

Vera Rundle Interview

This is a script of an interview with Vera Rundle, a longtime resident of Sunderland. She is interviewed by Lola Sheridan who with her husband Mike established a pharmacy in Sunderland that operated out of the building that was previously Bagg's Hardware.

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.

My name is Lola Sheridan and the date is February 17, 1996. I am in the Port Perry home of Mrs. Vera Rundle who with her husband had a hardware business in Sunderland for several years. Mrs. Rundle, I have many questions to ask you but could we first talk about your store and business. I understand that the business had belonged to your father-in-law. Do you know what year it was that he bought the business?

1908 ... it might have been 1909, but in around that time, you know.

And how long did he have the business?

Until after the war ... let me think ... until 1924.

Now your husband (Thomas Allister Rundle) must have worked in the store ... he helped in the store?

Yes. He helped in the store when he was through school. Then he went overseas for three years.

And so you grew up with the hardware store and, knew all about it, so when?

They sold implements – sold the International Harvester implements.

And so you had those big doors on the front.....

They were there, they were there....

So it had been a hardware store previous?

No, I'm really not sure whether it was a machine shop or what the man had before. I've heard them say, but I can't be sure.

There were big doors at the very back....

At the back, and that was to bring in freight and some times the cartons were huge and they were mostly made of wood in those days.

So then when your husband came back from the war, he just stuck around?

Well he kind of got forced into it (laughter) because his father and mother wanted to go out west and visit her brothers. She had two, let me think... In Sault Ste. Marie and two in Saskatchewan and she wanted to go out and see them and Allistair was left to look after the store and we just stayed.

And when did you go to Sunderland, then?

I can't remember how many years that we lived in the manse but we must have been there five or six years anyway before I was married. Then mother and dad moved to Gore Bay and I was married.

What year was that?

1924

Then I was wrong in thinking that your father was the minister of the United Church. You said he was the minister at the Presbyterian church. And where was the Presbyterian Church?

Where the Masons meet.

And you lived in the United Churchwhich is now the United Church manse?

It was the Methodist.

Yes

But you lived in that manse?

Oh, yes! That was the Presbyterian manse back at that time and the parsonage for the Methodists was on the back street, you followed the old highway down a block and went down, ... let me think. Did you know Cecil Real?

Mmmm.

Well that was the Methodist parsonage. (*Water & Pine Sts.*)

I see. So then when you were married you just automatically

.... went into the house cause Grandpa and Grandma had bought a house on the back street there.

And how many years did you and your husband ...?

I was there twenty-four and a half years.

Twenty-four and a half. OK. That's good, and your children grew up

Our children (*Catherine, Alex & Jean Rundle*) grew up in Sunderland and went to Toronto to go to school and finish their education and get jobs and got married.

Now I'm interested in the overhanging sign that went over the street, it's a very unique shape.

It was there... as far as I know it was there but I don't know whether Grandpa had it made or whether it was there before.

So when you took over the store, you just had to change the initial did you?

That's all, yeah.

Yes

I don't know how many years Grandpa had it Well from 1908 or '09 until '24. When Allistair bought it? Well, he may have bought it a year ahead, bought it in '23.

Ah hah, the year that I was born. No, it's a very unique sign though and I'm pleased that we have it because eh...

Well it's different to any that I have ever seen. Because they are usually just straight, whatever.

Um ... when we first took the store to make it into a drug store, Mr. Bagg was cleaning out the back garage that he had it then and he didn't know what to do with it so I said, well don't throw it out because one day it will have an historic significance so we have it and we hope to have it on display for around the end of March at the Town Hall. So ... now, you were talking earlier about the warehouse. Now that was the building just east of us wasn't it?

Yes, and the people that bought it from us did some fixing to the upstairs to use it and I really don't know what it was like because I never saw it. So I really can't say much about it.

No, so what would you store in there?

Binder twine mainly and chicken grit, anything that was bulky - barbed wire and fencing and things that took up a lot of room... and we didn't have room in the store. But then it was combines that came in so then there wasn't binder twine needed. And, huh, oh yes, we had lead pipe in those days and the machine to thread them. By threading them you

put the rings so that something could be screwed and fastened into it ... and my husband could do that kind of work. And well. Anything that there wasn't room for in the store.

Ah, getting back to the church ... What was life like in the church in those days. I'm sure that there was a large congregation.

