

## Ruby Miller - Tape 1 (side 1)

**This is a script of an interview with Ruby Jane Miller (nee Watts). While the interviewer is not identified, the interview dialogue would suggest that it was Donald Gordon conducting the interview. Velma Miller (nee Charter) was present and sometimes offers comment.**

**The Interviewer's commentary is presented in italics. Names are often difficult to distinguish. Where these are really unclear, a question mark appears in brackets.**

*I am here today with Ruby Miller a longtime resident of the Sunderland area. On behalf of the Historical Society, Mrs. Miller, we want to thank you for taking a few minutes to speak to us today. I don't know how many people have said to us, there is one person that you have got to talk to and that's Ruby Miller. I've lost track of all the people who have said that so we made a date with Jim and had to cancel once unfortunately when I had to go in the hospital with a bit of a back problem but finally we made it so I guess where we will start is perhaps you can tell us where you were born and when you were born.*

I was born January 27, 1891. I was born in the little house in Sunderland where I lived most of my life, down from the bank. I lived there for 26 years and I was married. I went to Valentine. I lived there for 35 years and came back to the same house that I was born in and that's where I lived until I came up here.

*And what was your maiden name, Mrs. Miller?*

Ruby J. Watts. I had one brother, that was Leslie (*Irvine Leslie Watts*) and he was a station agent (*CPR*).

*He was a station agent at the railway station here?*

Yes, he was the station agent or was at that time an operator and he was at various jobs... at various ... on the railroad, he was always on the railroad at various .... You know it was always related.

*Can you tell us a little bit about growing up in Sunderland as a child?*

How do you mean?

*Well do you remember some of the things you used to do and friends you used to play with when you were a child in Sunderland?*

Oh yes, I had loads of friends and the ones that I was most familiar with were a ... the Frank Doble family and they lived up in the little house where Mrs. Sheldon's (*Kay Sheldon – nee Brethour*) was - right behind the bank. And eh ... Margerie, Edgar and Earl were born there. And then they built a house right next to us to the north of us.

*(Frank Doble lived on the NE corner of Albert & Doble St. – Marg Doble – 1891, Edgar Doble – 1892, Earl – 1897)*

*Oh yeah, on the corner...*

So we lived side by side all our lives and Marg. was born ... I was born on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January, Marg was born on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February, that's all the difference there was and we grew up together. And they'd had a bunch at that house and when I was a little older I lived there half the time and then Margaret moved away to Toronto and Florence *(Florence Doble, 1885)* and I became friends and we were lifetime friends. There was Earl and Edgar, the younger ones....

(3<sup>rd</sup> party) One of them hunted with your grandfather .....

*Oh, is that right?*

(3<sup>rd</sup> party) Which one went hunting with John L. Gordon? Earl or the other? I say which one of the Doble boys went with John L. to hunt?

Oh Edgar, Edgar!

*Ummm. Did you go to school in Sunderland.*

Oh yes I went to school ... the school is up the front street there, The grounds was where the Bakers live now - Jean Baker.

*Oh, is that right? There was a school there?*

Jean Baker and the house next. I was a student when they built what we called the new school... *(north side of River St., west of St. Mary's Anglican Church)*

*What I called the old school when I went to school... We used to call that the old school when I went to school.*

When they built that, Neil McPhadden and Sandy McPhadden bought the property and they each wanted to build a house.

*What kind of a school was it? That was a one room school?*

No, it was three rooms.

*Three rooms was it?*

First, it was two rooms, a main room that came out and with a walk around and the other ... room run out from it. And after some years, they built another one on the other side and there was three rooms.

*So that would have been right across the street from the Anglican Church. I guess the Anglican Church would have been there then was it?*

Oh no, not across the street.

*Oh, it wasn't there at that time?*

Oh yes. Oh the Anglican Church was there. It was built in '74. (1874)

*Oh the little street there... maybe that little street wasn't there then.*

Yes it was. It was just a lane way. It was just one house back there and that was Richard Hodgson who had a lumber yard back there and there was a house on one side and a barn on the other, a little a little street ....

*And who was that that had the lumber yard?*

Richard Hodgson.

*Hodgson?*

And then there was the house close to the Anglican Church...the house was there and then the school yard was next you see right on the same side of the street.

*Yes. So I guess all of the children that went to school at that time then that would have included grade 1 right up to ...*

Yes, to the Entrance class and they had what they called .. it was the 5<sup>th</sup> class, it was the 5<sup>th</sup> class , something like a continuation. At one time, when Les went to school, you'd take your entrance and then you'd go to what they called Junior (leaping?)

*So where would most of the kids go that decided to continue on with their schooling after they got there? Uxbridge or...*

And I tried my entrance in Cannington and eh... McBride was the inspector then.

