

This is Shelley Richer interviewing Mrs. Mary Schihl in her home at 248 Dufferin Street on August 1, 1985.

S.R: Hello Mrs. Schihl and how are you?

M.S: Not too bad thank you.

S.R: What is your date of birth?

M.S: October 27, 1898.

S.R: Where were you born?

M.S: Tillsonburg.

S.R: When did you come to Fort Erie?

M.S: March.

S.R: Of the same year?

M.S: No, it would be the next year.

S.R: Oh, 1899. Have you always lived in Fort Erie since then?

M.S: Yes.

S.R: Where in Fort Erie did you grow up, what street?

M.S: Courtwright.

S.R: Could you tell me what school you attended and where it is located?

M.S: Phipps Street, now Rose Seaton. I went to book three. It was books then, not grades. And then I went to Buffalo. In highschool I went to Toronto.

S.R: Oh, you finished your grade school in Buffalo?

M.S: In Buffalo.

S.R: Why not Phipps Street?

M.S: We had...there was...see, I could go to the Catholic School over there, and here I didn't get the religion.

S.R: Weren't there any highschools here?

M.S: No you had to go to Welland.

S.R: Did you travel back and forth every day?

M.S: Train. But I went to Toronto and I went to boarding school.

S.R: Could you describe the Phipps Street School?

M.S: It was a four room school and it had a basement. I lost part of my ear there. There was the basement and those steps...you know, those high steps going up...and four teachers.

S.R: Do you remember any of the teachers names?

M.S: Hel en and Jane Gerrard.

S.R: The principal's name?

M.S: I think it was Henderson. And Ethel Johns, she was...Ethel Johns was her maiden name. She married a Thompson and then she married ...we used to call him the Fort Erie Bank. I forget his name.

S.R: He was rich was he?

M.S: Well, he knew how to get the money, and he held the mortgages. He would lend money and charge big interest for it.

S.R: Something like a loan shark?

S.R: Is there any interesting stories that you can remember from your school days...things that happened?

M.S: There used to be gypsies around.

S.R: What do you mean by gypsies?

M.S: Well you know those people that...in the covered wagons that steal everything? And you see back that way was all bush, and they used to park there all summer in the bush. And our parents wouldn't let us go to school alone. Either...they'd take turns taking us to school or bringing us home. They met like, on that block.

S.R: Do you know anything that the gypsies did?

M.S: They used to steal everything they could get their hands on.

S.R: You said that your school was a four room school house. Could you describe what changes took place in the school and approximately when?

M.S: I wouldn't say when, but they kept adding on. You know, building on to it. Now you see, they tore it down and built the new one on Em erick.

S.R: Do you know why?

M.S: Well, they claimed it was out of date. Some of the lumber and that, that was in it was a lot better than what you get today. They sold a lot of it. But they wouldn't give them permission to build it in the same place. So that's why they got the entrance on Em erick now.

S.R: Why not the same place?

M.S: Well, it's the same ground that you see now...where the school was is a playground. And the playground is where the school is now...used to be. It used to be the playground and now it's the school.

S.R: Are you, or have you been a member of a church?

M.S: Yes, St. Jo...now I'm at St. Michaels, before it was St. Josephs.

S.R: Where was St. Josephs?

M.S: Garrison Road. Now it's the St. Vincent De Paul building...and a cemetery up there.

S.R: And St. Michaels?

M.S: St. Michaels is on Central.

S.R: Oh, the big Catholic Church on Central?

M.S: Yes.

S.R: What was St. Josephs like?

M.S: It was a small brick church, something like New Germany. You know where you have the vestibule, the front vestibule? Well it had that, and then the church. But it was a small, real country place.

S.R: Were there any changes made in it?

M.S: Oh yes. See it was added...they build on to it and made it larger. They put on a front and a back. And they did away with the vestibule.

S.R: Do you remember when that happened?