Packed and in our case, I don't know about the other church, the Baptist was the first one when we first went there but it opened late. When our children were, well going to school in Sunderland, sometimes they went to their Sunday School on Sunday afternoon - something to do and to stay among their friends, but our own church would be pretty well filled and Sunday night a lot of the Wick boys would bring their girlfriends to church which I doubt if they'd do today. And I got to know a lot of the Wick people that way but of course they are all related to the Rundles anyway through Grandma Rundle because she was a Thorborne? who married a Ferguson and if there isn't ... if we aren't related to one we are related to the other. They all came from the (Isle of Mull, Scotland). The house I was raised in ...it's still standing at least it was.

In Sonya?

No, south of Cresswell.

Oh yes!

We saw through it. Oh, maybe three or four years ago. The young fellow, or at least he was then, people change so, he made antique furniture the type that and he used the old log house as his workshop. The barn had been burned a few years before the log barn.

So getting back to the church again, there were the ladies' groups of course, so were there mid-week girls' groups like the CGIT and the mission band.

There was a mission band which I belonged to and Mrs. Baker, that's Jean's mother was ...see the missionary society had to have someone represent them with our own mission band and Jean's mother was our representative. And many a Valentine's tea we had at the Baker's house. Yes. The farmhouse I don't know whether Robert lives in it now, do they still live in the same house?

I don't know.

It's just outside of town.

Yes...and the mission band used to go out there?

Well no, they met at the church but we had a Valentine tea. I don't know, ... we had it at our place, once we had it at Mrs. Quinns(?) which was a bungalow down on 2nd street, um and out to Bakers, I think would be more than once. The luncheon or at least the

afternoon tea always consisted of French pastry with chicken, cream chicken and then fancy cakes, and that was kind of a tradition.

Can you tell me any stories about the town hall?

It was built at the time when my father-in-law (*Dean Rundle*) was on the Council. And ... I can't tell you now what year it was because it was before my time.

Sure. But do you remember what activities there were at the town hall - did they hold dances?

There were lots of dances that we attended. And there was plays, Art Welsh, I know was in one of them. Now the Welchs had the mill, the grain mill, which I don't know what it is now, down the highway, down the end of the street near where the railroad used to be and oh a lot of young people took part in the plays and school concerts and other kinds of concerts and while we are talking about churches, is the Anglican Church closed.

No.

It isn't? I'd heard the rumour that they were running into difficulties and that they were going to close and I felt so badly because Allistair and I went for a little while to the United Church, but then we went to the Anglican Church.

They were building a big addition at the back. The congregation is quite small, I think, but this is a very nice addition.

Well, I was telling you about the dentist. They lived in the brick house that was just behind the church. That's where he had his offices.

Oh, I see. Behind the Anglican Church, oh really?

There was just a there was only one house there then, maybe there's more now, I imagine cause the street just went to his house.

Oh, the school was behind the Bakers?

The school was down on the highway.

OK, the original one....and now Sunnydale, now that was the Brock House then, you were telling me stories about it. There was a hotel there?

It was a hotel and the travellers used to have a room to the east. You went in the door, just to your right where they would put their samples out although the hardware they never did, they brought it to our store so I really don't know what it was like. But Mr. Pangman who was the manager or owner, I don't know which at the time was our choir leader and I know I had been in the I had been in the kitchen because I'd go right

through, Dad would sometimes give me the list of the hymns that he wanted Mr. Pangman to see and whether they would have them for the Sunday and so I'd go right through and give it to Mrs. Pangman if he wasn't around. The bar was at the left hand side but I don't think they sold liquor. I really don't think that it was allowed at that time.

No. It was a dry town only. Can you go down the business a bit more. I don't know how well you can see this (referencing a photo) the business section ,, ah this would be remember the other day you were saying there was a barber shop across from the store, is that correct?

This was down this way.

Oh I see.

It was at a house where it used to be the Batts (?). Oh it was Mrs. Bob Dusto's (*Ada Marquis*) before that and I don't remember who had it before that but do you remember when Carl Umphrey bought this?

Yes. This is his barber shop?

Barber shop, yes! Well to me it looked as if that could have been Flagler's jewellery store and um ... Phillip St, John had a feed shop here and Bestwicks had a grocery store here at the corner and Walt Bestwick married Ruth Mullen and they lived upstairs.

I see..Now then ...

