

This is Rose Hearn interviewing Mr. Sumner Beam in his home at 1235 Ridge North, Ridgeway, Ontario, and the date is August 15, 1985.

**R.H:** Good morning.

**R.H:** Could please give me the date of your birth?

**S.B:** Oh, it's October the 9th, 1898.

**R.H:** And where were you born?

**S.B:** I was born in my grandfather's, my grandmother's home on the Niagara Boulevard just above Black Creek, about 3 miles up Black Creek.

**R.H:** And what was your home like, could you take me on a memory walk and describe what your home was like?

**S.B:** Well as far as I remember the first place my father and mother rented was a farm on the Niagara Boulevard just north of my grandparents. We lived there, and we used to have walk down the 25 foot bank in the wintertime, (and it would be muddy, clay mud) to get the water from the river, and when they'd bring a pail up, there'd be about two inches of clay settled in the bottom of the pail.

**R.H:** What river was that?

**S.B:** Niagara River, and that river was beautiful at that time. There was no wells to draw from you see. The water wells around that part would be sulphery and black. It wasn't good you see, it wasn't like the water here, and they used to melt snow in the wintertime to do the washing.

**R.H:** How did your mother do the washing?

**S.B:** Washboard and tub, and then they had a boiler that they put on the stove. They put the soap in and boiled the clothes for a bit, the white clothes.

**R.H:** Was it a coal stove, how did you heat...?

**S.B:** Well wood and coal.

**R.H:** Wood and coal, that's how you got your heat, and that's how you heated your home too?

**S.B:** Yeah, I would get up in the morning and everything would be frozen.

**R.H:** Where did you get the coal from, did you get it delivered?

**S.B:** I don't know just exactly where they did get it from, but I believe it was Stevensville. They'd have to go to Stevensville for it. Well then they moved from there to where the other side of where my

grandfather lived, and they lived there for a few years, and then they bought this farm on the town line from...oh what's his name? I can't think of it right now. I was just, well I guess I was 5 years old then, and my brother was three. I remember them moving in, and the mud was 6 inches deep coming through from the road, and the cooking stove was in three pieces you see. They took the feet off, and then the top part of it, the firebox, and then the other, and they slid that in on planks off the wagon and built the fire, and we kids roamed around the house and we went up the back stairs and I got old-time pencils, well it was a pen that you use...well I still got it today...

**R.H:** With an inkwell?

**S.B:** Yeah, you take it and put it in a bottle, ink it, and you write for a bit and then you dip it again...That's where we lived the rest of the time.

**R.H:** That house now, did that have electricity?

**S.B:** No, It never had electricity.

**R.H:** Never had it, so what did you use?

**S.B:** The house was...well it was like some of the houses here. They don't sit on the foundation, they sit off the foundation about 3 or 4 ft., and when the wind would blow you'd think you were on a boat rocking. Then my dad decided that he'd build it, build over you see so the front part he turned it around, and moved it back, and built on the front, and then he built a small...he was going to build a small piece on the back and then it ended up that he had a kitchen 12 by 24 for the kitchen. Then they had two bedrooms up above that. Well he never did get it finished as far as that goes. He had quite a time of it getting the cement wall in. He dug it out, (can you imagine digging under the house and throwing the ground out) and all that ground under the house had to be picked loose, and put on to a scoop, (that's a metal thing that horses will pull) and one horse would pull it out, and they'd take it out and dump it, and then he'd pull that back in, and pick it loose again.

**R.H:** That's a lot of work.

**S.B:** Well then shortly after we came there, (well they used wood then not coal) they came through drilling gas-wells you see, and there would be four people to each well. Two fellows would work in the

daytime and two would work at night so they boarded at my dad's place but they weren't drilling that well, they were drilling the well a half a mile west of us, and so when they struck gas why of course we had gas then in the house. Gas for heating and everything. There was no limit on the amount of gas you could use, and of course a lot of it was wasted likely, except there'd be no end to it. Well now today there's practically no gas there. Well there is a little, but nothing to speak of, but they never had electricity, no electricity at all.

**R.H:** What about phones?

**S.B:** Telephones? We had the old Welland County Telephone, crank vacuum. We were on the party line and there was four or five in it, but before that the nearest phone was a mile away and that was the Bell Telephone.

**R.H:** Was that in a store or something?

**S.B:** No, in a farm home, and what's his name? Glenney, he was the one that got it between him and...

**R.H:** Krieger? did you ever hear of a man called Krieger?

**S.B:** They had the telephone connected to the fence, and they talked over the fence wire, one wire.

**R.H:** That was Mr. Krieger I think, no, it was Wensch, somebody Wensch?

**S.B:** No. Wensch? Yeah they were further west then, Mrs. Wensch, and that road that...

**R.H:** Were you close neighbours to Mrs. Wensch?

**S.B:** Oh it was just the...if you went by the road it would be a mile away that's all.

**R.H:** I see. Now was that near the Shipyards?

**S.B:** Yeah, about a half a mile from the Shipyards. That's what they called the Sumner Road, and that should never have been Sumner Road, it should have been Wensch Road and kept as Wensch Road. It runs from Ridgemount, no...Netherby Road over to College Street, and that's as far as the road goes.

**R.H:** So you were pretty close to the Shipyards then, your farm?

**S.B:** Oh yeah, we was only about 3 miles or so.

**R.H:** Three miles? The Glenney's were closer I believe?

**S.B:** The Glenney's and ...that's when my memory slips me sometimes when I try to think of a name, but anyway they used to talk over

the telephone and then they got the telephone going. When they got it going why they moved it to...the office into Stevensville which is where Miller and what's that insurance company? Miller and...the insurance company in Stevensville right across...well there's a bank on one side, the Bank of Commerce and then Miller's up there, you see...real estate or car insurance. Anyway my aunt had the office there for transferring to get on to the Bell Telephone and different places for a number of years.

**R.H:** She had the office, did she?

**S.B:** The office? yeah, and she would do her work and then the telephone would ring and she'd have to run and grab the wire and put it in the plug.

**R.H:** Was she the operator too?

**S.B:** She was the operator.

**R.H:** What was her name?

**S.B:** Grant, Mrs. Grant.

**R.H:** Mrs. Grant?

**S.B:** She was the operator, and I guess they operated it day and night, but there wasn't the calls like there were now you see.

**R.H:** So do you know anything about the Shipyards?

**S.B:** Well I know a little about it. I worked there for a while there.

**R.H:** Didn't they build a couple of boats there?

**S.B:** They built six boats I think. They built the North and South America. They were small boats, and they built...the first boat that they built was the (I think it was the first one) the E.B. Osler. That's the biggest boat that was sailing on the Great Lakes.

**R.H:** Did you work on that?

**S.B:** I didn't work on that one, no.

**R.H:** What did you do at the shipyards?

**S.B:** Well I was a mechanics helper at the time that I worked there, but I was working on the smaller boats and I was there when they launched the big boats you see, the E.B. Osler.

**R.H:** Oh were you...?

**S.B:** They had a big picnic that day when they launched it you know.

**R.H:** And did they launch it with the champagne?

**S.B:** Yeah they did that and they had a big ribbon on there, and some of them were going to catch some of the champagne from it.

It's quite a thing to see them...they had them logs, them big heavy timbers and they were all greased with what they called soft soap, and it is slippery.