M.S: Well, I was married there in '23, and it was a small church then. It had the back on but not the front part. They put the fence around. So, '23...In 1924 it was on the Gilmore. It was...they had it from the rectory and that building, the wooden building there. When it started it was supposed to be a hall, but before it was finished it was turned into a church. And then after that, then the one on Central was built. Then let me see...'35...I think they're celebrating twenty-five years now...'85, '75, '65, '55, '45...it would be in '35 wouldn't it? '35, '45, '55, '65...

S.R: That would be fifty years.

M.S: No it's twenty-five years.

S.R: Well, twenty-five years would be '60.

M.S: Somewhere's around there.

S.R: Do you remember any special events the church had to offer the family?

M.S: Oh, they used to have card parties. They used to have picnics. They used to have Christmas Parties for the kids. They would take a Christmas tree and put it in one of those horse drawn sleighs as I showed ya, and take the tree just as it was. If they didn't have

enough gifts, they'd take the trimmings off the tree and give the kids. They thought they were getting...they thought they were getting a million dollars. Well, it was from the church, and they figured they got a prize. And they had hayrides, sleighrides.

S.R: And the church put all these events on?

M.S: Yes.

S.R: Do you remember any prominent members of the church? Somebody that really did a lot, or really helped the members.

M.S: We worked together in those days. Let's put it that way. You'd get twenty-five cents for a card party. They sell tickets for twenty-five cents for a card party. And you get a lunch, and a prize.

S.R: Oh, everybody got a prize?

M.S: Everybody got something, pretty well.

S.R: Who was the first political representative that you remember?
Whether he was a Reeve or...

M.S: John Atwood was a Reeve...Manley German, um, Mussgrove, Cairns.

S.R: What was the last one?

M.S: Cairns.

S.R: Do you remember the approximate year at all, or what they had done?

M.S: Well when Manley German was in office...let me see. We opened the store in 1910, so it was before that. The early 1900's say.

S.R: You talk about this store, what's the store that you're talking about?

M.S: Our store?

S.R: Yes.

M.S: Well, it was like a General Store. See we'd get things in in the spring and the fall. We'd buy it by the carload. And you'd get...

S.R: Train car right?

M.S: Oh yes, a freight car. And you'd have to go...Potatoes would be bulk. You'd have to go and bag them up and bring them home. You'd get sugar by the carload. You'd get bags of sugar see? We used to have the basement for perishables, and we had the store. And we had groceries, and we had dishes, and we had hardware, and we had some stoves. And then upstairs, it's an apartment now. They had...that was like a store room. There was sugar, and there was...what else would there be...some hardware and matches,

anything.

S.R: And what was the store called and where was it located?

M.S: It was located on...where the Jaycees are now, on Courtwright.

And it was just called Driscoll's Store.

S.R: Did your father start the store himself, or did he get it from somebody else?

M.S: No, he built it himself. He built the blocks across the road. It was a field then...this side of IGA. And he built the blocks and had the mason in to put them together in the store.

S.R: What year was the store built then?

M.S: He started in 1910. No, 1909. He opened in 1910.

S.R: Was it a very prosperous business then?

M.S: Well, for those days yes. But you had to go out and get your business.

S.R: So what did that involve?

M.S: Well, you'd go out looking for customers. Or you'd ask, could you come...could I sell you this, can I sell you that. You know? Instead of having advertising or having things, somebody to do it for you, you did it yourself.

S.R: Were there a lot of stores of that kind then? Is that why you had to...?

M.S: No, not too many. We were the only one on that street of that kind. The rest were on Jarvis Street.

S.R: You showed pictures of the snow, a blizzard, on December 14, 1937. Could you tell me anything about it, anything that happened or...?

M.S: You were snowbound, you didn't get out. If you could look out you were lucky.

S.R: The snow was that high?

M.S: The snow was high. You wouldn't know where our step was, or your driveway until you started shovelling.

S.R: Do you remember any stories about it?

M.S: They, some of the men and the firemen volunteered for anybody that needed anything. They would meet at the firehall. And if it was an emergency, they would go for you. But you would take your life in your hands if you tried it yourself.

S.R: Were there phones in there then? Is that how you got a hold of these people?

M.S: Yes, some had phones. Those people who could afford it would have phones like now.

