

Ruby Miller - Tape 2 (Side 1)

This is a script of an interview with Ruby Miller. While the interviewer is not identified, the interview dialogue would suggest that it was Donald Gordon conducting the interview. There is an unidentified woman present who sometimes offer comment (identified as 3rd party).

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.

Well, we were talking about the agricultural hall and where it was located and I think that we decided that it was just south of the track then is that right?

Yes, you walked right into it. Yes, that was right.

And so what kind of displays would they have had?

Oh, everything. They had fancy work, quilts and they'd hang them all up on ropes - the quilts - and some of the fancy work and displayed them out ... they wouldn't have nearly as much as we have now but ... and they had apples and grain and corn and such and eh, oh everything you could think of. And they had horse racing.

Yeah. Did the track exist at that time?

Yes the track was there as long as I could remember.

Is that right?

I can remember when Ed Doble (1887 – 1966, son of William Henry Doble) was rather small, I mean young and they showed horses and cattle and sheep and pigs and dogs.(laughter)

So was it a one day fair back in your childhood days or did it run over the course of a few days?

I think they had one day to prepare and another fair day and the Directors, they used to go up and get things ready you know. It was locally judged. They didn't have a judge come in, I don't think when it first started. And then they went down to the Brock House for the dinner. When we were at the job, we got our own dinner.

So do you remember participating in the fair? Did you put things in the fair?

At one time I showed No, I didn't show much. At one time, I showed apples and they were in a box. They were packed in a box and the packing and the condition of the apples and I remember taking all kinds of time to shine them. And I had paper this way and this

way. I got first prize and I got a table cloth, a linen table cloth, I got. Fair day was a big day.

Everybody put all their tools down and came into the fair, eh? Yeah.

(3rd party) Didn't they have a big show at night, after 6:00?

They had a concert. That would be some talent from out.

Down in the town hall, I guess, eh?

Yes. But they never had a supper. It was when Wes Crozier (1893 – 1984) was president, he went down to Blackstock, to the fair down there and they had supper down there and he was so taken by that, he came back and he said I don't know why we can't do that and make a nice bit of money. And the fair board was pretty nearly broke when he was president and now I can't tell you how much money they have on hand.

But the fair was an important part of the community back then and now I guess even as well.

Another big day was the 12th of July and every family in the countryside was out with all the youngsters and when I think of it the first thing that comes to mind is youngsters running around, oh with candy and all dolled up and I said when I get youngsters of my own, I'll bet they don't ... they'll eat their candy at home. I never let my youngsters have candies like that.

What was the significance of the 12th of July then?

Oh that was the Orangemen's Day, a thing that was well forgotten. It was carried on too long. It was a thing that is now forgotten. It was carried on too long. It was the battle between the Protestants and the Catholics. And why should we be fighting over something that happened centuries ago. Crazy! It was well, well forgotten.

Well I guess that's why Ireland still has its problems today.

Pardon

That's why Ireland still has its problems today, isn't it?

Yes.

And we've forgotten about it.

Yes, and it's to be forgotten.

So you mentioned that you remember watching hockey games in that agricultural hall in the winter time.

Oh, I never missed one.

Is that right?

No.

So what teams would be playing? Were these local teams.

Local teams - Cannington, Uxbridge & Sunderland.

Wilfrid?

(3rd party) Wilfrid.

(3rd party) Yeah, Dad played for Wilfrid.

I never went to a hockey match where my husband played.

Those were pretty exciting games, were they?

He was kind of hot-headed. (laughter) Oh, I don't know. I told him, "Don't ask me to go!" But he enjoyed it.

Did they curl at that time?

No.

Curling came along later then?

I Oh baseball, we never missed a baseball game either.

Do you remember some of the names of the people that played on those hockey teams or baseball teams?

Jim Thompson.

This would be baseball would it?

No, both games ... he did.

Both. Did they usually do both?