**R.H:** For it to slide down?

**S.B:** For it to slide down in, and they had great big timbers there and there was a rope arranged to hold it. They hold by block to hold it in place, and a feller was standing there with a big broad-axe, (the axe would be about a foot across you know) and when they were getting ready for to launch why they blew the whistle and he came down with the axe, and cut the ropes, and the boat kinda sat there for a second, and then they had jacks and they kinda moved a little bit, and she started to slide in. She slid in that, and she dropped into the water, and she rolled over on her side like that and back up, and there was a wave there of about 2 feet of water that went up on the land and there was fish...people were racing all through the water to get the fish and stuff that was washed up on shore, and then it settled back, rocked back and forth, and they put a ladder to it and went up to see if there was any leaks or anything in it. That was an exciting time for us.

**R.H:** Who would launch it, would it be the Mayor or someone?

**S.B:** No, I think the company would.

**R.H:** Yeah but didn't they have some important person there to swing this bottle?

**S.B:** Oh they'd have someone important, some head ones from the company you see but that was the first boat. They had to dredge the slip out and they had to dredge the river out because the channel of the river was on the American side and they had to dredge that out so that the boat could go out that way and then get into the channel, and turn and go up there. The reason they didn't carry it on much longer was because the sand would wash in the place, and then they'd have to dredge it out again and it cost so much to dredge the canal. You see the river flows this way and the channel went right across. Well the sand would drift in and fill right in and level you see, so that's what stopped them Well then they kind of went broke I think on that.

**R.H:** What kind of boat was it? Was it a passenger...?

**S.B:** No, no a big freighter.

**R.H:** Freighter?

**S.B:** Yes a big freighter.

**R.H:** So it took a lot of goods and everything...?

**S.B:** It took a good amount of steel. All that bending of the steel was all done by hand you know, it was not pressed out. They beat the plate and they'd hammer it till they swung it to the form that they had to put it on you see, and when I worked there they started the first electric welding and they said "oh that wouldn't stand up at all, it would break loose and that and the other thing" and they had a lot of us scared to go near it because there was so much electric there. They had the generator up there running, and today if they were building it they'd put it in a press and they'd bend it. And even then when they had their big 6 or 8 inch pipes in there for circulation (I don't what they were for) they'd bend them and they'd fill them with sand, and then they'd heat it till it was red hot, and then they'd plug the end of the pipe and lay it on a platform and have stakes on here, and they'd bring it around and then if they wanted to turn it the other way they'd have a stake and they'd bend it that way. It was all done by hand, and when they did get it done it was perfect. It went right into place you see and the sand would keep it from bending in. It would hold it. The sand had to be dry, it couldn't have any water in it because if it did it would create steam you see, and when they got it bent to what they wanted (the pattern) well they'd lift it up, drop the sand out, and tap it out, and that was it.

**R.H:** Do you know how much you got paid for doing all this?

**S.B:** Oh the payment was nothing. I forget what wage it was, something like 35 cents or something like that.

**R.H:** 35 cents an hour?

**S.B:** 35 cents an hour or something like that. The wages wasn't nothing but then there was no other work you see.

**R.H:** What about the hours, were they longer hours then than they are now?

**S.B:** Ten hours, ten hours.

**R.H:** Ten hours a day?

**S.B:** I worked on the railroad for a dollar an hour.

**R.H:** You worked on the railroad? What did you do on the railroad?

**S.B:** Oh fixing up their track, and putting ties in and stuff you know,



and changing the rails. Sometimes there'd be a broken rail, and you'd have to go to the...we used to have the store-clerk keep a rail or two on hand, and then we'd have to lift them up and that rail would be 32 feet long, and it would be a 100lbs to the yard you see, and three of us would have to lift that up and on to the handcar, and push it down to where we wanted it and...

**R.H:** Is that the little handcar that you use to go down the tracks?

**S.B:** Yeah, it would be up and down.

**R.H:** I know there was some kind of a strike on the railroad, do you know anything about it?

**S.B:** No there was no strike that I know about. I worked on the Niagara Branch and that...well they used to call that Paddy Miles, the train that run from Fort Erie to Niagara-On-The-lake you see.

**R.H:** They called it the Paddy...?

**S.B:** The Paddy Miles Train.

**R.H:** The Paddy Miles Train? Did you know any of the engineers at all?

**S.B:** No,I never got to know them. Black Creek then had a post-office there you see, and they used to get the mail, they got the letters that came in there, and they'd carry it from the post-office to meet the train, and throw it on the train and if they had any mail there they'd throw it off, and bring it down to the post-office. I got the post-office box, that's the one in the greenery.

**R.H:** When you lived on the farm, did you get mail delivery or did you have to go and pick it up?

**S.B:** Well we had...the mail came in at Black Creek, and we'd get the Welland paper once a week, and we'd have to walk to Black Creek. It'd be oh about a mile and a half from Six Mile Creek to Black Creek, and oh it was years before the mail...well the mail if I remember rightly, it was just shortly before the war started that they started the mail route through.

**R.H:** Where did you start school?

**S.B:** Black Creek School on the Niagara Boulevard. It's torn away now. It was just a one room schoolhouse, and when I started (I think I was eight before I started school) my cousin...my dad owned a farm, and my uncle had a farm above him, and my other uncle farmed below him, and the one below him (my cousins)they had a piece of property up about a mile from their uncles, and they used to

take the cattle up that way and then they'd walk across and go to school and that's were they used to pasture the cattle in the summertime, and they were the first ones that took me to school.

**R.H:** Was that quite a ways to go for you, maybe?

**S.B:** Oh what would it be? Oh we'd walk about 3 miles that way. It was 2 miles to the schoolhouse and the roads weren't opened in the wintertime and we'd have snow up to our waist.

**R.H:** You walked in the wintertime?

**S.B:** Oh yeah, we walked to school. We walked down the road, and the snowbanks...we'd have to crawl through the snowbanks, and get to the railroad track where it would be better walking, and walk down the railroad 'til we got to the back to where the school was and then crawl through the wire fences, and walk back to the school.

**R.H:** And when you got in the school, weren't you cold or wet or...?

**S.B:** No, of course they had a big stove there if you...no we weren't wet, we always wore good clothes to keep the wet off.

**R.H:** But they had a stove in the classroom?

**S.B:** Oh right in the one big room. You went in the doorway, and there was the entrance way, and on one side they had a pile of wood, and on the other side they had a pail of water the children could get a drink if they wanted it. On the other side of that was the cloakroom where the girls stayed, and on the other side was the cloakroom where the boys stayed, and then the classes and stove in the middle. If it got too cold for the ones on the outside, why the teacher would bring them in and let them stand by the stove 'til they got warm, and then they'd go back. Oh, we didn't mind it.

**R.H:** Do you remember your teachers?

**S.B:** Well some of them. My first teacher was a Miss Dell from Chippawa. Well, there was a time when it was difficult to get teachers to come there because they weren't paying the wages that they are today. Six hundred dollars a year for teaching, and they had to stand their own boarding. They boarded with the schoolhouses you see and them being in the country too you see, it was hard to get them. In the wintertime there'd be about forty in the school, and then in the summertime there'd be twenty five maybe...maybe fourteen fifteen, depends you see. Some of them were the Bernardo boys that came from...



**R.H:** Do you know anything about the Bernardo boys?

**S.B:** Oh, I don't know, I just know there was some Bernardo's but there was...well the ones I knew...the last one that I think that I know of just passed away about a year ago, Freddy Fear.

**R.H:** And they were brought over from England and...?

**S.B:** England.

**R.H:** And they were adopted?

**S.B:** Well they just...they weren't adopted, they were taken in to the homes and they were clothed and sent to school, but they were only sent to school in the wintertime, and in the summertime they kept them on the farm.