S.R: Some of the changes that have taken place in the area, such as, it used to be Fort Erie, Bridgeburg and Amigari. Starting from Bridgeburg, could you describe the boundaries, what part of town it was, and what it had to offer?

M.S: Bridgeburg went to Gilmore Road, and from Gilmore to the Garrison was Fort Erie, and from Jennet Street west was Amigari.

S.R: What did Bridgeburg have to offer?

M.S: They had trains. They had some factories.

S.R: Such as?

M.S: The Mentholatum, the Tool and Dye, of course they had the railroad. They had transportation like the railroad and the waterways, which Amigari just would have the train as far as Gilmore and the hotel...this side of the racetrack, like. And from then on it was fish for yourself.

S.R: Could you describe Jarvis Street?

M.S: Jarvis Street was plank, a small narrow road and a ditch on either side. No lights and you had...what did you have? You had a drugstore and a dry goods store. You had a grocery store. You had a green grocery, they called it then. It was like vegetables and fruit and they used to call it green grocery at that time...and a barbershop, and bank, and the post office. Then on this side of Central, it was like a farmers market. It was a vacant...and on Central by the alley was the Town Hall. There was a curfew at night at nine o'clock. The bell would toll and the kids would run.

S.R: What happened if you weren't home by nine?

M.S: You made sure you were home by nine. You didn't take a chance.

S.R: Would your parents get after you or the police get after you?

M.S: The police would come out looking. And then they would take you to your parents.

S.R: Then you'd be in trouble.

M.S: Because of course, if the parents went...they knew the police would look so it was no use...the parents didn't have to go out. And it wasn't that heavily populated that you had to go. And then, the Town Hall, it was on the ground, it housed the Fire Hall. It used to be horses then with a steam engine. They had a jail. You come

in and went up a stairs and up in that second floor would be the Council Chambers, the Library, and...there's three things...I thought there was three things upstairs. And the Town Hall was made into a house.

S.R: And where was that located?

M.S: That was located at the corner of Jarvis and Central, between Jarvis and the alley on Central. Then, the house was bought, and they put it on...dug a celler, and put it on a foundation. It's a nice looking house now.

S.R: It's still in the same spot?

M.S: No, no. The house was moved to Dufferin Street. It's the one across the street.

S.R: 259 Dufferin Street. And when would that have been moved?

M.S: We were married in '23 and it was up here before that. In the teens, in the 19 teens...19 something.

S.R: Do you know why Fort Erie, Bridgeburg, and Amigari were amalgamated?

M.S: Well, three places...you had to have your council, you had to have different ones to run things. They figured it would be cheaper and much easier if they all went into one and under one name.

S.R: So, why was Fort Erie picked?

M.S: See, it was the oldest and the Fort was there. See, this is where the battle, where it was fought. Where they come across the river...see where they come across and captured the Fort here in Fort Erie. That's why it was picked. For it's history.

S.R: How did the Depression affect the town and the family?

M.S: One helped the other. They did get some help, but you had to work so many days for that money. You didn't get it for nothing like they do now.

S.R: What did you have to do to work?

M.S: Whatever the town would give you. Maybe clean the streets or paint or whatever work the town would give you to do.

S.R: What other effects did the Depression have?

M.S: Well, some of the things moved out. That's when some of them moved out of here.

S.R: Industry?

M.S: They used to have like...there was coloured cards. We don't have

that now.

S.R: There was what?

M.S: They called it the Coloured Card. They had plastic slips that they would put the colours of paints on you know? They'd put them on if you wanted to pick out your paint colour. And different things like that. And you see then, we only had one Mayor, or Reeve and one set of Councilmen. But they tried to have somebody represent each section. So then, there would be somebody that would stick up for you. But one helped the other. People didn't look for everything for nothing. And they'd give plots...any vacant land. They would give plots to anybody that wanted to make a garden for themselves. And you would have vegetables for the summer and whatever was leftover you had for the winter.

S.R: Did you have to rent these or pay for these at all?

M.S: No, not during the Depression.

S.R: Is there anything else that you can remember about Jarvis Street?

M.S: Well, they built different buildings, they gave you a paved street, you got lights.

