

Beverly Branton interviewing Mrs. Baxter on April 18, 1985. The interview is being held at Crescent Park Lodge, Hagey Street, Fort Erie, Ontario.

**B.B.:** Hello, Mrs. Baxter. You just recently had a birthday. You had a birthday party?

**F.B.:** Oh, yes.

**B.B.:** When was your birthday?

**F.B.:** The 26th of February.

**B.B.:** What year were you born?

**F.B.:** 1890.

**B.B.:** Were you born in this area?

**F.B.:** No, I was born in Orchard Park in the States, but oh, my parents were over there but a very short time and brought me back as I was a baby. And I lived in this area all my life.

**B.B.:** When they brought you back, which area did you move to?

**F.B.:** In Ridgeway.

**B.B.:** In Ridgeway? Did you ever live in Black Creek?

**F.B.:** Black Creek? Oh, dear. Now I remember being at Black Creek and I remember the store there. Yes, yes we did live in Black Creek area and we had to go across railroad bridge and there was a high fence we had to climb over to get in where the house was, you know.

**B.B.:** What is a railway bridge? Describe it.

**F.B.:** Pardon.

**B.B.:** What did the railway bridge look like?

**F.B.:** Oh, just like any track would you know like a bridge, only there was no, nothing to hold on or anything. But I remember one time my mother sent me to the store, there was a store on the other side, for a bar of soap, and I dropped my , my money that she gave me. I got down on my knees and I did everything, you know I felt so bad about it but I had to go back and tell her that I had dropped the money.

**B.B.:** How much money would it have cost for a bar of soap?

**F.B.:** Oh, a nickel, yes that was all it was but then it was a lot to me you know. Oh, dear.

**B.B.:** Then you moved to Ridgeway?

**F.B.:** Yes. Yes I lived on Ridge Street. I lived in Ridgeway practically all my life. I don't think we were at Black Creek too long you know. I remember there was a creek that went through and we had a little

rowboat. My mother use to go out, my mother and I use to go out in the boat and she use to row it around, oh dear.

**B.B.:** When you moved to Ridgeway did you live in the village of Ridgeway or on a farm...?

**F.B.:** Yes, yes I did. Ya that's where I went to school.

**B.B.:** Where was your school?

**F.B.:** The school was, well it was on the Main Street across the track and it was across from Dr. Snyder, Dr. Snyder was there then.

**B.B.:** What did the school look like?

**F.B.:** Oh, it was a two-storey school. The main part was a two-storey school and then on the right hand side was where the entrance class met in that room.

**B.B.:** What is an entrance class?

**F.B.:** Well, grade 9, oh dear, I forget.

**B.B.:** That's all right.

**F.B.:** No, not as high as grade 9, oh, dear...I wish Mary was here, she could tellme.

**B.B.:** Who was your teacher?

**F.B.:** Well, Miss Sharman was the teacher upstairs, a little Irish teacher and she had a fiery temper...oh, dear..

**B.B.:** Did you ever live on a farm?

**F.B.:** Yes, we did at Windmill Point. Yep, it was eighty-seven acres and a half.

**B.B.:** When did you live there?

**F.B.:** We, I, we lived there when we were first married.

**B.B.:** What was your name before you were married?

**F.B.:** Zimmerman, and I married Harry Baxter. And he was a good husband I tell ya. Harry and I got along real good, and oh, I don't know, I can't tell you how much I miss him.

**B.B.:** I'm sure you do.

**F.B.:** He had two brothers and a sister - Harry and Tom and Ruth.

**B.B.:** Can you describe the farm?

**F.B.:** Pardon.

**B.B.:** What was your farm house like?

**F.B.:** Oh, the farmhouse was big, really. I mean when you went in the side you went in a woodshed, like you know and a few steps on a platform and in the summer time we use to put our stove out there so when it was hot. And there was a kitchen and a bedroom and a room off of there, we always ate there, you know and we had a little dining room adjoining that and oh, if we had guests we always ate in there, you know and there

was a nice sized living room and upstairs there was two bedrooms, a close closet and a store room and they were a nice size rooms.

**B.B.:** How did you heat your home?

**F.B.:** Well, we heated it with wood at times and we had, we got a coal stove you know and we heated it that way, at times and we was always nice and warm.

**B.B.:** What kind of farm was it?

**F.B.:** Well, we raised, we raised grain and hay and oh, you know always had a nice garden, we had a beautiful garden. It was a nice farm really. I liked it there.