**R.H:** They worked the farm?

**S.B:** Working on the farm, you see. They worked them too, and their legitimate boys took it easy all the time.

**R.H:** And the little Bernardo boys...I've heard about them and that's an interesting subject, isn't it?

**S.B:** I don't know all of them, but if my sister was here she could name some of them right off. I don't remember.

**R.H:** So that was your school then and it was only a one room schoohouse...?

**S.B:** Eight years is all I went to school. I never went to high school to get my diploma.

**R.H:** You didn't?

**S.B:** Some of them did, and some of them didn't. Della you know, she did and she was...well I don't know how she ever got to the...

**R.H:** That don't mean anything, does it? Did you do a lot of chores then?

**S.B:** Oh, not too much. I had calves and pigs to feed, a little like that. There was haying, and taking care of the crops in the summertime. It is far different today than it was then. It was all hand work you see.

**R.H:** You didn't have the machines then at all...?

**S.B:** They didn't have no combines, no balers, and nothing like that. They had their balers to bale up commercial, but to take them in the fields, they didn't. All the farmers had was a...they had a plough, and a disc and harrow, and probably a cultivator, and a mower, and a wagon, and a binder, that's all the machines they had. That's if they had the full equipment. Some of them didn't have all that, and they'd get their neighbour to come and do the work. Well, they were neighbours at that time, because if they

were stuck with the work, and the other neighbour was ahead, he'd come over and he'd help you, and if you offered to pay him you'd offend him. They didn't want any pay at all, not like today, you can't hardly hire them to come, you see.

**R.H:** What did you have, maybe two horses, was that a team?

**S.B:** A team of horses.

**R.H:** And would that be two, a team would be like two?

**S.B:** Two, a team of horses would be two, but sometimes they would be three. One would be the driving horse for the...to go to the store sometimes, you see. Well the team horses would be the heavy type, real heavy, but the driving horses would be what you have today, like the riding horses you see. Dad had the three horses, he had the...the team was...well two matched, but one was a little heavier than the other, and the one had been a riding horse, and she was kinda tricky to handle. You never knew when she was going to jump aside of one or the other, and the old horse, he was just like an old oxen. You would take him up the road, and he had flat feet, great big...flatfooted you know and if there was a stone in the road he'd step onto it, and then he'd injure his foot, and then he'd be limping. Many a time he got a piece of gravel on the bottom of his foot, and we got to dig it out because his foot was getting sore, and mother and dad would go up to see their...my dad's brother and sister-in-law and they'd drive like from 2 miles below Stevensville up to Welland. They'd go up there and they'd sit around 'til maybe 10 oclock, and then they'd come home and they'd put us kids in front of the buggy, and the robe was over top of it (there was just the two of us) and the lantern sat down between them, and that would throw a little bit of heat you see, and if they needed any light they'd could lift it up and see, and they'd get in that buggy, and then they start for home, and then both of them would drop asleep, and the old horse would just plug right along and he'd hit the culverts which would be boards, and they'd wake up and see where they were, and he'd be in the centre of the road. He wouldn't get off the road, he'd just plug right along the centre of the road, and one time he came in, and went in the driveway, and went right out to the barn, and both of them were asleep, the whole four of us were asleep and they wondered why the horse wasn't going any

further, and here we were standing at the barn door. But then the roads were all mud, there was no stone on top, no roads at all. Well, the first stone road that was through was the...they had the Bowen Road, and then the Garrison Road was stoned a little, that was all.

**R.H:** Did you have a blacksmith then too?

**S.B:** Yes, we used to go to...he was the blacksmith in New Germany about three miles up and he'd shoe the horses. In the wintertime he used to have to put the corks sharp you see, so that if the horse stepped on the ice it would chisel in you see,, and I think the last time I remember dad going, he was growling about the price of getting on the shoes. They would charge a dollar a shoe then to put new corks on. They're welded on you see, and they buy these little short corks, and there's a little prong on it, and he'd get that, and that would stick into it, then he'd heat the metal 'til it was spitting, and then he'd tap that, and it would weld right to the shoe you see. He went and took a load of hay out to Fort Erie that year, and he had sharp shod on the horses, and every time they'd start to chisel into the ice. You know, by the time they got back from Fort Erie, they were dull, no good at all. The horses couldn't stand, they'd slip and slide all over. He said "That's terrible, that was those bad roads".

**R.H:** So did you take your farm produce to sell in Fort Erie?

**S.B:** Oh, mother used to, in the summertime. We used to raise garden stuff, and take it into Fort Erie. Well, there used to be a...Cozy Dell was a settlement of Americans, and they had six or eight customers that was buying what they want, and they would come in there with their wagon full of radishes, and carrots, and beets, and corn, and peas, and beans. Why, they'd clammer all over for it, and then they'd want butter and eggs, homemade butter, they didn't want the factory butter, not on a bet. One woman, she talked to mother and she was...mother just made the butter in pound rolls you see...there was a press that you could put the butter in, and press it out into one pound pieces, you see. Well, this woman, she wanted a mold that would have a sheaf of wheat on it or something to make it fancy, and mother said "I haven't got time to bother with that". She was growling at father, so mother reached over and took the butter, and put it in the basket and says "you'll have to get somebody else".

Well then they'd go to the store, and drive into Fort Erie.

**R.H:** To the South End or the North End?

**S.B:** To the North End, Bridgeburg was the North End. It was changed...well, in my time it was called Victoria, but they soon changed it to Bridgeburg. They'd come up Jarvis Street, the Royal Hotel was there then, and a lot of the stores along there were all vacant, and then where...what's that? Well, where that big fire was here a couple of years ago. It burned some of it down.

**R.H:** Rossman's?

**S.B:** Rossman's. That was a big pond of water with green scum over it. In the summertime it was terrible, and up a little bit further was a wooden structure, and the Chinese had a restaurant there. You used to walk up four or five steps onto this platform, they made it level, and go into the restaurant and get a cup of coffee or something. The grocery store was C.W. VeHey, he had a general store there, and it wasn't a self-service. You bought the stuff by asking him for it, and he went and got it.

**R.H:** Did they have sidewalks?

**S.B:** No sidewalks.

**R.H:** Were they wooden or...?

**S.B:** Well, it would be cinders or gravel. Some places had to have wood but...and then they had hitching posts where they could tie the horses up. But most of them used to take the horses to the livery stable at the hotels.

**R.H:** Was there one behind the King Edward Hotel?

**S.B:** The one that mother used to go to was the one facing the railroad tracks. I forgot what they called that now, but anyway this had the stable there, and for 25 cents the feller would put the horse in, tie it up, and it would be under shelter from the rain or cold or anything like that. When they were ready to go home she'd go over, and he'd back the horse up, and...

**R.H:** Did they water and feed them?

**S.B:** Some did, but sometimes they'd take a little pan of oats along so the horse would have something to eat. There was big potholes on Jarvis Street full of water, and you'd rack into that, and back into the other side.

**R.H:** Was there ever a type of quarry on Jarvis Street?

**S.B:** Well, that might have been where the pond was.

**R.H:** (Where's the place were they used to smuggle Chinese people?)  
[The question was asked by Mr. Beams daughter-in-law] Do you know anything about the Chinese smuggling?