Let's see, I'm trying to think of the barber the other day in the tailor shop. He was Art Brethour.

Oh

And he employed two or three girls to do tailoring and they had a back room behind the barber shop and the Brethours lived upstairs andoh what was his name.....it was Mr. Wes Miller but I can't think of his first name had a grocery store down here and Pinkham's furniture store was next, oh and there was a shoe repair place in between, Mr. Harris had it.

Uh huh.

And in the , I can't remember whether it was winter or summer, he went to Quebec City and he was the head waiter for one of the big hotels there and then of course there was the Brock House, the big hotel.

The hardware store ...

Oh yes, that was Bagshaws. I don't know what it was before Bagshaw took over.

It was ... I think at one time it was a bank because there was a vault out back.

I know, it was the Home Bank. Yes. It went broke. And on the corner where the curb is now was three or four stores. There was Doyle's grocery store to the east and Bagshaw's hardware was there to begin with and then they bought the other property. On the corner was Hay's grocery store and a restaurant, I think and post office. And as you go down the highway there was Mr. Wakelin. He was a tailor. But then he bought what used to be, I believe they called it the Nippissing House.

Ummm, yes. But that building was burned wasn't it in the fire?

That was after he left and Taylors were on the corner. Now I don't know where Taylors had been and then they went to Beaverton and were there a number of years and Mr. Johnston had that corner store. Well then his wife died. She died in an election week heart and Margaret Miller was his housekeeper for a while, well the he ... I don't know where he went, unless it was Toronto for the children were grown by that time.

But the Snowballs I think had it ...

Yes, they took over after Lorne Taylor.

Mmmm, yes, so then where Velma & Jimmy Miller lived and then the stores in there...

Yes, ahhh, Bob Charter had a butcher shop, but Mr. Christie had it before Bob took over and there was a grocery store because Lex Gordon had it. Lex was another relative (laughter). But this is a mix up.

The Oldfields would have been on the corner?

Yes. They were on the corner but Baker Thompson was there before.

Oh yes.

They were there when we came.

Yes, uh huh. So then the drug store was next?

Yes, Andersons were there when ...

Who had it before?

Not in our time. Andersons were there when we came.

There was a Mr. Green. Was he there before Anderson?

I don't ... the name doesn't ring a bell but because Andersons were there when we moved to Sunderland and were there when we left although Mr. and Mrs. Anderson had passed away but Mrs. Dunshey (?) was still there but I don't really, oh Mr. Good or Gould. Mr. Gould ran the drug store for a little while. He was married to one of Julie Anderson's sisters. He was a druggist but they had to get rid of the store because there was nobody could run the place.

Yes, they'd have to have a registered pharmacist.

Yes, well of course Mr. Gould was.

Oh, I see. The Nippissing Hotel. Now that was just a hotel?

Yes and that new part was all added since we moved to Sunderland. That was for a timethey had the children there.

No, I mean the Nippissing not the Brock House.

Now let me think...

Can you tell me anything about it?

I can't remember what was there in the beginning.

There were two or three stores...

Yes, there was a gent's furnishings and Stan Will owned it for a while. The bowling green was in behind it when we were there and Gordon's Garage was next and oh dear ... there was a blacksmith's (*Dan McIntyre*) shop next. You know the pig farm that was south of Sunderland, well his wife lived there before ... when it was a farm. Her mother and sister lived there until they passed away..... Oh Mrs. Beaton, no Mrs. .. mmm, they came from Wick, they were related, her grandmother was a cousin of my (laughter) mother-in-law's. Well Kays had it too and they had a blacksmith's shop, just down from the brow of the hill. But I don't know what's there now. Never been down that way...

No. The fair, the Sunderland Fair. Do you have any special memories about it?

All I can remember is that we always fed a lot. (laughter). Well, I'll tell you my brother-in-law from Brooklyn showed cattle at Lindsay Fair and between the last day of Lindsay fair and Sunderland fair was the next week on a Tuesday and Wednesday, but really it was Wednesday that they brought the stuff in. Instead of carting it, their cows all the way back to Brooklyn, they'd put them up in those sheds and the boys stayed at our house. So I always had two or three of the Ormiston boys at our place but then friends from a distance that knew Sunderland and that so we often had them so I usually had my table set in the dining room and the kitchen because I knew it would be occupied.

Did you show your handy work?