S.R: What about a hole? I heard about a hole on Jarvis Street.

M.S: Well, that was just, it wasn't built on that's all. Now that's filled in and it's a parking lot. Where it used to be the hole is down there this side of the alley up to...is it Simpsons Sears? Is Simpsons Sears the first? Well, it's up in there. That's where that was the hole.

S.R: I don't understand. You said it just wasn't built up yet.

M.S: Well that's it, nobody built on it. See, there was buildings on that place afterwards. Rossmans was one of them.

S.R: So Jarvis Street raised as buildings were built and it was all filled in.

M.S: It was just built up.

S.R: What did Fort Erie have to offer in sports?

M.S: They used to play hockey, baseball, soccer, tennis...what else did they have?...swimming, regular sports.

S.R: Where did the sports take place?

M.S: Where there was room. First it was a vacant lot and they would flood, you know, fields, or the school yard...the different schools and then they built the arena. So then things were in the arena.

S.R: Did the arena house any important teams or was it all just Fort Erie teams?

M.S: No, they used to have competitions. They would come from Buffalo and they would come from other places.

S.R: Hockey competitions?

M.S: Yes, or baseball.

S.R: In the arena?

M.S: Well, the arena wouldn't have that I guess. Yes, I guess they did. They had floor...what do you call it?

S.R: Floor hockey?

M.S: Floor hockey, and they'd have this other...you play it with the balls...

S.R: Basketball?

M.S: Yes, they had basket ball.

S.R: Soccer?

M.S: Soccer's kind of new. I don't remember soccer. When people worked they were tired. They didn't have too much time for a lot of sports.

S.R: Did they work more than their eight hours a day?

M.S: They would and it was...they didn't have the machines, or the convenience they have today to work with. It was manual labour, let's put it that way. You used your hands and your brain.

S.R: In 1936 the arena caved in. Could you tell me what you know about that?

M.S: That was from a storm. The weight of the snow and the ice on the roof, flat roofs, and the weight...nobody was hurt. After that it was enlarged. The arena wasn't as big then as it is now.

S.R: So it was rebuilt then on the same spot?

S.R: Fire Departments, do you recall approximately when they started and who started it?

M.S: Well there was always volunteer firemen as far as I can remember. They didn't have the equipment that they have now. But you had lots of water. The water wasn't restricted, and they had lots of pressure. We didn't have a lot of pump houses but we had all kinds of pressure.

S.R: Pumphouses?

M.S: Yes, where they pumped the water. See, we have pumphouses now. There's one...there was one down at the foot there, the other side

of the bridge. There's one up at Lakeshore, and now they've got the big one up a Crescent Park. Now they're talking of opening the others again.

S.R: Do you know what they did before there was fire hydrants?

M.S: They used to pump it into tanks from the river.

S.R: On these tanks...how did they get these tanks to the fire?

M.S: With horses.

S.R: Do you know whose job that was?

M.S: On this end it was Benners, and on the other end I think it was Plato ...Plato or Douglas.

S.R: And that would be Fort Erie and Bridgeburg?

M.S: Yes.

S.R: Do you recall any major fires?

M.S: There was a lumber company once, I think that was...was it out on the Gilmore or was it...Hart and Cooley...

S.R: Do you know what happened there at all?

M.S: I think they said it was a short circuit. I wouldn't say for sure. And then there was the Hospice. But they kind of figured that was carlessness.

S.R: What's a Hospice?

M.S: It's like a boarding place. The nurses used to have rooms. It's on Central Avenue. The place is still there. I think now it's apartments, I'm not sure.

S.R: Where on Central?

M.S: The other side of Bertie, just the other side of it. It's got the outside stairscases there.

S.R: Oh, just coming up the hill there on Central.

M.S: No, no. Just the other side of Bertie. The nurses used to come down there and have their...until they got the new hospice. And then there was our big fire on Courtwright Street.

S.R: What happened there?

M.S: It was set on fire...arson.

S.R: Did they ever find out who it was?

M.S: Yes. He admitted it, he admitted setting nineteen. But ours was really the biggest one.

S.R: Why did he pick your building?