**S.B:** No, I don't know. I don't know too much about that. There was a story about that. They had maple trees set out along the street, you see, and then the clothing stores, they had their...well, their gingham and cotton was all in big bolts, and you'd go in and get so many yards of this, and so many yards of that, and he'd measure it out on the counter for you.

**R.H:** Who was the guy that owned this store, do you know?

**S.B:** I was just trying to think of what his name was...it's on the end of the tip of my tongue...I'll think of it later.

**R.H:** What about Erie Beach, do you know anything on Erie Beach?

**S.B:** Well, not too much, but Erie Beach was bigger than Crystal Beach at one time, and they had a train that ran from the ferry dock at Fort Erie, at the south part of Fort Erie right by...

**R.H:** Agrette's? Is that the one that ran from Agrette's?

**S.B:** Right from the...well, there was a grocery store now on the river side, but the boat used to pull in, and then the current would back it down to where they could unload the wagons and stuff. They'd take hay over across to Buffalo, and well, sometimes they'd get their coal and stuff and bring it across from over there.

**R.H:** But Erie Beach was quite a big thing then, right?

**S.B:** Erie Beach was, but I was only once to Erie Beach so I don't know too much about it. I don't know what went wrong with it but it just petered right out in no time at all, and Crystal Beach went ahead and it took all the trade from it.

**R.H:** There was the Bertie Fair, do you know anything about that?

**S.B:** The Bertie Fair? Well, that ran...the Farmers Association, agricultural, used to have fairs up at Guelph, and they used to go up there and they'd get special rates to go to the fair on the train up to Guelph. There'd be an excursion in the morning that would take people up, and then at six or seven o'clock, why-they'd come back down, and people would come back on it. They had the Fair at the Racetrack up until...but I don't remember too much about that, as I was never there...well, I guess it was once that I was there.

I know I got questions too over the racing. I used to like to watch the horses you know, racing. My folks said "That's enough of that, you don't wanna get mixed up in that".

**R.H:** It's nice if you just go and watch and not spend your money, right?

**S.B:** Well, we never had any money to spend as far as that goes.

**R.H:** Do you know anything about the fire in Ridgeway?

**S.B:** No, but I remember someone telling me about it, but I don't remember the fire.

**R.H:** Do you know anything about the Fire Department itself, how it started?

**S.B:** Well, let's see, I was 16 years old when my dad had to go to Ridgeway to where the cemetery is and get gravel, get a yard of gravel, and we'd drive up in the morning, in the wintertime, and they'd have to pick the gravel loose. It would freeze along the side of the bank, they'd load it on to the sleigh, and then they had to come up a hill to get to the road, and some of the horses wasn't able to pull a yard of gravel up there, and the different teams would unhook and they'd put a chain on and help each one up 'til they got out, you see. They'd say "Well, you help me and I'll help you". After we got out then we'd come home. We'd come down through here, [Mr. Beam means the area of Ridge Road North where he lives] and the road would have four or five feet of snow, and then there'd be places where you'd dip in and out, and places where you'd slide sideways over on up. There is no comparison to what the roads are today. You'd slide back and forth with the team, and in some places you'd go over top of the fences with the snowbank, into the field. Then of course you'd turn and come back out again, maybe at the gate, at the other end of the field on to the road, and go down to the road. We'd leave down home there at...well, it was about seven o'clock, and we wouldn't get back 'til five that evening. It would be bitter cold, and sometimes it would be starting to snow and blow you know. We'd think it was going to be a nice day and we'd get started early, and then it'd come up blowing snow. It's about all you could do to get through with a team of horses, and then that gravel had to be unloaded that night, because if it didn't, it would all freeze solid, and you couldn't pick it loose. So after we'd get in, we generally had to get our supper, and go out and unload that load of gravel.

**R.H:** (Do you remember anything about the first Fire Department?)

The question was asked by Mr. Beam's daughter-in-law.



**S.B:** The first one? No.

**R.H:** I guess it was all volunteer then, was it?

**S.B:** Oh, I think likely it was all volunteer. It could be all volunteers.

**R.H:** I was just wondering how they put out fires before they had all their fancy equipment. I've heard about the bucket brigade, have you?

**S.B:** They had pails, and then they had tanks of water that they put up.

**R.H:** Did they keep tanks of water ready for...?

**S.B:** No, they'd have those tanks that they could fill up with water you see, and I know some of them used to have...on the threshing outfits they used to have a pump that would pump water pretty fast you see ,to fill up a tank of water for the threshing industry, and they'd get a pump like that, and they'd fill up the tanks and they'd get them over to the fire and...

**R.H:** I guess everybody would help one another, right?

**S.B:** They were careful of fires, more so then than they are today.

**R.H:** Did your family have an icebox?

**S.B:** No.

**R.H:** Oh! How did you preserve your food?

**S.B:** Some of them did, some of them didn't. They used to put up a building of about 14 feet square, something like that, and line it with sawdust, and the boards on the outside would make it airtight, and then they'd go to the river in the wintertime when the ice would be eight inches and just clear, and they'd saw these chunks of ice out, and flow them over to shore, and then had the horse with a grapple that would grapple it and pull it up on the shore, and then they'd pick them cakes up. They'd be two feet square, and eight inches thick, you had to be careful, and you had to watch your fingers because many of them got their fingers smashed between the ice you see, and they'd bring them home, and then log them into the icehouse, pack them as tight as you could pack them together, and then put sawdust on top of it, and the next day go back, and get a couple of more loads, and bring it and pack that in. In the summertime you just brushed your sawdust away and got your chunks of ice out, put it in a...

**R.H:** Oh! it lasted for quite a while, did it?

**S.B:** It would last all summer, last all summer.

**R.H:** That's amazing isn't it?

**S.B:** Down at the townline at Netherby Road at the Black Creek, my

aunt had a hired hand as my uncle was working in Buffalo. They had a hired man to do the chores, and they had an icehouse, and they were filling ice, they were cutting it, and they had something like a cultivator that had teeth in it, and you'd draw it along and it would cut so deep, and then you'd keep on cutting you see. You'd do it that way with the horse, and then the other way, you'd use it to saw, and it looked like a big cross-cut saw, and saw it. Then this feller steps on the ice, and he went down into the, under the ice, in the cakes, and he struck the bottom of the creek, and he gave himself a boost, and he came up. The grabbed him and pulled him out of the water, and laid him in the wagon, and covered him over with the blankets that they put on the horses when they were loading the ice while they were waiting. Took him home, and they had to saw the clothes off of him as they were froze by the time they got home, you know. He didn't have any ill effect of it at all.

**R.H:** They didn't have the hospital then, did they?

**S.B:** No, no.

**R.H:** So what did they do, did they get the doctor?

**S.B:** No, they didn't bother with the doctor at all, he come out without any trouble at all, you know. He just went down, and he bounced right up, and they grabbed him quick you see. They had it as a joke for while. Betty said he took an early spring bath. But the ice will stay way 'til October if it's all packed in there tight. They used to do that on the railroads at the big icehouses.

**R.H:** What did they use the icehouses for?

**S.B:** Well, for their cars that...the cold storage cars which they have now, there's a unit in there which keeps it cold, but then they used to have ice in it you see, for perishable produce that they had. They didn't know, but when you built an icehouse, in three or four years, you'd have to build it over again because the ice would rot the building you see, but those who sold milk, and dairy produce, and cream, and stuff like that, they needed to have ice to keep the stuff cold.

**R.H:** Did you have your own milk on the farm? Did you know any of the dairies?

**S.B:** No. We generally kept Jersey cows because they give rich milk you see, but we did put ice in one year, but it was too much bother.