*Do you remember any of the teachers from the Sunderland School?*

Oh yes. I went to Nellie Huxtabel was the first teacher I went to at the school and then there was Mrs. Nesmith(?), she was from Uxbridge and she married Wes Doble, that wasn't our Wes. I don't know what Doble he belonged to.... *(Wesley Doble was a butcher and married Ethel Nokes)*

*Oh a different a Wes ?*

Yes and he was a butcher in Sunderland and I went to Nellie Elm(?) I went to Earla ... I forget her name and there was another teacher I went to there and I went to Mrs. Colville (?)

*You remember quite a few of them anyway.*

Yes

*Do you remember many of your classmates that you went to school with?*

Oh there was Ruth McPhadden and Nelly Geldon (?) and Carol Williams and Lee Shier and Serge, Will Stewart and Charlie Snooks (?) and the Laverys, the Laverys, they came to Sunderland when we were in the first school and there was Will and Frank and they were great big fellows, they were great hockey players and there was Will (*born 1885*) and Frank(*born 1887*) and Charlie (*born 1892*) and Thomas (*born 1895*).

*What did people do for entertainment back in those days.... Can you remember some of the different things that people did?*

Oh they didn't go to shows like they do now.

No

They eh, oh they went visiting and the old ladies... the grandmas, they wore a white apron and they always lived in with their family, they didn't go away to a nursing home for we didn't have nursing homes then and the grandma generally, she sat in her big rocking chair and minded the babies and mended the socks and didn't do what they do now.

(3<sup>rd</sup> party) You used to have shows though up in the hall, didn't you?

Oh yes, when they built the hall ... the hall was built in 1907 and when they built that they had a dramatic society and the boys formed the one and the girls formed another and they put on shows and they put on East of 'N' And Charlie's Aunt and um those are two I remember.

*So everybody would come to town?*

Oh, everybody! And at Christmas time, we used to skate in the old arena, the old agricultural hall and they called it the wash tub, it was so small, but we had a lot of fun in there and the United Church - it was the Methodist Church then, they always put on the Contada, at the Christmas night and everybody went, they wouldn't miss it for anything.

*Is that right?*

And they put on some wonderful entertainment.

*So can you remember when the town hall was opened then?*

Oh yes.

*Was that a pretty big event for the town?*

Well yes, but I just forget what ... They had dignitaries there, speaking and that ... the United Church was built about the same time and I can remember when the hotel - the Brock House was built. I can remember when the old hotel, there was an old hotel there where the bank is .... Keenans (?) had a machine shop and then there was - these were just little narrow buildings there was another one beside it and then there was a blacksmith's shop, Warrens, Mr. Tom Warren ran the blacksmith shop and then the livery barn - the livery barn was right out at the street. It covered that place where Hazel Robertson's house is now and the downtown pump there ... and everybody that needed to went there for water and there was fire in the Keenan place and it burnt right down to the livery barn and the old hotel. That was in about '08 or '09 and the Brock was built as a hotel. It was - Hamilton was the first hotel keeper there. He married a Stoddard and his father run a hotel in Beaverton and he came down and that was opened in 1900 and the bank wasn't built until 1904.

*Do you remember who would have built that hotel? Did one of the railway companies build it maybe or was it privately built?*

McDermott

*Oh is that right?*

Now I don't know whether he did it on his own or whether there was others with him. I don't know that.

*Yea.*

He owned it for quite a while and that.... the hotel took in that whole square back to Croziers, right down ... right to that corner and up to ..... well, that building where Ralph was ... right out to the old post office that whole square was...

*It was all the hotel property?*

There was a barn there and shed and at the back of that barn - it was about half way back - it was an orchard, a garden, a big garden and a few apple trees. And my father bought that later in life and we owned that for a while - we run it - he run a market garden there.

*What did your father do for a living?*

Well he was a day labourer for years and he learned a trade - a carpenter and he worked out later then he built a little greenhouse and raised plants and grew the garden.

*Oh. Did they have the greenhouse in behind your house or where was it?*

Right out - right where the pump is now.

*Is that right? Well I guess in those early years, everybody got around by horsepower?*

Oh yes - horse and buggy, yes. Um, I think the train - I don't know if I'm right or not but I think the train came through in 1871. John A. MacDonald was Prime Minister.... Prime Minister of Canada. And Cannington wanted the junction, Sunderland wanted the junction - but they put it in Blackwater.

*Oh yeah.*

And the .. at that time we had as you say, we used the horse and buggy. We had a livery barn and two hotels and ...

(3<sup>rd</sup> party) They wouldn't sell whiskey in there would they?

Sure. (laughter) Sure they sold anything - anything and everything in there. And there was two blacksmith shops and two tailor shops and three dress making shops.

*Now these would all be on the main street?*

Well, yeah the two hotels were on the main street - one was the Brock House and the other one was the Nippissing House.

*Yeah which was up were Will's (Stan Will, 1903 – 1984) store used to be and what year would that be approximately? Do you remember roughly what year that would be that you are describing with all the stores and that?*

Oh that would be as long as I can remember.