M.S: He was sore at one of the tenants. He was going to take spite out on them.

S.R: Did it work?

M.S: No.

S.R: Why not?

M.S: Because she wouldn't have anything to do with him. But he wasn't caught there. He was caught after. The firemen knew who it was but you've got to catch them in the act or you can't arrest, and none of us saw him do it.

S.R: So they just had to wait until he did it again?

M.S: They had to wait until they caught him. And they caught him just over here.

S.R: On Jarvis Street?

M.S: No on Dufferin. On Dufferin Street. Just kitty-corner here. That green house with the brick front.

S.R: He was trying to set that house on fire?

M.S: He had the garage, but the firemen...they had it so the policemen and the firemen worked together. And they told the firemen, if it was near there to, not to blow the whistle and give them time to walk. You see the snow, there was a lot of snow on the ground, and the policemen come up the alley and they tracked him there. And they tracked him to his own place. Now he lived on Emerick Avenue near the river. And they tracked him there and pinned it to him.

S.R: What year would that be about?

M.S: Ours was in 1977.

S.R: That's when the...

M.S: When we had our big fire on Courtwright.

S.R: Is that when you moved back here then?

M.S: Yes.

S.R: So you still owned this house?

M.S: No, we were...we had the real estate looking at it. We were going to put it up for sale. We were lucky, we had a place to go.

S.R: What was there to do for entertainment, such as on a date when you were growing up?

M.S: House parties, oyster suppers, you would dance in the house.

S.R: Oyster suppers?

M.S: Yeah, They'd have a, like a party but it would be mostly oysters, oyster soup or what have ya. And what else...oyster suppers and we'd go to house parties. We'd dance in the homes. We played cards or games. We never chased our parents out. We always had them with us because they would feed us.

S.R: What about a movie theatre, did you ever go to the movies?

M.S: You'd have to go to Buffalo until...they had one here later but they ...when I was young we had to go to Buffalo.

S.R: When was later that you had one here?

M.S: Well, the Ziffs started one down here on Dufferin Street. And then they went to the south end.

S.R: Do you know when that would be?

M.S: No, I don't think we had it back when I was married, so that would be after '23. We were married in '23.

S.R: Were you ever in the Bellard Theatre?

M.S: No, not that I know of.

S.R: Once you got married you didn't go out anymore?

M.S: No, but I mean as far as...I don't remember the Bellard.

S.R: That was the name of it. When the Ziffs owned it it was named the Bellard Theatre.

M.S: I don't remember that.

S.R: No, when the Ziffs owned it.

M.S: Oh yeah. I used to go when the Ziffs had it. We used to let the children...you know if they had a good matinee on a Saturday, we'd let our children go.

S.R: It was ran as a family operation. Do you remember who did what at all?

M.S: Well, there was the mother and the father, and the daughters and the son, and if they were married their partners, everybody worked. It was...they...so many would take...they'd take tickets, they'd clean, and they would have their time off. No, that they didn't...the same one wasn't working all the time. The mother especially. She would go down to take her turn, but mostly at night she was home. She didn't go out at night.

S.R: Do you remember the Bertie Fair at the old Fort Erie Race Track?

M.S: Yes. That was a school holiday, how could I forget.

S.R: Why a school holiday?

M.S: The Bertie Fair was here in your district and you would take part and get free tickets.

S.R: Oh, so it was a really big event then?

M.S: It was a big event at that time.

S.R: And what events did it have?

M.S: It had sports, it had races, you had things to display, whether you had horses or chickens or what have you, cats or dogs, your pets, birds. And then there would be baking and sewing and fancy work. Anything like they display at a fair only it was more handwork than now. Now everything's machine.

S.R: Do you remember who helped run it or anything like that?

M.S: It was the, mostly the officers in the Bertie Township.

S.R: Government offices?

M.S: And that included farmers in Stevensville, Ridgeway, Fort Erie and the surrounding districts.

S.R: Do you recall any of the winners on any of the events?

M.S: Not now. They haven't been on now for so long. Well, they used to have baby shows you know...judge for the babies.

S.R: Do you remember any of the prettiest babies?