No. I didn't have much time for handy work other than knitting. Although one thing that I was proud of ... I didn't consider myself much of a seamstress but the institute, ah no, the Red Cross put a display one year at the fair and one of the dresses was one that I had made so I was quite proud of myself.

*Now we have here a picture of the 1926 businessmen's club and I'll just read these off:
Ray Doble, the teacher.*

Now he died here a few years ago from heart, I believe they brought him from Florida.

Oh did they?

And his wife has had a bad heart attack, this winter.

Mr. Johnston, store keeper.

Yes, well that's were Taylors were.... later.

William Snodden, farmer.

Yes...They had ...

Sorry.

Well if it's the one I think, there was two or three boys.

John Gordon, the garage. Gordon Hall, the restaurant.

That's were Fred Wakelin had his gent's furnishings at one time.

Harry MacGregor, shoe repair.

Yeah, but he sold shoes.

Jim Christie, a butcher.

Yes, I believe he came from Port Perry.

Oh there are lots of Christies there. Wilfred Haney, farm machinery.

Yes. It was next to our warehouse.

Oh yes. Uh huh, Stan Young, bank employee.

Yes. I can't say that I knew him really because he was in Toronto.

Elgin Bagshaw, hardware store. (George Elgin Bagshaw married Eva Rundle, sister of Alex Rundle)

My brother-in-law.

Jim Anderson, the druggist.

Our neighbour.

Mmmm. Jim Thompson, son of Baker.

Yes. And Lorne Pinkham, the undertaker.

Yes. He had four boys. I went to school with one of them.

Fred Wakelin, the taylor.

Yes

And Billy Phillip, the town councillor.

Yes, in fact I think he was the Reeve for a while.

Oh, and John Henry Purvis, farmer and inventor.

Yes, an inventor or whether he had something to do with the Council at one time.

John MacKinnon, general store.

Yes. Well he came ... I think he and his friend came from Port Perry but there was another family that were there and they moved here and the son still lives here.

Bill Harris, shoe repair.

Yes

Wes Miller, grocery store.

Yes, now did you know Mabel Miller?

Mmmm

Well this is her father.

Oh, well the Mabel Miller I knew was Mrs. Miller. I don't know who she was.

Oh

Oh, I know Mabel Miller. She was deaf wasn't she?

Was she? I don't know but they lived a way down on the highway...

Yes, sure.

Well that was her father.

And Joe Thompson, insurance agent.

I'm not sure about him. I'm not sure who he was.

Doctor Paul.

Yes, he was the one that delivered two of our children.

And Baker Thompson, grocer.

His son was back here.

So that was back in 1926. You remember them very well.

And their older daughter, that's Baker Thompson's oldest daughter, when we lived in Collingwood, we lived on Maple Street and the daughter lived almost right behind us on Elm and we didn't know her... any of them in Sunderland at that time. But how close you can be...you know.

Small world.

And Florence, the other daughter married the youngest son of Dr. Paul.

Now this is the class of 1940 and Isabel Wallace at the top here.

Oh yes.

And Irene, your Irene. (Catherine Irene Rutledge)

Oh she looks like Jean (*Jean Rundle*)... oh I never seen her look so much like her.

And the Newell girl...

Yes, now her mother ... they were new he worked for the railway so they weren't originals any more than we were but the mother is now in the other seniors building here in town.

Mmmm, OK.

Or at least she was

Kay

Oh that's Kay

Charlie Kelly

Oh yes.

And in the third row, Gord Pinkham.

Yes, he was the teacher now. He eh ... there was Earlby, Gordon, Wes and Ralph Pinkham and I went to school with ... After Gord went um and eh Wes was in the same grade as I was.

Irene Sherwood. And there is Margaret Newell.

Yes, they lived out west or out east of Sunderland.

Harvey Horne.

Yes

And Marvin Smith

I can't just place him.

And Bruce Young

Yeah

And Wilf Burrus.

Oh yeah, they lived....I don't know where his parents lived but they came and stayed with his aunt and uncle ... I believe that his sister came too and went to school. Maybe it was handier for them to get to school.

And then Evelyn Wright.

Oh yes.

And Connie Welsh.

Yes.... Connie was the head of the operating room - head nurse in , I forget what hospital and my daughter-in-law was in the hospital and Alec met her, had quite a visit with her.

So....

She's dead now has been ...

Norma Wilson

Oh yes.