**R.H:** Have you ever heard of a medicine man that travelled around here?

**S.B:** There used to be a lot of peddlars come through, but I don't remember any medicine man. I know some of them would carry a lot of novelty things, and then they would have certain antique bottles that was supposed to be good stuff.

**R.H:** Cures, like the elixer of life?

**S.B:** Well, it wasn't exactly a cure, and it wasn't...but there was a lot of...Polish, I believe they were Polish, or Hungarians that used to come through with big bolts of cloth, and so on, cutting through the mud and...

**R.H:** Did you have any Gypsies?

**S.B:** Gypsies? Oh yeah.

**R.H:** Did they tell your fortune?

**S.B:** Oh they would, but we never wanted them near the place.

**R.H:** But there was quite a few Gypsies around?

**S.B:** Oh yes, there was Gypsies. They were raised on trading horses, and you never knew when they'd come through. They'd stop on a side road you see, and they'd camp for the night. Well, the people around would generally have someone stay up, because they'd go into the barn and they'd steal oats, or the water for the horses you know. They'd want to trade horses you know, and you'd trade with them, and they'd get the best of you 'cause they had their horse doctored up to be number one, and when all the dope and stuff had worn off of it, why, he was just nothing but an old plug, he was no good at all. Then they sold tinware,, plates, and cups, and things like that.

**R.H:** What about the Depression, how did that affect Bertie Township?

**S.B:** Oh, I can't say that it...it did a little. Really, I wasn't here at the time of the Depression.

**R.H:** You were a missionary I believe, was that during the First World War, or before the war?

**S.B:** That was after the war. In the Depression...well, there was no work, there was no work around here at all to do, and I went down in the States to work on a farm there. I worked on a farm here, one year. Well anyway, that was after the railroad quit, see, and you got \$40... no, we'd get \$10, \$10 a month and your board, and what's \$10 a month?

R.H: This was the farm here?

S.B: On the farm here. I went down to the States, and got \$40 a month, and my board, and I worked there for a couple of years. When the Depression hit I was down in South America then.

R.H: So you were a missionary then?

S.B: Yeah.

R.H: You weren't here during the war then either?

S.B: Well, during the war I was home. I was in the draft in the First World War, the 19 year old draft you see. My uncle was an officer in the 44th Regiment, and he wanted me to get in the army, and the army didn't appeal to me, not one bit. I didn't want any part, nor lot with it, and when the war was on they used to have soldiers riding along the Niagara Boulevard, but on bicycles you see. There'd be two and three go along at night you know, day and night they patrolled along there. We used to go down to the camp, and they had a stockade place at Chippawa, and we used to go down there and listen to them talk, and one thing and another. Some of the boys were just as scared as they could be you know. Well, you never knew if someone might be laying for them or something. When I turned 19 years old, I had to report then to the government you see, to register for the 19 year old draft. I registered, and then I got notice I had to carry this paper on me at all times because I could be picked up any time, and you weren't free to go any place much then. You had to be careful where you went, and of course that was in October, and in November the Armistice was signed. It was only about two or three weeks after that, that they cancelled everything. Well, then you had more liberty then.

R.H: So then you went overseas?

S.B: No, I never got in the army.

R.H: No, I'm talking about the missionary field, did you go overseas?

S.B: Oh yeah, I was 19 or 20 years old when I was in missionary work. I was in New York State, and Michigan State, and then I went down to South America. I went down there, and that's were you learn what you never knew before.

R.H: What was it like down there?

S.B: The country is beautiful, beautiful, but boy oh boy, the people...

R.H: Are they very poor?

S.B: Oh, it's poor as...poor as Jerbs turkeys, they say you know. They're

and they're backwards, quite a bit backwards...oh they're kind as can be. They're the essence of kindness, and then there's others that will rob you sooner than look at you, but I never had any trouble.

**R.H:** How long were you there?

**S.B:** About five years, and then I came back and got married and settled down. That was the end of my travelling days.

**R.H:** You didn't stay a missionary then, you got out of that?

**S.B:** No, I didn't do any more missionary work.

**R.H:** So what did you do then, did you get another job?

**S.B:** Well, I started in farming. I should never have done it, I should have left the farming alone. I farmed 200 acres, I rented the farm and it only cost me \$200.00 a year to rent the farm with a house to live in. The last year that I farmed I had a good crop of oats and everything, and I wanted to sell them because I had a note coming due for the tractor, and one thing and another, and I wanted 15 cents a bushel for them. Imagine 15 cents a bushel, which is three dollars a bushel now, or better...I wanted 18 cents and I had to take 15 cents. When I got everything straightened up that I wanted that year, I had about 15 cents left to myself for the winter. We had cows and we had chickens. We had bunch of Plymouth Rock, and White Rock chickens, and they were just coming nice into laying when somebody came in and stole them all. They took them all away. I had a few Leghorns, and they didn't want the Leghorns...they wanted the White Rock and they took them. They went to Niagara Falls, New York, and were sold on the market. They stole them at night, and by the next morning they were on the market.

**R.H:** Did you ever find out who did it?

**S.B:** Never found out.

**R.H:** Who enforced the law then, I mean who did you call when this happened?

**S.B:** Well, we could call the police you know, you could call them, but what could they do?

**R.H:** There was a police force here?

**S.B:** Oh yeah, there was police around.

**R.H:** I imagine there wasn't too many though, was there?

**S.B:** Well, they didn't patrol the country then like they do now, and I got a chance then to get a job in Fort Erie with a plumber. I worked there for 10 years, and that's when I thought, when I go into farming

again, I'll get a better price for my stuff. I worked there for 10 years, and I still held the farm, because it was cheap rent. I had another feller that was living in town, and he couldn't stay away from the booze, so he said "I'll go out to your place, and I'll do the chores in the morning". At that time I had 21 pigs that I was fattening and six cows, and chickens. Then you'd get up in the morning and get the chores done, and get into work for 7 o'clock. You had to get up early, and I said, "It's the same thing when you come home at night". So he said, "He liked to come out to the country and get away from that" so he said, "I'd work practically for nothing. You give me ten dollars a week and that'll be fine," so I did. In the meantime I sold the pigs, and made a little out of the pigs, and I wanted to sell the cattle, but the moochers could come in and they'd say, "Do you want to sell them" and I'd say "Yeah, but I don't want to give them away". Finally, the landlord says "I'm making some changes now, and you'll have to try and look for another place". "Well", I said "I can't do it now because I can't turn the stock out, I got to keep them in for the winter". I had hay and stuff in there, and that went on for a few weeks, and my uncle was the assessor here for Bertie Township, and he says...

**R.H:** He was what?

**S.B:** He was the assessor and he says...my aunt and uncle had bought this place, (Mr. Beam means the home he is living in now) and they had a place down on the Bowen Road where the highway tracks is, and they had a brand new house and everything, and the railroad was going to expand, and they had to sell it to the railroad. He didn't want to sell under any consideration, but he had to, and he came up here and he bought this place. Well, part of the house was never finished. They lived in these three rooms, and the room upstairs. There was only the four of them, then my aunt died, and my cousin, she was a schoolteacher, and the boy, he didn't do anything much...Well, he did most of the work around the house. He was a good baker, and he could bake pies, and cakes, professionally. My uncle, he got sick and died, and my cousin he married, and his wife took him up to Delhi. That only left my one cousin here with the place, and she didn't want it, so she wanted to sell it. My other uncle told me, and I went up to see her and we made a deal, and I bought it. That was in 1949.