M.S: Oh, that was always cut and dry.

S.R: Really?

M.S: You're not kidding.

S.R: Do you know why it stopped at all?

M.S: Well, the bigger ones come on, and people had cars. Eventually they didn't get the crowds. And then everybody...the war come on and everybody was busy.

S.R: Did you ever visit Erie Beach and what years would that have been?

M.S: Many long years ago.

S.R: What kinds of things did Erie Beach have to offer?

M.S: They had the Merry-Go-Round, the Ferris Wheel, the Fun House, the stands. The popcorn and you know, candy, sponge candy, and the Crazy House, the Scary House, or whatever you want to call it. Just like they have now only maybe...it was along the walk, where the water was behind it and there was the walk in front you

see, and on both sides...

S.R: Is that called the midway?

M.S: Yes.

S.R: And it had, Erie Beach had the big dance hall?

M.S: Yes. They had a big dance hall and so did Crystal Beach. They had a swimming pool, a wading for the tots, a wading pool, restaurants.

S.R: Were you in the dance hall at Erie Beach?

M.S: I should say I was.

S.R: How often would that have been?

M.S: Whenever I got a chance.

S.R: Could you describe what it was like, what the interior was like, any of the colour schemes or what was inside?

M.S: Well, mostly natural. You know, you'd have your dance floor, and of course it was hard wood and it wasn't really polished. And the top part was mostly windows, so you'd have your light.

S.R: Could you describe your impressions in comparison from Erie Beach to Crystal Beach?

M.S: Well, I think when they built Crystal Beach it was after Erie Beach, and it was on a larger scale. They knew pretty well what to put up there. And when they went to Crystal Beach, they, Erie Beach was closed and they had to sign a contract that they wouldn't start again as long as Crystal Beach was open. That's why they don't have anything at Erie Beach.

S.R: How did you get to Erie Beach?

M.S: Drive a horse.

S.R: Were there any other ways to get there?

M.S: Afterwards there was the cars, but before that it was the horse.

S.R: So they didn't have a railroad or ferries?

M.S: Just the ferry from Buffalo, they'd have a little train, a dinky train would go from the ferry to Erie Beach. But that wasn't down from this end.

S.R: The dinky train?

M.S: We used to call it the dinky because it was small, small coaches and they were hanging out all over, and run by a steam engine.

S.R: Do you know another name for it?

M.S: Sand...

S.R: Sandfly Express?

M.S: Sand Train or something. Well, the ferries would run...you see, they would stop at a certain time, they wouldn't run all night. You would have to wait until two or three o'clock in the morning to come over on a train. If you went to a show and it was on after the boat was stopped...that's why we were plugging for the bridge.

S.R: Did you use ferries very much?

M.S: Oh yes. I used to even drive the car on the ferry. We had a Touring car.

S.R: What kind of car would that be?

M.S: An Overland Touring car. An open car with...you had front and back seats and then you'd pull seats up. And I used to think that the fellows on the boat used to just see if I could drive or not. They'd put me in the worst corners there ever was.

S.R: To make you park?

M.S: Oh yeah. You'd have to park on the boat, because you see, well...but you could sit in the car. You didn't have to leave it if you didn't want to.

S.R: Why were the ferries so popular? You said you travelled on them a lot, for what reason?

M.S: Because we didn't have any other way. There was no other means.

S.R: To go where?

M.S: Well, especially if you wanted a car, you could go as a person on this Dummy, I think we called it, that went across the bridge. But if you had a car you couldn't drive it on the bridge because there was no way. You had to go on the boat.

S.R: Why did you need to use the boat though? Where did you want to go?

M.S: Just to Buffalo. That's as far as it would go.

S.R: What was in Buffalo that Fort Erie didn't have?

M.S: We didn't have the big stores. It didn't have the entertainment. We didn't have theatres in those times.

S.R: Oh, so that's where most of your entertainment was then, over in Buffalo.

S.R: You described Erie Beach, could you describe Crystal Beach?

M.S: Well, it had the amusements and things, but on a larger scale. And

they had the boat coming from Buffalo to go to Main Street to Crystal Beach.