**B.B.:** How long did you live there?

**F.B.:** Oh dear, oh I think I forget how long. Oh, we lived there a long time. And then we, my husband was a carpenter, and he was going to try and work the farm...(there's Stern Mathewson, I bet Mary isn't coming today, I've been looking for her to come today)...what was I going to say. Harry was going to try and work at his trade and work the farm too but 87 acres and a half needs some work, so we sold the farm then, we moved to Ridgeway.

**B.B.:** And he did carpentry business in Ridgeway?

**F.B.:** Ya, ya he worked at his trade.

**B.B.:** Do you remember what year that was?

**F.B.:** Oh dear, I don't.

**B.B.:** Was that before the war?

**F.B.:** Oh, I wish, oh before the war, I think it was, oh dear...

**B.B.:** Do you remember the two wars?

**F.B.:** Ya, I do. Oh, before the war, no, my land no, I was in Ridgeway when I think the war, and so many of our young men were drafted in the war. I felt so bad about it. They were young men you could always count on you know, I always thought, thought a lot of them.

**B.B.:** Who were some of your neighbours when you lived on the farm?

**F.B.:** Pardon?

**B.B.:** Who were some of your neighbours when you lived on the farm?

**F.B.:** Oh, some of my neighbours, well at times my grandmother, my grandmother Barnhardt, Mitilda and Daniel Barnhardt lived right across the street, and Den McKay was another one, and oh, Saeger's, I forget there first name.

**B.B.:** Did they all have farms?

**F.B.:** Oh, my no, this, they lived in Ridgeway. And John Helevan, oh, dear...

**B.B.:** These are all your Ridgeway neighbours?

**F.B.:** Huh?

**B.B.:** Are these your neighbours in Ridgeway?

**F.B.:** Oh, no, oh no, they've gone. This was just a long time ago. Oh, no they are not there now.

**B.B.:** What did Ridgeway look like?

**F.B.:** What did Ridgeway look like? Ridgeway was a nice little town. There was a railroad track went through it and the station, they, there was a time then when trains didn't run and I don't know if they bought the station or what, but any way it was moved down to Fort Erie. I felt bad about that.

**B.B.:** Why?

**F.B.:** 'Cause I didn't know why we couldn't have it in Ridgeway.

**B.B.:** Was it passenger trains?

**F.B.:** Ya, and it was moved down to Fort Erie and then they had a bus system and Al Fulton run that and he well, this was before, this was when the trains was still running and the bus people use to get off the bus, or, uh, off the train and walk to the McLeod House, it was right next to the track and get on this bus, you know. Ridgeway was a nice little town. There use to be two hotels there at one time, McLeod House and the Queen's Hotel. The Queen's was just opposite. But now there's only one hotel, the McLeod House.

**B.B.:** Is the McLeod House in the same place it always has been?

**F.B.:** Yes, yes it's in the same place, yes. And we have an Imperial Bank and we have two drug stores, Stuart's and Brodies but Stuarts are not in the drug store now there's someone else that's got it, and I don't know, of course I don't get to Ridgeway anymore and I don't get to the drug store like I use to.

**B.B.:** When you lived on the farm in Windmill Point..your ancestors <sup>helped</sup> built the church ~~out~~ there.

**F.B.:** Yes, they did.

**B.B.:** Could you tell me a bit about that?

**F.B.:** Oh dear, I don't know if I can tell you much about that. Oh, I wish Mary was here. I think she could be more help to you.

**B.B.:** No, you are doing fine.

**F.B.:** The church was started by the Baxter's, I know that, Thomas Baxter. There's a plaque in the church and there was Thomas, oh...

**B.B.:** Was that your husband's father?



F.B.: Oh, no my husbands fathers name was John.

B.B.: Was that your husband's grandfather?

F.B.: Ya, and...I think that it was a older group...I remember this plaque was always up in the church. I t was Thomas Baxter, I remember that.

B.B.: How did you use to get to church.

F.B.: Well, we didn't live too far from the church. I'd walk to church and many times Laurie Baxter and I use to walk to the church. And Harry attended church. He was a nice bass singer, he use to sing in the choir. He was really a nice singer.

B.B.: What were the roads like?

F.B.: Oh, the roads were good.

B.B.: What were they made out of?

F.B.: Oh, they were gravel, you know. They weren't pave or anything.but the roads were good.

B.B.: Do you remember the quarry?