**R.H:** What was your uncles name?

**S.B:** Eveley, James Eveley.

**R.H:** Eveley? He was the tax assessor then?

**S.B:** Yeah, and he didn't get nowheres near the wages that they get now.

After he quit it, they pretty near tripled the wages. He had everything in number one shape and he had a typewriter...I've got the typewriter in the bedroom now, that he used, that he typed everything out on so there'd be no iffs or ands about it. Anyway, we bought the place, and the wife was kind of anxious to get a place so we'd have it when we got older. We bought this place, and that's as far as we moved.

When I moved up here you couldn't hire anybody to help you. You couldn't get any help lugging stuff six miles through mud roads, some of the mud roads and stuff. I said "Never again, that's it, when I move from here they're gonna carry me away 'cause that'll be the end of it".

**R.H:** Where did you do your shopping, did you go to downtown Ridgeway?

**S.B:** Oh, Fort Erie was mostly...I never liked Ridgeway, and I'll tell you the reason why. I got a 1914 car, and you know what you do when you get a car, you get buying gas. I was running low on gas, and I stopped at several places in Ridgeway, and they said "Don't you know that this is Sunday, and there's no gas sold on Sunday". Well, I said "They do it in other places". "Well, they don't do it here" they said. I thought, that's it, enough of Ridgeway. I don't remember now the places I stopped at, but they gave me a lecture because it was Sunday afternoon. Most everybody that had a car would go for rides up to the Welland Canal, turn around, and come back, and they'd had a nice afternoon, you see. Well, I had a 1919...and I got home on the gas I had anyway.

**R.H:** What kind of car was it?

**S.B:** A Ford, a Ford Roadster. Of course there was no roads, you know, and if you lived in the country where my dad was...he bought...I don't know what it was, 28...I think in 1928 he bought the first Ford touring car, side curtains on it, \$800.00 he paid for the car. He came up near the raceway to Fretz's I think it was, the man that sold it, and he never drove a car in his life, gets into it, and drives it home.

**R.H:** He didn't need a license?

**S.B:** No license, and when he went to stop it he said "Whoa" and it wouldn't stop, and then he remembered. He drove that for...well, that was the only car that he ever bought.

**R.H:** Do you know anything about the Stevensville Hotel?

**S.B:** No, I don't know too much about that.

**R.H:** You don't know too much about Stevensville?

**S.B:** Oh, I knew the general store was owned by Pat Robinson. He had a general store there and he sold everything. It didn't make any difference what it was you wanted, if it was available, he got it for you.

**R.H:** Now, was that on Main Street?

**S.B:** Yeah, West Main. Well, it's the first street up on the corner where his store was. The mill was there.

**R.H:** The Cider Mill, or the Planing Mill?

**S.B:** The Planing Mill, it was there, and there also was a Grist Mill there for grinding grains. Well, Wilfred House's father was the one run it then, you see. Then there was the Cider Mill that Charlie Wale operated, and then there was...

**R.H:** The Stevensville Garage?

**S.B:** Pardon? Yeah, there was a garage there...The Chevrolet feller...I can't think of his name, he ran the Chevrolet place, sold Chevrolets...I can't think of it now. There was two or three implement dealers there selling implements, and where Wale is there now, Phil Lichtenberger sold machinery. He was kind of a slippery feller that would sell things, and there was a joke about him at one time...he had a rhyme that meant...but anyway, it didn't amount to anything you see. The bearing on this part was supposed to be good, but it had collected dust, and dirt, and grease, and everything all mixed up and it was no good, and you had to watch him when you were dealing with him. Then they had a barrel factory there, where they made barrels. That was Pirson's, John Pirson's. They had a barrel factory there, wooden barrels, cider barrels, and whiskey barrels, and stuff like that. They'd buy the lumber, the trees from the farmers you know, and they'd cut them out, and they'd haul them up, and cut them out, and make the barrels. That only lasted for a few years. Well, then they had a sawmill, they had a sawmill there that used to saw logs, and stuff. That was Ben Dean, and his brother had a sawmill

up towards Welland. I remember dad taking a shellbar chicory tree, and he cut it, and he bought it from...I don't know, but I think he only paid \$10.00 or \$15.00 for this tree, and he wanted to fix him two pieces on each end of the barn. He needed some timbers 36 feet long, and he got this shellbar chicory tree, and he took it up to Ben Dean's Mill, and they were just able to cut that length on the saw there, and they said the sparks was coming off of the saw just like it would come off a grindstone. Oh was that hard.

**R.H:** Was Stevensville's Main Street just a mud road?

**S.B:** It was much the same as it is now, it hasn't grown much.

**R.H:** But was it mud roads then?

**S.B:** No, they had no houses on the east side of the railroad tracks. There was nothing there, you see.

**R.H:** Where was the railroad station?

**S.B:** Well, there was a post station on the C.N.R., and one on the Michigan. The C.N.R tracks, that's the one...the first one you go into when you hit...the station was just up a little bit.

**R.H:** And they had a ticket agent there, didn't they?

**S.B:** Yeah, they had ticket agents there. The double tracks, that's the other track at the other side when you go through Stevensville. There was a double track in there, and they had the station agent there.

**R.H:** Do you remember who that was, the station agent?

**S.B:** Oh, Baker.

**R.H:** Baker?

**S.B:** Baker I think his name was. I don't remember the ones in the C.N.R. My memory on names don't hold so good.

**R.H:** Did Stevensville have sidewalks?

**S.B:** Oh...well, I...some had sidewalks, but there was no sidewalks that there is now.

**R.H:** Did they have the hitching posts too, and everything?

**S.B:** Yeah, they had the hitching posts. They had three or four hitching posts across in front of the store, and a double plank across, and you could drive your horses up, and put the halter on him and tie him up to this post, so he couldn't slide back and forth. You'd try to keep them apart from the other horses that were there, you see.

**R.H:** Why, would that cause trouble?

**S.B:** Well, the horses might kick one another, you see. That was the only way to watch them. My aunt and uncle were funeral directors there for while.

**R.H:** Was that the Climenhage's?

**S.B:** The Climenhage's, not Bert Climenhage, but it was his father Chris, Chris Climenhage.

**R.H:** He had a horse-drawn hearse, right?

**S.B:** Yeah, and he lived on the first house just after you cross the railroad tracks. That would be the C.N.R., and his stable was on the side of the hill facing the railroad tracks, and you could go down and around to the stable or you could...he had stairs planked up, that the horses could come up when they got ready to take the hearse out. They'd take them up there, and hook them on to the hearse, and drive them out. When he started in the business, he couldn't write his own name. My aunt taught him what he knew as far as that goes. She had the education, he didn't have it.

**R.H:** What about taking care of the deceased, did he know how to do that?

**S.B:** Yeah, they used to make the caskets and line them with cloth, they were lined with cloth at that time, you see. My uncle and...they had big bolts of cloth that used, you know, the different colours that they put on. If there was a death in the place, they'd sell the casket, and then they'd take it and line it, and fix it up ready for to put the person in it. There wasn't too much embalming at that time. I guess they used mostly formaldehyde at that time to kinda hold the body for...they only kept the body for two or three days. I don't know too much about it.