*So this would be in your childhood days, I guess would it be?*

Yes. I am .. we had four general stores - there was one down ... down where Graham Lowe lives and that was run by Auntie ....and what was her name now .... Calhoun. (William Calhoun). And Herds run a little a little feed store beside it. And Herds lived over ...

*So that would have been to the north - the feed store- would it? Where the service station is now?*

The little feed store was right next to the Masonic Temple.

*So it was right in between, in that little space in between?*

Yeah. The Masonic Temple was the Presbyterian Church and then there was this feed store and then Calhouns and Dr. McDermott's lot - the big lot right on the corner - that belonged to him and there was ... there was a bank right in the first store, there was a bank and it wasn't a chartered bank. It was a .... (*The Doble Bank*)

*Private bank?*

(3<sup>rd</sup> party) Trust bank?

I think private bank but I can't be too sure. I forget what they called it but Jamie Valentine and Mr. Yerkes(?) (*Ulysses Yerex*) run it.

*And were was that located again? Was that part of the McDermott Block?*

Yes, right on the first corner ... right on the first corner... well the next place... oh I don't know ... well they had a dress making shop in it at one time and on the corner on this corner was the post office and Mr. Welsh (*Arthur Welsh*) was postmaster and he had a small office along that's eh ... Mrs. Richard Purvis. She was Edith Lelong and she worked as a clerk in the post office. And then the next was the drug store, Mr. Mogell run it and the next was a little furniture place and the eh ... the eh ... I forget even the names....Mr. Till run it and he was, he was undertaker. And then there was and the last store down that way was a shoe store and Al Wilson runs it.

*So there were a lot of businesses in town at that time weren't there?*

(3<sup>rd</sup> party) That was the block that burned.

Yes there was. And then there was Taylor's (*Lorne Taylor*) store. It was a general store. A general store was a grocery store, a dry goods and hardware and pretty nearly anything that you mention.

*So you didn't have to travel to Lindsay or anyplace to buy anything?*

No!

*They had it all in Sunderland.*

It was ... the store next .... Well the hardware, the Home Hardware - that was a general store and as far back as I can remember Neil McPhadden run it. And the next was Mr.

Charter, Mr. Bob Charter (*Robert Charter 1852-19150* and I can't remember before him but eh... He had the furniture and he was the undertaker and then there was a Mr. Harris run a little shoe store next to him and I don't know when I was very small - I don't know what was next to it but that's were Wes Miller (*1869 - 1940*) had a store there. Before that, that's Nance Oliver's, they were bakers - there was two bakeshops at that time - Nance Oliver, he lived down, down the hill and ... I can't .... I don't know where .. I ... on the first corner down, there's a house there and the next one, there's a bakeshop and Nance Oliver (*Henry Anson Oliver - 1878 - 19620*) ran that and Mr. Thompson run the other one up at the Oldfields at the end.

*Is that Baker Thompson?*

(3<sup>rd</sup> party) Baker Thompson.

*I've heard of him.*

(3<sup>rd</sup> party) He took our attendance when we went to Sunday school.

*Oh is that right?*

He was the superintendent of the Sunday School, the United Church Sunday School for many years.

(3<sup>rd</sup> party) He was short and fat and he just always reminded me of Santa Claus.  
(laughter)

Yes, and Dan MacIntyre had the place up the other side of the Nippissing House. Oh it was right next to it - the hotel run up to it - oh Charlie Thompson's that was at one time .... that building wasn't there. The sheds run this way and there was a little driveway ... that little driveway down beside Charlie Thompsons. And the next building in there was the dressmaker's shop and the milliner's shop. That's were Stan Will is.

*I remember when Jennie Baker lived there.*

Yes.

(3<sup>rd</sup> party) And Camplins lived there.

And on the other side there was ... there was ... ah... and then where the funeral parlor is now that was a grocery store and Uncle Wes Miller had feed in there too. He sold feeds and when I was a small child, the next place was a hardware store and was run by Thompson and the next building was where the Legion is, it was a dwelling ..

*Yea, I remember that*

Because



*I remember the old house that used to be there.*

Well right there where you went up those steps that was Jardines -- Jardines lived there - that was the doctor - Dr. Jardine had his office there and then the next place was ... an insurance fellow run that and then where Carl Umphrey had his shop - that building wasn't there. That was a driveway into the back to this house and the store at the corner was four places - there was a dry goods store and then you went upstairs and then there was a grocery store. Will Hall and Marsh run that - Will run the dry goods and Marsh run the groceries. And then the next ...

(3<sup>rd</sup> party) It was Bill St. John wasn't it?

Oh I ... and the ....the last one, a Mr. Walsh lived there and he was the clerk of the township for a good many years.

*So he would be right across from the town hall then was he?*

Yes, down the front street and there was at that time the street was away down and you went up about four or five steps and in front of the store there was a platform and you could walk that platform to any of those places, then the town hall, the old town hall was where the platform is, that's Olivers, there was a machine shop, a carriage shop there and that building was ....