F.B.: Yes, yes there was a quarry there and oh, my goodness if you ever saw the big body of water where they took stone out of, you know, and oh, boys use to work in the quarry - Harry and brother Tom and he married a relation to me, Myrtle.

B.B.: Do you remember the American families by the lake?

F.B.: Who?

B.B.: The American families that moved in by the lake?

F.B.: Oh, my I should say! Oh, yes I use to work for Mrs. Whitlocker and Mrs. O'Brien.

B.B.: What did you use to do when you worked for them?

F.B.: Housework. In the spring I use to clean cottages along the, you know, for American people and then in the summer I worked for Mrs. Whitlocker and Mrs. O'Brien and I couldn't work for too many I had too much to do at home.

B.B.: Did they have the conveniences we have today in the homes?

F.B.: The facilities, oh, oh, yeah they had, Mrs. Whitlocker expecially because they adopted two boys and oh, yeah they had everything handy and nice.

B.B.: Do you remember the Depression?

F.B.: Who?

B.B.: The time of the Depression?...The Depression...Do you remember the Depression?

F.B.: Oh, yes, I guess I do!

B.B.: How did that affect Fort Erie...Ridgeway?

**F.B.:** Oh, my, well it meant hard times for a lot of people, you know. You had to make a limit on what you could buy and what you couldn't buy because work was scarce then and you just couldn't get what you would like to get. But thank goodness we went through it and we survived.

**B.B.:** Did you do a lot of canning?

**F.B.:** Oh, my I should say! We had a good size cellar and Harry put two, big long shelves in the, and I use to fill those shelves with food and with different kind of preserves and pickles and oh, I'd have one on one side and another on the other, oh, I had, we had, lots to eat.

**B.B.:** What were the winter months like?

**F.B.:** Oh, well the snow at that time was so deep you know and I tell you it was something to get around because there was so much snow but we would survive.

**B.B.:** How would you get around in the snow?

**F.B.:** No, I didn't get out too much really. Oh, we use to wade through it. We'd walk to Ridgeway because you couldn't get through. But we got there

**B.B.:** Do you remember when the cars first came?

**F.B.:** Well, well yes I do but we just had two cars. We had a chevrolet and a Pontiac. They were new and we really enjoyed them. And we had a nice neighbour, Tom Leigh and Aldy was the nicest person and her and I were so friendly and I use to drive her all over. It was just a pleasure to. We use to go over some nights and spend the evenings and she'd go down to the cellar and get a can of the best apples, I can almost taste them yet. She was such a sincere, good, Christian woman. Oh, I liked Aldy and her sister Mrytle married Tom Baxter, a brother to Harry, my husband you know.

**B.B.:** What else did you do for your social life?

**F.B.:** Oh, really I didn't do much else. We use to have dances in Ridgeway and we had a good time there you know. They'd have square dances and run around you know. We really had a good time. And they had, Sam Anchor was the violinist and a man by the name of Black, he was a colored person, played the violin, bass viol, it was good too.

**B.B.:** Did it cost to go to the dances. Did you have to buy a ticket to go to the dances or was it free?

**F.B.:** Oh, dear I forget. I think we paid for the tickets but I forget what we paid. I'm quite sure we paid for it.

**B.B.:** Did you ever go to visit in Buffalo before the Peace Bridge?

**F.B.:** Oh, yes. I had relations over there in Buffalo.

**B.B.:** How would you get over there?

**F.B.:** Well, we use to go...I don't know...how did I get over there? Sometimes I would go in the summer time and there was a boat that ran from, back and forth from Buffalo to Ridgeway or to the Beach and I'd go over on the Beach and it landed on the foot of Main Street.

**B.B.:** At what street?

**F.B.:** At the foot of Main Street. And I'd take a street car, I knew where to go. And I'd go to my cousins Ruth.

**B.B.:** Do you remember when the Peace Bridge was opened?

**F.B.:** When the Peace Bridge was opened? Oh, I think I do, I think I remember when that, oh, dear I remember going over on it a good many times...but oh, dear that's a long time ago. It's too bad we didn't think about those things and make a note of things isn't it?

**B.B.:** Can you think of anything as you look back on your life that you would like to tell me about?

**F.B.:** Oh, dear I don't know what.

**B.B.:** What the area looked like, maybe? How it's different today then it was yesterday? Do the roads look different...do the houses look different?