S.R: What boat was that?

M.S: I think the Canadiana and the Americana. And then they used to have...what is it they called that?...the night cruises. They have big boats in Buffalo, and they'd go here from Black Rock, and cruise this side of the Falls and up again at night. And they'd have bands on them and you could dance and rest. You know, they had the snack bar. And that was another entertainment they had.

S.R: What were your impressions of Crystal Beach?

M.S: Well, it was amusement. It was a place to go and it was fun, something different. We didn't have it in Fort Erie, you see so...

S.R: Did you ever travel on the Dummy?

M.S: Oh yes. I went to school that way.

S.R: Oh, you went to school in Buffalo?

M.S: Yes. I used to travel it every day.

S.R: What was it like?

M.S: Well, at first it was, it was like...what do you call it...one coach with a motor in the end of it. And the rest was for the people. Well then they had, they would have an engine and a coach. One time they left the bridge open...for boats to go through. One time it was open and the Dummy went down. There was people in it. Some of them got hurt. Some of them swam out.

S.R: Do you remember that? Was it in your time or earlier?

M.S: Just faintly. I was really young when that happened.

S.R: Do you remember any stories that your parents or grandparents might have told you...any history from before you were born?

M.S: I don't know about that, but I don't remember so much...when the station was out here at the subway it wasn't down where it is now.

S.R: What station?

M.S: The railroad station. You see, it was down on Courtwright Street, you know where they had it. Well, before that it was up here at the subway. That's where the first station was.

S.R: Is that the Michigan Central?

M.S: Yeah. That was either one. And then they went down and they used to go right down to the foot of the river and meet the boats.

S.R: Oh, the trains did?

M.S: Yeah. They would have their grain boats there you see, and they would unload, deliver it wherever they had to take it, then they put it up along the Niagara Boulevard. Some of the tracks are still there if you notice...from Gilmore Road down.

S.R: You remember this, or your parents told you about this?

M.S: I remember the train going, and going over on the boats up there. But I don't remember this down here.

S.R: Would you recall anything about smuggling?

M.S: Oh yeah. It used to be a great thing. Then there wouldn't be a woman on then and the men couldn't search ya. And you had long dresses, long skirts in those times, and they had petticoats with pockets up to, above your knees. You could fill your pockets.

S.R: So you came back and your pockets were nice and full?

M.S: The Customs would say, anything to declare and you'd say no. If they didn't have it out they didn't declare it. One day there was one man, and this woman. I can see her to this day laughing, she thought it was such a joke. She had a yeast cake. And at those times a yeast cake was a penny...one cent. They wanted to know if she had anything to declare, and she had this yeast cake. You know, he made out, I think it was four sets of papers, and charged her on that yeast cake. Oh, she laughed and said, if he wanted to work she says, I give him a job.

S.R: Why did the people smuggle?

M.S: It was cheaper and you could get things that they didn't have here.

S.R: What about the big time smuggling when the rum-running took place?

M.S: You could get an assortment, especially dry-goods. And you could get ready-made things, like dresses you know and hats, shoes. That stuff was cheaper.

S.R: Didn't you have a Sears Catalogue then?

M.S: No, we didn't have a Sears.

S.R: No mail-order catalogues yet?

M.S: No.

S.R: What about the rum-running days and that kind of smuggling during prohibition?

M.S: Well, that was done in boats, or in these tunnels. That wasn't done

personally like these others, and it was men that did it. The women didn't do those things.

S.R: Is that all that you can remember about them?

M.S: And they...I guess they had some cars that they used too. They would put false bottoms in, or take the back seats out in some way...I mean the back of the seats see, and pack them in there. But, oh they...the government, they got on to all those ways, you know.

S.R: And you mentioned the tunnel. Could you tell me what you know about a tunnel?

M.S: Oh, I know there was one at the north end and one at the south end. The one at the south end was between Queen Street and...what was the one on this side of it?

S.R: Princess?

