

## **Life in the Northern Inn**

**By Mary Noble**

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When he was seven years old, Earl Noble, moved with his parents, Warren ("Tim") and Addie, and sister, Margaret, to the Northern Inn at the mines on the Trout Lake road in Edwards. Addie ran the Inn and Warren ran the farm, both owned by the Northern Ore Company.

It was the year 1918, the last year of World War I. Prices were high and some foods were scarce or rationed. Eggs were \$.90 a dozen. The men who stayed at the Inn paid seven dollars a week for room and board, which was later raised to eight dollars. Agents came on the train to get grocery orders, but their goods became so expensive that it was cheaper to buy from the local stores. It took a lot of food for 43 boarders.

Food was stored in the basement of the three-story hotel as well as in the wooden icebox on a porch that was built onto the back of the building. Addie did the pastry baking and her mother, Nellie Barnes, did the cooking. Each day they put up lunches for the men to take with them when they went down into the mines to work.



The Northern Inn as it looked in the days when the Noble family ran it for the Northern Ore Company.

At the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918, the Armistice, ending WWI, was signed, and in Edwards there was a big celebration. One of the highlights remembered was that the Kaiser was burned in effigy.

Warren did the farm work, milked the cows and peddled milk to the families who lived at the mines. He took the milk around in a can that he carried on his back. It had a spigot from which the milk ran into the customer's container. He always gave good measure and one customer, Mrs. Rio de Janeiro, would say, "Mr. Noble, you shouldn't do that. Youâ€™ll get in trouble". She didn't know that he had been told to be sure that the children got all the milk they wanted to drink.

Some of the boarders were Italian or Spanish and two were Russian, and when they talked among themselves they spoke in their own language. Two of them, a big fellow named Paul and another known to Earl only as Kousma, took Earl to the movies in the Town Hall one night and when they walked there from the mines they were speaking in Russian all the way. (This was about one mile). Earl was scared to hear them speaking in the strange language. Later, Earl learned that Kousma was Kousma Kahonsky, who married locally and became the father of John Honsky.

During the time that the Noble family lived at the Inn seven men died from accidents in the mines. One particular accident made the headlines of the Watertown Daily Times - "Three Killed in Mine Explosion". There is no date and no other information on the surviving headline, but Earl recalled the incident. The men hit a dynamite cap causing the explosion. Two men were killed outright. After they were brought to the surface, Warren was asked to go to one of the empty double tenant houses belonging to the mines and build a fire as the two bodies were to be kept there overnight. As he went in, he stumbled over the bodies, which had been laid on the floor, and couldn't be seen in the dark!

The Inn was so crowded with boarders at that time that some men were sleeping in the halls on cots, so Mr. Patterson, who later became one of the bosses, gave up his room to the third man who was severely injured. The worker had a rock as big as a man's fist embedded in his back. At some time through the night a person poured undiluted iodine in the wound, no doubt with good intentions. The injured man was in such pain that Earl remembers hearing him screaming throughout the night. In the morning the man was carried downstairs, leaving a trail of blood, and taken by horse and sleigh to the depot. There he was put on the train to be transported to the hospital in Ogdensburg, but died when train was near DeKalb Junction.

There was a fourth man, a Spaniard, in the group of workers involved in the accident. However, he was bent over using a short handled shovel known as a "Banjo Shovel", so the rocks missed him and his life was spared.

One of the other mining fatalities recalled involved a man from Porter Hill area of Hermon who worked in another man's place just before Christmas in 1918. Warren was sent to the family's home to inform them of the accident. He could see they were desperately poor, with a large family and little in the home. On his return, he made the remark that "If you ever wanted to help someone in need, now is the time to do it, for that family certainly needs help".

During the flu epidemic of 1918 White's Medicine Show came to town and they boarded at the Northern Inn. One day when Earl was going after the cows he became sick very suddenly. He said that he was never going to chase cows again. He was the first person in Edwards to get the flu, probably brought to town by the people in the show.

On March 25, 1919 Earl and his family left the Inn and moved to his grandfather's farm. His grandfather, Cleland, was no longer able to do the work so his son, Warren, took it over and ran the farm until he, in turn, passed it to his son, Earl.

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The author, Mary Noble, is the wife of Earl Noble, who recalled the above time period in his life.

The specific information on the incidents of the mining accidents was been added by LaVerne H. Freeman after an interview with Earl Noble to get information on the aforementioned headline found in the Watertown Daily Times newspaper library.

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