Hockey.... Hockey, there was Jim Thomspson and Fred Milne(?) and the Joynt (?) boys. There was Cec. (*Cecil, 1893*) and Jim (*1897*)and the Lavery boys - they were all big fellows. They were hockey fellows. But the ... Stan Young and oh, Mac Thompson. And I'll tell you, Mac Thompson used to play first base and I don't think he missed a Earl (*Thompson*) used to play too. I think that he played third base. But, Mac always played first base and when he came to bat he was just a picture. He just stood there and held his bat just so ..

Is that right?

He was a very ... I would say a graceful player. They were great at sports, those two boys.

(3rd party) The Brandon boys, did they play then?

Yes. Oh it would be way back before that even ... Macklin ... there was a fellow by the name of Macklin used to play and Jenkins. Jenkins was a pitcher. At that time we didn't have a pitcher good enough in Sunderland and we got Jenkins. I don't know where he came from Back north some place.

Where did he come from?

Back north some place.

Back north? There were a lot of Jenkins over at Little Britain too. Do you think he might have come from there?

Oh they...

(3rd party) Junkin.

Junkin, was it?

(3rd party) Cambray.

Oh there were lots of Jenkins in Little Britain.

(3rd party) Ted Johnston. Don't forget about Ted.

Yeah, Ted Johnston.

(3rd party) And Carl St.John's brother, Ralph (*William Ralph St. John, 1907 – 1984*). He always played ball, years ago.

Yeah.

Funny you mention that. Eh ... Clare (Gordon) had picture that he got from Ralph and Iva of a baseball team and that St. John is in it.

(3rd party) Yes, so is Ted. And so was ... more than that ...

I remember that picture. I had it ...

(3rd party) I'll bring you that picture. It's a wonderful picture, just as clear as anything.

And they too had a picture of the Methodist choir, years ago.

(3rd party) Didn't Kay show you that? The Methodist choir.

I don't know whether I've seen that.

(3rd party) Cause I had one of those that Bessie gave me and I'll give it to you.

OK

(3rd party) It's got all the people in the choir and all the names written beneath it.

And what year roughly, would that have been?

(3rd party) What year was that Mrs. Miller -- the United Church choir ... before it ... oh it'd be the Methodist choir before it went United.

Before the union?

(3rd party) I can't remember.

In the 1890's.

Is that right?

Oh, I was only small.

(3rd party) It's a lovely picture.

There was the St. John family, there was Mrs. Beall was the organist and I suppose Mrs. Williams was in the choir at one time. And Mrs. Sheldon...

(3rd party) Oh there's quite a few there. And Dr. Oliver is in it. You wouldn't know him at all - just a young fellow with lots of hair, you know. Well I'll see that you get it, because you know....

Jim Brethour and two of his daughters.

Do you remember some of those Sunderland baseball and hockey teams winning some championships?

Oh yeah. They often won.

Did they often win?

Yes, they often won. They had some good teams. Later in years, we used to go away ... Cameron and

I guess in those early days, they wouldn't be playing baseball on Sundays would they?

No sir. You didn't read your newspaper on Sunday. You put your dolls away and you went to church and you went to Sunday school. I went to our own Sunday school at half past nine and I stayed for church - that's be till 12:00 o'clock. I came hoe and had my dinner. And I don't know how old I'd be just a youngster and Mr. Harry Baldwin (?) (*Druggist in McDermott Block before Jim Anderson*) lived on our street and he was the treasurer of the Presbyterian Sunday school and he came over one day and he said to mother, "Would you let Ruby go to the Presbyterian Sunday school?". She said that I'd be glad to. So then I he kept on walking up to Mrs. Dobles and they called her Maggie at that time - "Can Maggie go?" So the two of us, we were small enough - he called for us and we went to the Presbyterian Sunday school for a long time until they had it in a morning.

So actually, you were in church most of the day, then.

