, technical
35 studies such as nursing, and uh, engineering, and uh, short courses, farm courses, and, uh, s-, uh,
shaping up, um, uh, people to assist architects and assist engineers and work o-on, i-in a technical
fashion, uh, maintaining machines or preparing, uh, for construction work, or, uh, working in
plant design. And it is hoped that in, eventually that this school will get to be a school of about
40 ten thousand students. It seems quite likely, uh, provided it doesn't, uh, imitate too closely the
liberal arts colleges of which we have seemingly plenty. Then the Sault is a tourist center and
because of the, all of the new motels and the other facilities that are necessarily here to look
after the tourists during July and August, Sault Ste. Marie, I believe, stands a very good chance of
becoming a-a well rounded and well known year-round convention center. We have a big armory
45 building, uh, relatively new, that can seat a thousand people at a dinner. We have the uh, Pullar
Community Building which can seat, uh, several thousand people a-, in gatherings and, uh, we,
we have, uh, numerous other buildings that give facilities for s-small, medium and large
conventions. Another thing that I think will, is gradually becoming, uh, felt here is the new
shopping center that is being built is going to stimulate the other merchants to make better
50 parking and the, the friendly war that will necessarily follow is going to bring in business that
doesn't already exist here. That is, uh, as the shopping can, improves here, the people will come
from farther and farther away. Even our hospital is fast becoming medical center, there are over
three hundred employees there, and I can remember, not very many years ago, when there
weren't probably more than thirty or forty people employed in the hospital. It's grown at such a
55 rapid pace in the last few years. But we still would like to get some industry. We still would like
to h-have, be in the forefront of a general e-, growth and expansion such as the United States as
a whole is enjoying. Possibly, an idea that you haven't thought of is that industry is what you
make it, also business is, tends to be what you make it. In other words, there isn't just so much
business, and there isn't just so much industry, but when someone comes along with a brand
60 new idea such as television, eventually that blossoms into a great many different, uh, employing
agencies, industrially. And uh, merchant-, and from a merchandise standpoint. It doesn't come
into f-full fruition instantaneously, and not all things that are invented reach their culmination as
quickly as television seems to be doing. Although I think television has a long, long way to go yet.
I think eventually it will be used more and more in schools and colleges as well as in the homes.
But, to digress just one minute, when two firms are competing together in business, each one
65 trying to give more service, or trying to win a bigger section of the trade, the mere fact that they
are competitors, they will unearth ideas and new ways of developing their business than either
would by himself, without the competition of the two. And while not all competition is fair
competition, still, uh, unless you have lively competition, you don't have a lively growth of a
business. I remember when I was a little youngster, almost everybody in his back yard was trying

70 to develop something having to do with an automobile. And, uh, a good many of these trials were
laughed at. I know we called Billy Hills auto Billy Hills "trashing machine," because it made so
much noise when that would get stuck in the, in the sand. And it was just a little tiny motor, uh,
out on the back end of the car, and it didn't have much power and the roads were not then of
course what they are today. So all of this growth and, that, that the automobile had would never
75 have taken place if it hadn't been, uh, brought down to the level of every man in his own
backyard. And so with the business on Ashmun Street, and the business in the, the Sault or in any
city, it has to be down where the ordinary man is hard put to build it up. He knows what he wants,
but he's having a, one devil of a time achieving what he wants. Henry Ford, you know, failed three
times before the Ford Motor Company finally in nineteen three became established, and he went
80 into racing first, in fact before that, his car was a wealthy man's car, and it wasn't until nineteen
three that he hit on the idea of making a, a-an inexpensive car that the man in the street could
own. And so with business on Ashmun Street, I think it's got a very fine chance of growth and
expansion if the men in, in the various stores will exert themselves to the nth degree, putting on
new store fronts, or introducing new fixtures, or even enlarging their stores, or making them
85 more commodious, or taking on new lines, and, uh, uh, originating business that doesn't at the
present time even exist. An example of how this can be done is to just look at the Woolworth
store, which for fifty years was on Ashmun Street in very much the same, uh, humdrum, ordinary
sense of being a five and ten cents store. Now it's more a department store. Two floors, selling
furniture and rugs, and for the first time in the history of the Sault, to my knowledge, a full-
90 fledged book store and doing a flourishing business. Very many new departments were added,
and of course while this is only one business, it's a dramatic example of a, a business that has
been here for a long, long time, uh, more than trebling in size all within a matter of a few months.