And Betty Lambert

Yes

And there is Vi, Vi Cotton.

Yes, our girls used to spend a lot of time down at Cottons.

Jean Gordon.

Yes. She lives over at Ivy or at Janetville.

And Marion Haney

Yes

And Verna Camplin

Yes

And Ruth MacMullin

Oh yes.

We have a Roy, that's probably a brother. Paul Farrell

Yes

Ray Miller

Now Ray is um ... my homemaker on Tuesday - her brother-in-law.

Keith MacGregor

Yes

Jack Gordon

Yes

Tom Welsh

Yes, Connie is his sister.

Charlie Flagler

Yes

And Floyd Newell

Well, well, well, that's interesting.

I'll see if there are some more back row staring over here. Cameron Glover.

Oh yes

Doug Fair

Mmmm

Ernest Sonley

Related to the Rundles.

Oh really. Howard Gordon

Yes, he babysat for us quite often.

Harry Bagshaw

Yes

Mack MacLeod

Yes

Royce Thompson

Oh yes

And Harry Glendenning

He was related to the Bagshaws to some of the Bagshaws

And Bruce Tocher

Yes

And Speedy .. Speeder Wakelin

(reflective comments) What was his name? Never heard him called Speeder. I'll have to ask how ...

And starting over, Bessie Kay.

Yes, now she was the teacher.

Oh.

Later on

Louise Cockburn, Queda Shier.

Yes, she taught Sunday School in the Anglican Church

Noreen Doble

Noreen ... Well there was so many Dobles.

Kathleen Sonley

Yes, another relative of the Rundles.

Claire Snodden

Yes

Mack, must be May Baker.

Yes there was a May Baker

Rita Gordon.

Yes, that's Jack Gordon's daughter.

Daughter or sister?

Daughter

Did Jack?

To the one that had the garage.

Oh, OK.

And, Mary Doble. And then over here again, we are doing it the opposite way. John Flagler.

Lived in behind us.

Angus Stainton

Yes, his ... now let me think ... he was father of Carl, I think ... I better not say.

George Durward

Oh yes.

And Howard Shier

Oh I don't know which Shier that was.

Muriel Snooks

Yes

Fay Phillip.

Yes. Fay was the younger one, lived next to the manse.

Oh?

The manse was right here and road ran down here and she lived in here.

Margerie Leask

Yes

Iva Glover.

Yes. Another relative.

Joy Shier and in the front here, Gerald McNinley and Burton.

I went to school with some of the McNinley girls.

Burton Bagshaw.

Yes, my nephew.

And Tom Platom.

Yes, he came from England and lived with his uncle and aunt, his sister was with them before and she married (oh dear) a chap from Lorneville.

Gerald Peel

I can't say as I know him.

You were telling me earlier about Mrs. Rundle curing a little boy who had swallowed something. Can you tell me that story?

He swallowed some carbolic acid and I don't know what my mother-in-law did for him but it saved his life although his lips had a few marks on them. Not bad but enough to know that he had had something go wrong at some time in his life but he lived a good many years.

Had she made him bring up the contents of his stomach?

She must have as there was nothing else that would get rid of it.

So she knew all these old cures did she .. remedies?

Well she was pretty good at being able to nurse people. She'd have made a good nurse. And a lot of people at that time would come to her for help.

Your father's name - we haven't got that.

My father's name was Walter Cannon and he was the last Presbyterian minister before church union and he married Jessie and Ted Thompson. There were other but they weren't local people because some of them belonged to other congregations but came back to him to be married and he christened Jean Baker and I can't think of any others just at the moment. Young people's society in our church and I imagine the Methodist group too and ah the social nights - we had them in the manse- we'd have to bring every chair that we had in the house down to make sure that we had enough chairs but it got a little too big so then we went to the Council Chambers and I was told the other day that it'd moved to Cannington.

Yes.

Too bad. Too bad as far as the building is concerned. I don't know, otherwise. I certainly hope that they never get rid of that building.

I don't think they will, Vera.

Well of course it will be used for concerts and dances will it not?

Well they don't have dances there now but they do have the Music Festival which is on right now and Dr. Opleromy(?) was an adjudicator for a long time - he was with Timothy Eaton - he said that it was one of the best buildings as far as acoustics is concerned so I hope they don't.

It makes me feel very happy that my father-in-law was on the Council at that time .