Well not at night. I didn't go to church at night, at that time. Yes, oh that's what you did then.

So the baseball games and the hockey games would have been on Saturdays, that or week nights, I guess?

Yes, anytime.

Not on Sunday! You didn't go. It was awful when they started going to the lake and playing baseball up there.

So do you remember taking any train trips when you were a child?

No. Well, we went one time back to Orillia to the park and that was all the Sunday schools went together and got the train. That train went back to Orillia. Oh I guess it was a big holiday. No, oh we didn't take trips then. When you were in Sunderland - that Sunderland area was where you found all your fun. You hardly ever got out of Sunderland. You'd go to your relatives, maybe. I always went to Grandmas, but you didn't go far. Mostly, we didn't have a horse and you just didn't go. You didn't have a

way of going. We hired a horse once in a while and went over to my Grandmother and Grandfather (*Irwin Johnston*). Mother's father lived in Cresswell and we went over there sometimes, an odd time. But I used to go over there on the train. We'd go, get off at Mariposa station and walk a half a mile down.

How did you get onto that train track? Because that's not the track that goes through Sunderland, is it? Did you have to go down to Blackwater?

Well you went to Blackwater. That's where the junction was. You see the north train came down from Orillia. It came through Sunderland about half past nine. It went to Blackwater and it would be the first train in. And the engine would leave the car sitting here and it would go around the 'Y' and it'd be turned the other way and they jostled the cars that way.

Is that right?

And they always had ... they wouldn't do it exactly like that because they always had baggage cars before the passenger and then that train stayed there until one came from Toronto. There was a track at Blackwater this way, and then one this way and one came from Toronto and went on and the other one came from Lindsay. Well if the one from Toronto came in first, it came up on this track to leave an opening for the other one and they waited, each waited for the other and they exchanged express and passengers, mail and then the Sunderland train was the last one going back. And it went back about half past ten. You could go to Blackwater. We used to like to at Christmas time or Easter when the holiday fellows were travelling, we used to go down to Blackwater - You'd go down to Blackwater on the train and we'd see all fashions and all ... everything. We see it and come back. A great little trip. Fun! See you picked up. You found fun wherever, wherever it came.

Yes. So who used to stay in the hotels then? Were these people that were on the train overnight or something?

Well, you see it was storekeepers. It was travelers that represented - they had different wares and at the hotel, they had at the entrance, they had one room, a big room on one side. It was a sitting room and the other side was the sample room. In Sunderland, they found that that sample room wasn't big enough so they built to the north of it and you went down north on Albert Street and right behind it they built a building and it was just a shell you know and that's where they would bring their samples in trunks and they'd go this sample room and put it all up on display and the merchants would come and do their buying. And those fellows stayed in the hotel, and any traveler, that's the only place you had to stay.

So these would be people travelling through town with horse and buggy then, whatever?

Yeah. And the travelers, mostly. Quite a few travelers.

(3rd party) They had all these different places in town, all these different shops... they'd need a lot of ...people. They had jewelry and shoes, hardware They'd all have to buy from sample goods.

Yes. So these travelling businessmen, they'd spend a day or two in town selling all their goods.

Oh, they'd spend one day. If they came in at night, the next day, they showed their wares and then they'd be on some place else. Oh I think they got the little stores ... you know there used to be one at Valentine and one at Vroomanton and those fellows would come in to Sunderland to buy, or to put in their order. And there was one in Cresswell ... there was always a store in any little hamlet.

And so a lot of the goods that the storekeepers sold then would come in by train and the storekeepers would go down to the station ...

All of it. Well they had what they called a dray at the livery barn and that delivered all the freight that would come in to the station and be delivered to different places.

Who run that?

Well, Reynolds run the livery and later Harry Brandon worked for Frank Reynolds and after he died, Harry had it and then this little building at the back of the hotel, E.T. Williams bought it and took it across the road and that is the present house where Mrs. Bill Sheldon (*Kay*) used to live.