And the other businesses, uh, following in that same pattern, could easily make the Sault, uh,
rebound with a great influx of new business, not presently enjoyed and not even dreamed of by
95 most of the merchants. When Kincheloe closes, if the pattern of other air bases, uh, having
been closed, is followed, it will be found that an entirely new development might be had. There
might of course be a temporary setback during the transition period, but with the example of
these other bases that have been outlined so nicely by the evening news, and every incidence
where a military establishment has gone, gone out and the proper steps have been taken by the
100 city adj-, closest to that air base, the new development that has ensued by making an industrial
complex, or enticing, uh, various firms to come in and take up the multi-millions that the
government has, uh, established there, that ordinary, uh, commercial use of military property
brings a much bigger return for the area than the military does. Uh, the uh, people that own their
own homes tend do fix up their own homes. People that live and rented homes tend, if anything,
105 to run them down. And this can be seen over and over in company towns where the beauty has
gone the other way as against private ownership where they've added a little each year, dressed
it up, put on additions, uh, landscaped the grounds, and uh, enhanced the property. And, uh, uh,
I think that the individual ownership, just like when individual transportation was put into every
man's hands by the ownership of a car instead of being in a big company's hands, such as travel
110 by railroad necessarily is, that this country has enjoyed a prosperity that, uh, is unrivaled

anywhere else in the world. And we can have it here when Kincheloe goes out, we can have a rebound that will do us a tremendous good if we, and we have these other examples by which to pattern our moves. So I think that between the two, the shopping center and Kincheloe, uh, we have right at our fingertips the basis for a genuine new growth such as has never been achieved in this locality or any other locality in Michigan. The Story of Arthur the Rat. Once upon a time there was a young rat who couldn't make up his mind. Whenever the other rats asked him if he would like to come out hunting with them, he would answer in a hoarse voice, "I don't know." And when they said, "Would you rather stay inside?" he wouldn't say yes, or no either. He'd always shirk making a choice. One fine day his aunt Josephine said to him, "Now look here! No one will ever care for you if you carry on like this. You have no more mind of your own than a greasy old blade of grass!" The young rat coughed and looked wise, as usual, but said nothing. "Don't you think so?" said his aunt stamping with her foot, for she couldn't bear to see the young rat so cold-blooded. "I don't know," was all he ever answered, and then he'd walk off to think for an hour or more, whether he would stay in his hole in the ground or go out into the loft. "I don't know," was all he ever answered, and then he'd walk off to think for an hour or more, whether he would stay in his hole in the ground or go out into the loft. One night the rats heard a loud noise in the loft. It was a very dreary old place. The roof let the rain come washing in, the beams and rafters all rotted through, so that the whole thing was quite unsafe. At last one of the joists gave way, and the beams fell with one edge on the floor. The walls shook, the cupola fell off, and all the rats' hair stood on end with fear and horror. "This won't do," said their leader. "We can't stay cooped up here any longer." So they sent out scouts to search for a new home. A little later on that evening the scouts came back and said they had found an old-fashioned horse-barn where there would be room and board for all of them. The leader gave the order at once, "Company fall in!" and the rats crawled out of their holes right away and stood on the floor in a long line. Just then the old rat caught sight of the young, of young Arthur—that was the name of the shirker. He wasn't in the line, and he wasn't exactly outside it—he just stood by it. "Come on, get in line!" growled the old rat coarsely. "Of course you're coming too?" "I don't know," said Arthur calmly. "Why, the idea of it! You don't think it's safe here anymore, do you?" "I'm not certain," said Arthur undaunted. "The roof may not fall down yet." "Well," said the old rat, "we can't wait for you to join us." Then he turned to the others and shouted, "Right about face! March!" and the long line marched out of the barn while the young rat watched them. "I think I'll go tomorrow," he said to himself, "but then again, perhaps I won't—it's so nice and snug here. I guess I'll go back to my hole under the log for a while just to make up my mind." But during the night there was a big crash. Down came the beams, rafters, joists—the whole business. Next morning—it was a foggy day—some men came to look over the damage. It seemed odd to them that the old building was not haunted by rats. But at last one of them happened to move a board, and he caught sight of a young rat, quite dead, half in and half out of his hole. Thus the shirker got his due, and there was no mourning for him.