**R.H:** That was your uncle that had the funeral home?

**S.B:** That was my uncle, yeah, my father's sister and brother-in-law.

**R.H:** You said you worked for a plumber, do you remember the name of that plumber?

**S.B:** Barnhart, Lou Barnhart.

**R.H:** Where was he situated, was he on Jarvis Street?

**S.B:** No, he was on Gilmore Road at that time. He lived on Gilmore Road. It was during the war time, the Second World War. He couldn't get any help at all, and there was only the two plumbers in Fort Erie then. There was the Barnhart's, and then there was the...oh, I can't think of it...he was almost in the place that called Amigari,

and the other was in the portion of Fort Erie, the north part of what is Fort Erie now. I did all the plumbing, I did everything in the plumbing. Well, I spent better than 10 years there, you see. His boy was called into the army, and when he came out of the army he wanted to do heating, hot air. Well, Lou Barnhart didn't like that, he liked the plumbing, the pipe-fitting, and stuff like that, he didn't care for the other, but he did a certain amount of it. I didn't like to start at the top, and work down. If I had started at the bottom, and worked my way up, it would have been alright. I could do the stuff, but I just didn't like it. I'd sooner do the plumbing part of it, you see. So when the boy came home he...well, he got \$50.00 per person to hire some of the...well, mostly French people, and they brought them in, and hired them, and then let the Canadians shift for themselves. He layed me off, and he hired these fellows because he got \$50.00 cash from the government to try and teach them how to plumb, how to work at the trade, and they couldn't hardly understand them, and they had to go there and show them what they wanted done. They all had to be showed. He came back after four or five months, and wanted me to come back, but I got plumbing jobs along the Niagara River, water and pipes, and stuff like that. I had all the work I could do, and it didn't make any difference to me, so I said "No, I can't, I promised these customers to finish their jobs, so I have to do that".

**R.H:** So you went on your own then?

**S.B:** I was on my own.

**R.H:** And did you stay that way?

**S.B:** I stayed that way as long as I was plumbing along the river. Well, then when I came up here, I did a little bit more, but nothing much, I didn't bother too much.

**R.H:** Do you remember when the Peace Bridge opened?

**S.B:** Yeah, I remember but I didn't have too much interest in politics.

**R.H:** No, I just wondered if you went to see the opening?

**S.B:** I don't know, I never was interested in a whole lot of that stuff you know. I never was in politics or public works, or anything like that. I was mostly on the quiet end of the stick, I guess. That's the reason why I've lived so long I guess. When we moved here, we figured we would have a home when we got old, you see. Well, the price wasn't nothing, we rented the farm, and we got \$60.00...



**R.H:** Did you say this was the Baxter place at one time?

**S.B:** I think it was the Baxter place, from the government.

**R.H:** Was this Crown Land at all?

**S.B:** Well, my uncle bought it from Baxter's you see, but Baxter was the one I think that got it from the Crown if I remember rightly, but my uncle bought it from Baxter. When I came in here that wallpaper in the dining room there was hanging in shreds, right almost down to the floor you know. They had a furnace, a floor furnace, and the pipe went up and crossed, and then up into the bedroom, and round into the chimney. You stood and looked at the fire when they had it in there, and you could see the flames at the bottom of the fireplace. I said "That's enough of that" so the next year I got the hot water radiators in, and did away with the furnace.

**R.H:** Did you go on the ferryboats at all?

**S.B:** From Fort Erie? Well, we used to go on the ferry going across to Buffalo. Oh, I've crossed that many a time.

**R.H:** What was it like?

**S.B:** Oh, it was only a short trip. They used to take the cars across to go over to Buffalo, and come back. I don't know what the price was, 15 or 20 cents.

**R.H:** You caught it right at the South End, did you?

**S.B:** Well, it was at the South End and it run pretty near straight across. In the wintertime if you'd go when the ice was coming down the river, sometimes the ferryboat would have to go way down pretty near to the International Bridge, and then come up on the other side to get across. This was on account of the flow of ice. It was a sidewheeler too at that time.

**R.H:** They were sidewheelers? There was quite a few of them, wasn't there?

**S.B:** I think there was four or five different ones that they run in there. Well, then of course they put the bridge through, and that was the finish. They did run the ferries in the summer for a little while, but everybody took to the Peace Bridge you see. Then the cars came, and the roads and...well, there was a Beam that lived down near the townline, or Netherby Road, near Black Creek, on Black Creek and Netherby Road, and he was advocating good roads. He could see ahead, that the country would be into good roads. Well, I said



"You'd look around the farms and see lots of woods and timber". They'd have timber on the trees and stuff on there. Now you'd have a job to find a tree that you could get a 30 foot piece of timber out of. You can hardly find it anymore. Well, they've been cutting them all down you know, and all for firewood. The only one was down here on what was the Reinhart place, and there's some lovely trees in there, but they're taking out the dead trees and as a result of taking out the dead trees they're destroying the places where the 'coons and stuff stay in the forest, and they're coming out into civilization.

**R.H:** Have you ever heard of a place called Kern's Boarding House? It was in the South End.

**S.B:** No. I don't know too much about the South End. In Fort Erie? No, C.W. VaHey was the grocer, he was the main one and that's the one mother used to trade with, and then there was Yeo. Yeo was the grocery, and then there was a couple others that came there, fly-by-nights, and you had to be careful if you bought anything. They'd want to gyp you on what you were getting. Then there was a drugstore that was run by Mr. Land, and then there was a jewellers store by... House had a jewellers store in...

**R.H:** The South End?

**S.B:** In the South End. Well it would be on Jarvis Street. There was several others there but...I don't...I know the Royal Hotel was there the same as it is now.

**R.H:** The Queen's Hotel has been there a long time, hasn't it?

**S.B:** Yeah, the Queen's Hotel has been there...the Queen's is in the South End. Then there was the Anglo American Hotel which has been burned now for a little bit. The Barnea House, the Barnea House is what I was telling you about, where my mother used to... That was on the street right next to the railroad tracks, and that's where she used to drive the horse in the driveway, and they used to have a big open shed, and they'd drive the buggy and everything in there. They'd tie the horses up, and there was a place in the feedbox where you put the oats in there. You'd dump the oats in, and let the horses eat, and throw a light blanket over them.

**R.H:** Do you know who owned the Barnea House at that time?

**S.B:** No, I wouldn't know. Then there was the Grand Trunk Hotel. That

That was on Gilmore Road. The Racetrack was nothing like it is now you know. It was all level, and they filled it up you see because people used to stand there on the street and see the races go on, you see. That's why they built it up so you couldn't see it. All the customers at the Grank Trunk used to enjoy the races and not pay for it at all. They went up and planted the trees around and that stopped the view.

**R.H:** It wasn't very big at that time, was it?

**S.B:** No, not too big then. It was only a small place.

**R.H:** Was there a lot of races at that time?

**S.B:** Well, I don't remember too much about the races. They used to have the Farmers Picnic there, and some of the farmers that had driving horses used to figure that their horses was better than so and so's. They'd take them to the races and try them out. Sometimes they used to hook wheels and lose a wheel or something. That used to be the drawing card for it.

**R.H:** Have you ever heard that on Victoria Day, May 24th, there was a competition between Ridgeway, and Stevensville?

**S.B:** No.

**R.H:** It was a sports competition, do you know anything about that?

**S.B:** No, I don't.

**R.H:** Do you know if there was a movie theatre in Ridgeway?

**S.B:** I couldn't tell you.

**R.H:** I know there was one on Dufferin Street, the Bellard.

**S.B:** They were just beginning to go to those movie places you see. The oldtimers used to get together you know and...