Oh, is that right?

That's just a shell.

And that place place when they took it across there, the livery barn was done with and Mr. Williams had a little stable and he kept a few horses and he hired them out and he was a vet you see, he had an office up there and then oh there was a little Jew, Harry Holborne, used to come, he stored wool there and at one time they had a garage there - Wilf Haney.

Oh yes, I've heard of Haney's garage.

Oh that was uptown. He was right there where (?) lived and they fixed it up for a living quarters and rented it out.

Did you ever go swimming? Did you go down to the river.

Oh no, you didn't go near the river to didn't swim. It was dangerous down there.(laughter)

Well I don't know too many people that did swim in that but....

We went down to the Gravley to swim.

Oh, I've heard of Gravley, yeah.

Yeah, well that was down.... that farmhouse that Minnie Wilson used to own. There was a lane there that went right to Gravley. We was all down there the odd time.

Do you have any idea where that name came from?

No. It was just a place ... the river is pretty dangerous and mucky and that was one place where it was a bit solid and I think that's where it got its name.

(3rd party) It's been Gravley ever since I can remember. It's always been.

I've heard Dad talk about Gravley ... that's where everybody learned to swim from Sunderland, wasn't it.

(3rd party) We used to go down there to skate, like on the river you know. And I think every winter, somebody would fall through.

Oh I did that. I went down skating and Stan Young took me and a few couples went and we thought we'd go down farther and every once in a while there was trees growing up in the middle of us you know and there would just be a bit of ice. And I wasn't too sure of my feet. And he went through first and I tried to help him. And my foot slipped down in the wet. I was scared of course and I was wet of course. I thought I'd get home and get changed before Daddy come.

But everybody got out, OK, did they?

Oh yes. Nobody got hurt. Bu there was always... the McPhaddens lived down there in a little house right there - there was a bunch of them you know - George and Serge, Kate ... Kate Fountain, do you remember Kate Fountain? Well that was that family. While they were there, there was lots of kids down.

We haven't even gotten out of your childhood, Mrs. Miller, have we?

Pardon?

We are not out of your childhood yet. We haven't even got to the point where you got married (laughter).

(3rd party) She never told you that she worked in Toronto. She was a seamstress. Is that what they called you, a seamstress?

Oh yes, I learned dressmaking in Miss McKinley's and that was in the doctors block and the post office was at this corner then, the post office used to be here and it was around here then and I learned dressmaking then and that's what I worked at. Oh we skated and we always looked for a good time and we had it.

So you eventually got married and moved to the farm. Where was your farm?

At Valentine. The first farm, north of Valentine. Our farm, eh his part of Valentine, you see the front you come into Valentine this way. This part of Valentine was all the front part of our farm.

Oh I see.

And I had three boys, Herb, Jimmy and Earl.

So how many years did you spend on the farm?

Thirty-five. And then I went back to Sunderland to look after Mother and that's where I lived till I came up here.

So I lived quite a while in the same house.

(3rd party) You didn't tell him that your dad built the house.

Oh no, my dad built the house. He built it in 1900 and I was born in 1901.

(3rd party) No that's not right.

No I was born in '91, '91. I forgot,,,

Do you remember a little church in Valentine just north of the four corners, then?

Well that was on our farm.

That was on your farm. Because Lloyd Bagshaw talked about a church there at one time but nobody seemed to know very much about it.

Well it wasn't there in his time.

What kind of a church was that? Was that a Methodist church?

I can't tell you. Oh the Valentines were very much interested in it and there was a man by the name of Thomson owned our farm before Grandpa Miller got it.

So did that church building disappear?

I don't know anything about it. All's I know is that there is a few graves there and it was all fenced off, a wild place. And then there was another church up at the corner of the 9th, that was a Baptist church.

Where Rods(?) live?

Yes.

Is that building still there?

(3rd party) Just the basement, the cellar like.....