M.S: Is that what it is? Anyway it was between there. Like, it went from the hotel grounds, the Queen's hotel grounds...let me see now...yeah, the hotel grounds were that far then...but it was more of a block back because I know there was a family living there not too long ago. The house is down now I believe. And I said, did you ever see the tunnel, yeah, but I didn't want to go through it. But they seen it and it was down in their basement like, under the house.

S.R: And what about the one at the north end?

M.S: The north end was here where the doll house is.

S.R: Have you ever seen it?

M.S: I didn't see it but my mother did, I didn't.

S.R: When did your mother get a chance to see it?

M.S: When they were looking to buy the place on Courtwright. They were going to buy that one. That one my dad liked and it had the ground you see, it had a garden.

S.R: What year would that have been?

M.S: 1902 I guess.

S.R: Was the smuggling still going on then?

M.S: Oh yes.

S.R: What was being smuggled in the house?

M.S: Mostly Chinamen or slaves.

S.R: Why?

M.S: Well, the Chinamen you see, they'd come over here. They couldn't

go to the States. They'd pay a good price. They were slaves you see.

S.R: Oh, so it was just a money racket then.

S.R: Do you remember very much about the railroad days? When the railroad was a big part of Fort Erie life.

M.S: Well, they worked from seven o'clock in the morning 'till seven o'clock at night. Like, when they were carmen or in the...what do you call it?...

S.R: Main line?

M.S: No, no. The main line would be roadmen. But this would be, oh the diesel shop, what it is now. But then it was the steam engine you see and they would clean them and wash them. And them things was pulled by hand. They didn't have machines like they do now. They had to lug it on the tracks. They used to repair them then, not like now. They had those big spikes you know, to put in them. There was a lot of trains going in and out.

S.R: Where did they go to?

M.S: They would go...the main thing was from...they'd go through here, and then they'd meet them from the Falls. They'd come from the Falls and they'd meet in Smithville, this side of Hamilton. Then they'd go on to Toronto, then from there they'd change and go to wherever they had to go. And from here they would go to Buffalo, and from Buffalo, then they would branch out and go to wherever they had to go. Windsor...they would go to Windsor. They would go from here or they would go from Toronto to Windsor. But you worked long hours then.

S.R: Did you get good pay for your long hours in comparison to other jobs.

M.S: Are you kidding? Well, in those days I suppose it wasn't bad, you know. But you didn't get much money in those days but you never starved.

S.R: In comparison to other jobs around, how did they pay?

M.S: Well, some of them were cheaper, but once, at that time when you got on the railroad you were sure of a life job. I can't say that now. Do you know they've got girls as the brake men. Did you see the picture in the paper where the two girls were the brake men. And was

was a hairdresser and I forget what the other was. I think she was a photographer. But they were dared into it, you know. And they took up the dare.

S.R: Is the ~~brake~~ men a hard job?

M.S: Well, you have to turn those switches. And they say in the wintertime, then it's going to take something. Now it's not quite so bad. They got to turn the switches and they got to make sure the lamps and that are...you know...the signals are going. It's really a man's job.

S.R: Speaking of men and women's jobs, what kind of employment was there for women to do back then?

M.S: Housework, cleaning ladies, waitresses, stenographers, some office jobs, if you were lucky to get the education...teachers.

S.R: Why wouldn't you be able to get the education?

M.S: People didn't have the money, and they didn't have highschools here. Then you had to go some...you had to go to Welland or someplace to highschool.

S.R: Oh, so you had to have the money just to get to school?

M.S: Yes.

S.R: There were different men's groups before. What did the community have to offer for the women in the line of organizations or social gatherings?

M.S: We used to have tennis, and we used to have...

S.R: Like, the men have their Lions Club and different things like that.

M.S: Well, the women would have...heck, what would you call it? They'd have a craft I suppose you'd call it. Craft groups you know. At night mostly you stayed with your children because they didn't have babysitters in those days. But they found something to do. We would do crafts, we would...oh, there was usually ladies nights to go to some of these things. Or, they had their groups at churches. They'd have womens things and things like that in the church.

S.R: Thank you very much for the interview Mrs. Schihl.

M.S: It was nice interviewing. It was really nice knowing you.

S.R: Nice knowing you too.