**F.B.:** Oh, yes the road are different. Today they are paved and then they were graveled you know and in the winter time they usually had a snow plough but when it snowed it was really hard to get through sometimes we wanted to go to Ridgeway we had to walk which was I think 2miles and a half to Ridgeway. It was you know quite a ways to walk. You couldn't buy very many groceries not carrying that far.

**B.B.:** When you were a little girl what type of games did you play?

**F.B.:** What?

**B.B.:** When you were a little girl what type of games did you play?

**F.B.:** Oh, my goodness. We use to play checkers and dominoes and ... oh, I forget what kind of games we played...I remember we played dominoes and checkers...and the children was always wanting me to play with them.

**B.B.:** Can you think of anything else Mrs. Baxter?

**F.B.:** Oh, I wish I could. I was just trying to think...

**B.B.:** Do you remember when you lived on the farm in Windmill Point what the area looked like?

**F.B.:** I don't think it changed much really because I went down to live on the farm when I first married and I....

**B.B.:** Where did Harry and you get married?



**F.B.:** In Fort Erie. We didn't have a wedding. We got married down there and then we, well they, oh our friends thought that Harry and I was going to get married and they was watching us and they was ready to shivaree us. And we went down to Fort Erie, we didn't even go together down there. I went down there and Harry drove and we got married. We wanted to be married at the parsonage down there at the, oh, I can't think of that ministers name, we wasn't a member of that church or anything but they was building, some of the carpenters from Ridgeway that Harry knew was building this building right next to the parsonage and we couldn't get married there 'cause they'd see us go up there. However, we got by, they didn't see us and we went, not very nice, but we didn't know where to go, you know, so we went in a private room in the hotel and 2 ladies witnessed it. However, we went to Toronto Fair and then we went to Evans, that was a cousin of Harry's up there and we stayed there for a week or so. We had a nice time there you know. But Harry was a good husband, one you could be proud of, one you could trust. I never had any heartaches.

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\* the tape was turned off at this point, a few times  
continued

...it was a Methodist church and later I became a member of the Church of Christ Disciples and I always remained a member there. Mr. Cecil Fletcher is the minister and Phyliss is his wife there and they have a nice congregation, it's really a nice church and I like what it stands for, you know they believe in worship and I really like it and I like Mr. Fletcher he's a wonderful minister and his wife too, I like Phyliss.

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\***B.B.:** Mrs. Baxter, you had mentioned the word, that your friends when you were going to get married wanted to do a lot of shivaree...what does that mean?

**F.B.:** Well, they'd get tins that they'd pound on, you know and they did after we ~~were~~ married they came to the house one night and they really shivareed us. We both went out and Harry gave them money, o dear.

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\***B.B.:** Mrs. Baxter you had mentioned that when you got married, that you had to go to a hotel and two ladies witnessed it. Could you tell me a little bit more.

**F.B.:** Oh, dear I don't know what really.

**B.B.:** Did you have a justice of the peace?

**F.B.:** No we had the Anglican minister came and married us. \* He was always a Methodist you know but he changed his belief when I wanted to go in with the Church of Christ Disciples, why he became the same religion as I did and he was a good Christian. I was always very fond of Harry. He was so so sincere, and so honest and I never had to be jealous of him never in my life was I jealous



of him.

**B.B.:** Well, Mrs. Baxter I thank you so much for letting me talk to you.

**F.B.:** Oh my dear you are so welcome.

**B.B.:** Is there anything else you can think of before I go?

**F.B.:** Pardon.

**B.B.:** Is there anything else you like to tell before I go?

**F.B.:** Oh, I don't think so. In case I do think of anything I can make a note of it for you. Maybe as I talk to Mary she might think of something.

**B.B.:** Okay, well again I thank you very much.

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\***B.B.:** ...you use to take the cows to pasture?

**F.B.:** Yes I use to take the cows to pasture.

**B.B.:** How would you take the cows?

**F.B.:** I walked.

**B.B.:** How did you get the cows to follow you?

**F.B.:** Oh, I'd get behind the cows and they would, once you take them you know they learn, and they'd go down the main road until they came to the road that we turned, turned to our right, and then we went almost to the end of that road because they had sold that 12 acres and a half off of the farm and it didn't go quite to the other road, you know, thank goodness.

**B.B.:** Do you remember the names of the roads?

**F.B.:** Well, the one road was the Dominion Road but the other one, I don't remember what the name of that road was but the main road was the Dominion Road.