



living than many industrial, commercial or educational workers did. I think we would be classed in the well off category."

The Elliotts lived in a two-storey four bedroom home in the city's east end.

"The house was heated with a coal-fired furnace located in the basement. This basement ran full length of the house under the kitchen to the living room.

"The basement was accessed by a stairway that ran under the stairway that led to the bedroom wing upstairs. The basement contained my mother's washing machine, a double laundry tub, a great workbench, a large closet for keeping preserves my mother would make and of course, a fairly large sealed room to receive and store the coal.

"The basement also had an entrance from the outside with steps. The living and dining room floors were oak hardwood and the kitchen floor was covered with battleship linoleum which would never wear out. There were beautiful built in cabinets around the kitchen sink and a separate four burner electric stove and oven. All in all we didn't lack for very much."

While the railroad people handled the Depression years fairly well many people in the neighborhood and throughout the city had some tough times, he said.

The Finkles with 14 children in the family struggled along with the rest.

"Only one of us was born in the hospital," he laughed. "Nobody had money. We certainly didn't."

A year after he began working for his father, Finkle left the city to work for an electrical contractor in Sudbury.

"I was only getting about 15 hours work a week with my father. I needed to find more work and when I got that job in Sudbury, I got more hours and I made more money. I was able to send home enough money so that that year my family back home here could have their first good Christmas in a while," he said.

Ernest Finkle Sr. suffered a stroke and retired from the business operations, which were taken over by his two sons, Don and Ernie Jr. both of whom had joined the family business in the early 1940s. Following the death of their father, the two brothers became co-partners until Don's death about three years ago.

Today, the family business continues to operate under the partnership of the younger generation of the Finkles, at its Pinnacle Street location.

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"Two or three days after the pay period we had lots of work. But after a week and a half later, that business too would dry up because nobody had any money except for them.

"They're the ones who got their homes wired. Their homes had more rooms that needed wiring, more fixtures, switches, sidelights and so on. Very little came in between those railway pay days," recalled Finkle.

Former Belleville resident Jim Elliott, who now lives in Tillsonburg, used to work at Coleman Street's Corbin Lock Company. He recalled Finkle Electric as being the only firm the lock company would use for any electrical work it required.

Elliott's father was a CNR engineer and was paid every two weeks.

Reflecting on the standard of living in the city at the time, he said:

"I believe railroad workers, especially engineers, enjoyed a higher standard of