Orono
Students at UMO think of the town of Orono as being a quiet, small town. Drinkers bring some action to the sleepy village during weekend nights, filling the streets and parking spaces. But only the occasional rustling of leaves blown by miniature tornadoes disturbs the casual tranquility of a warm sunny spring Sunday.

Orono has not always been this way. According to William "Wild Bill" Campbell, who has lived in Orono since 1913, Orono used to be almost a bustling metropolis.

Campbell, 74, was here when Orono had three train stations, and two paper mills.

"Yuh. Three Central Maine Railroad Stations. One just across on the other end of the bridge, Webster station. The Orono station here. And Basin Mills. Yuh. See, Basin Mills was, that was the name of the town. 'Cause there was two or three big mills there, they named the town after the mills.

"The Walker Lumber Company employed 300 help. The Orono Paper company, Orono Paper and Pulp, employed 800, running three shifts. And this International mill over here employed 170. IP, it used to be the International mill, right across the bridge here. The Orono paper mill had three machines in there. They put out 28 tons a day."
With all those men working in the mills, there had to be something for them to do in their spare time. And there was something to do.

"There was several barrooms right here in Orono. Sold hard liquor. There was one right on this end of the bridge, called Sharkey Violette's and there was Bill Fisher's. And then there was the Hole-in-the-wall, over there near the wall of the water company, near the mill. Well, I don't know what the owner's real name was, but they used to call him 'Tuffy' King. I don't know why. Maybe he was a fighter or something. See what I mean? In them days they didn't have no police to speak of."

And traffic jams were unheard of.

"Yuh. There was just one cop here in Orono for six years that I knew about. And he was on 24 hours a day. He was subject to a call anytime, on a bicycle. Well, the cops a few years ago in these little towns used to ride bicycles. Well, there wasn't any cars. In 1915, there was only four cars here in town."

One family had two cars.

"They were millionaires. I don't know how many million, but they had money. They had two cars and chauffeurs and everything. Their cars were Pierce Arrows. They had headlights on 'em a foot long."

The absence of cars meant the lack of some conveniences.

"This town had milk wagons. Hand wagons, with five-foot wheels on 'em. And a man would push it around the streets and go house-to-house. He didn't have no horse on it or nothing. He'd spend all day just peddling milk. He was quite a big man, but it had them big wheels, you know."

Living was cheaper then.

"You could buy skim milk for five cents a gallon, when I was a kid. Regular milk — about three cents a quart. In 1912 and 1913, they did pay 15 cents an hour, but they were working a 10-hour day. You could live, because sugar was two cents a pound. In them days they didn't have no hot dogs. Hot dogs never come out until about 1918."

Streetcars were a normal sight in Orono.

"Streetcars ran from lower Hampden to Old Town. Yuh. Overhead trolley. There's tracks right there on the road right now from here to Old Town. And they ran all the way to Charleston, where the air base is. It's 26 miles from here in Orono, by streetcar. You could go out there for a quarter, return trip."

"Some of them were all open, with no roof at all. On a rainy day, you'd have to have an umbrella. They ran in the wintertime, too."
"They had what they called a cow-catcher. It looked like a big snow scoop, only it was made of heavy wire. Some of the students years ago used to ride on it for nothing. Yuh. It was nothing to see 15 on a cow-catcher, riding for nothing. The conductor didn't dare to go out and say anything to 'em, 'cause he might get a bat in the mouth.

"They done with the street cars October 1, 1934, the same year the mill shut down. 'Cause the mill here was using a lot of the power you know. When they shut the mill down and everything, they had all kinds of power to spare. And the town was building up, and they were just putting the lights in 'most all these houses around town here in 1934. So they done away with the street cars to save the power for lights. They sold all the streetcars. The streetcars went to Brazil."

On the darker side, violence occasionally flared up. Several murders have occurred since Wild Bill came to town 61 years ago. One involved a UMO student.

"A student shot a girl on the toll-bridge here, the bridge going to college. She was going with this Chinese boy. She threw him over for another one. So he didn't shoot the boy, he just shot her, at nine o'clock at night, when the moon would come up. He sat up on the bridge, so he could see her under the light, when she came, and he shot her. They were in court quite a while over it. This was in 1915."
William "Wild Bill" Campbell
Another murder involved a feud between two mill workers.

"There was this old widower, a beater-engineer at the paper mill. He made sure the paper was ready to go through the machine. That was in 1919. He had a housekeeper living in his house. The widower come home one night from work, and this young man, he must have been going with her. When the widower come home and caught him in the house, he put him out, and put the shoes to him and kicked him and everything. The young man, when he was out of the house, told the widower right then. He threatened the old man, 'You old son-of-a-whore, when I catch you again I'm going to kill you.' That would stand up in court now.

"So where the young man threatened to kill him, the widower was pretty nasty in the mill. I was on the same shift he was. And there was an old fellow, used to work there. When he didn't have nothing to do he would sit down and read. The widower would go out and give him a broom, and make him sweep the floors. Oh, he pushed him and shoved him, and this old man, he was about 65 years old, but you could work, them days. The old man got mad at the widower. He decided he was going to kill him.

"So he moved to Bangor. He practiced quite a while. He fired 300 shells with a revolver. He had an old policeman's badge, and he used to go into Mt. Hope Cemetery and put it on a headstone, so it wouldn't hurt nothing.

"When he was good enough, he came up to Orono. He came up from Bangor in a streetcar, and he got off down there by Highland Ave. He waited for that old widower to come into work at quarter past eleven. I was one of the first men that found him the night he got shot. We came up over the hill just 10 minutes after him, up Highland Ave. He was grunting just like a little pig. The old man emptied the gun on him with a 22 pistol. He put through three bullets, right in his upper stomach and his chest. The widower was dying, but he was dying slow, and he was laying in the grass.

"They arrested the young man because he'd threatened the widower. He did three months in jail. The old man was still free. He set out to commit suicide. He went down on the steamboat wharf (in Bangor) and he had a piece of train rail, and a piece of wire. He was going to slide it over and go with it, drown himself.
"He admitted to the murder. They sent him to prison in Thomaston. The old fellow died in Thomaston. So they let the young fellow out. He married the housekeeper after a while. But the old man didn’t want to see an innocent man go to jail for a crime that he (the old man) did, so he confessed.

"And it was a perfect murder, if he hadn’t admitted to it."

Campbell commented on Orono’s slow deterioration from its former position as a center of activity into its present quiet and peaceful state.

"Well, the town wasn’t any bigger, but there was more stores here. Oh, hell, yes. There was all kinds.

"It’s gone downhill on account of business. Well, I’m not educated enough to tell you the reason why. But the only thing I can see, the whole world’s that way. They say England’s just as bad, pretty near. It’s on account of money."
Fall
Spring
March 21, 1974