**R.H:** Yeah, what did you do for entertainment, did you square dance?

**S.B:** I danced a little at one time. Well, they used to have the dances in the private homes. Well, it was only one winter I guess they had it and that kind of petered out. You couldn't get them to hold together on anything. There was a family down along the Niagara Boulevard that...Edwardson, they had a big house. Well, the room would be longer than this room across here, and it would be as wide as this. It was a lovely old place for dancing. It was all hardwood floors and everything. They used to like to get the young folks to come there, and she was a lovely cook. She could cook like nobody's business. They'd have an oyster supper after the dance, and one thing and another.

They'd take up a collection among the fellers that was there and hand it over to them to help to pay for the evening.

**R.H:** [Have you heard anything about the Fenien Raid?]

**S.B:** Well, there was gunfire at...

**R.H:** What was his name?

**S.B:** Athoe's, I don't know whether Athoe lived there or not, I don't think so.

**R.H:** And this Athoe's house on Ridge Road was hit by this gunfire?

**S.B:** It was hit by musket balls. The marks are in the brick walls today, you can see it. There was an orchard just up from the barn and there was an orchard across the road and that's where the soldiers where hiding behind the trees and stuff when the Feniens...the Fenien Raid of 1812 you see. The first soldier that was shot died under a thorn tree up here on...near the...what do you call that? The park right in there, somewhere's in there, but I forget just where that tree was. There was shooting here, and that's were they got behind the trees for protection and some of the bullets hit the brick house of Mr. Athoe's up here on Ridge Road. There was a Mrs. Roadhouse who was in 86...just up the other side, , that new brick house just up here a little ways beyond the white house, that was her house, and that was the hospital for some of the soldiers at the time of the Fenien Raid.

**R.H:** Was that house right on Ridge Road?

**S.B:** They moved it up to the...

**R.H:** The Garrison Road? Is that the one they moved to the Garrison Road and they call it the Ridgeway House?

**S.B:** Yeah, that was right down here you see.

**R.H:** Yeah, with the brass plaque. So that was a hospital?

**S.B:** That was a hospital for the soldiers at that time of 1812.

**R.H:** For the soldiers, and it was right on this road at one time?

**S.B:** Right on this road, right up there...

**R.H:** And they were taken care of in there?

**S.B:** They were taken care of. It wasn't too...I don't think there was too much of a battle, because they were overpowered and it was... It wasn't like it is today with those machine guns and stuff. It would have been slaughter.

**R.H:** So that was the Fenien Raid then?

**S.B:** That was the Fenian Raid. What I was saying was, the orchards was what gave them protection, and the trees. You see, they gathered in behind the trees for protection. Some of the bullet marks are in the wall yet. You can see them. When Milligans fixed it over, they left that part there. They changed the inside of the house a little bit from what it used to be.

**R.H:** That was really interesting, but getting back to farming can you remember what your parents would pay for a team of horses?

**S.B:** I don't really know but I think it was somewhere's around \$100.00 a piece. They had the team as far back as I can remember.

**R.H:** Where did they buy them?

**S.B:** That I couldn't say. There was a team they called Jack and Jill, but who they bought them from, I don't remember. My grandfather took the one, and my father took the other. My grandfather took Jack and my dad took Jill. He got another one but she was lighter, not quite as heavy a horse.

**R.H:** Was the driver horse the lighter horse?

**S.B:** Well, they used them for both, farming and driving. You see the machinery wasn't heavy at those times. The heaviest one was probably the binder. That was the heaviest.

**R.H:** When they needed shoeing you took them to the blacksmith, can you remember who the blacksmith was that they went to?

**S.B:** Oh, Pat Ryan in New Germany. He was the shoemaker. After he quit they went to Howard Bertran in Stevensville for the shoeing. When it got to be a dollar a shoe, at that time they figured it was too much money. Now, my dad used to supply some people in Fort Erie with hay. They'd call up and they'd want a load of hay and it would maybe be icy so he'd have to take the horses up to the blacksmith and have the corks sharpened. Then they'd go on the Niagara Boulevard, and by the time they'd come home they were dull again. The horses were sliding all over. He said, "Oh those roads are no good for the horses at all". One year he took a log up to the mill, Ben Dean's Sawmill, that was just east of Stevensville, and he had quite a bit of trouble getting over the railroad tracks on account of the snow being plowed off. He said "It's no good for the farmers now anymore. They can't get over the roads, those cars and trucks keep all the snow off the roads. So he came home and I think he sold his sleigh

and he had a pair of bobsleighs that he made himself. He sold them, and I don't remember who he sold them to. I know they disappeared, and that's all I know.

**R.H:** If any of the animals got sick, was there a veterinarian you'd call?

**S.B:** Oh yeah, but some of the local farmers were pretty well good at doctoring the stock themselves. There was a vet in Stevensville I think, but I forget what his name was. Most of them, if they had any experience at all in farming would know what to do. This one horse that dad owned, he had quite a habit of getting colic so he used to keep some ginger, and give him a quart or so of ginger. To give him the ginger we had to hold his head up and pour it in his mouth so he'd drink it. That used to work for the colic.

**R.H:** Do you know anything about the races?

**S.B:** No, I was only there once when the Bertie Fair was at the Racetrack.

**R.H:** Was that the only time you were at the Racetrack?

**S.B:** I was never interested. It was a waste of money to...

**R.H:** Yeah, but I was just talking about watching the racing.

**S.B:** Well, a neighbour by the name of Russell Miller, he used to run these horses at the races.

**R.H:** He owned horses, did he?

**S.B:** Yeah, he did. Everybody had horses. They had one horse for driving, and then a team for working. The farmers had three horses you see. One they'd use for just driving into town and stuff, and sometimes... well, my mother used to drive the horse we had. She'd drive it to Fort Erie, and then if they went to Stevensville. The mud would be six inches deep, the wheels would cut in on the roads, and in the wintertime it wasn't no fun on it. They didn't go where there was a stone road, they didn't like the stone road because it was cobblestone like, and it was so rough with the wagons and stuff until they got it smoothed down with the asphalt.

**R.H:** Talking about your mother going to Fort Erie, she went to that livery stable beside the Barnea, didn't she?

**S.B:** The Barnea House, yeah. It cost 25 or 30 cents to stable the horse in there, and if it was near noon they'd give it a bundle of hay to eat. Well, if it was wet or snowy they'd go in there, and if it was sunny she would just tie the horse up outside at the store. She generally went to VaHeys Store and did her shopping in there. It wasn't a self-service,

you would ask for everything and they knew right where it was and go and get it, and give it out to you.

**R.H:** Was the Barnea House like a boarding house at that time?

**S.B:** Oh it was a low slung... I don't know, I never was in there. Most of the shed was low, low enough just so that the buggy, the top of the buggy could go in there. It was about 7 or 8 feet high or so, maybe 10 feet for clearances. Just enough so that you'd drive the horses in, and tie them, and there was a manger in the front where they could put the hay, and something for them. They used to back them out, turn then around, and have them ready to go for home then. There was two or three places in Fort Erie where they could put the horses in.

**R.H:** I know, but I was just trying to get some information on the Barnea, what it looked like.

**S.B:** To my recollection it was a low slung building. It wasn't high...well, if it had two stories that was all it had. The shed was attached right on the back of the Barnea House and went far back as the... Well, the town had those, I don't know what they call them now. From Jarvis Street over, there had to be a division you see, there was a street through the alleyway...the alleyways they used to call them. They all had the alleyways to drive through, you see, and some of them were just wide enough to drive through with the wagon and hay on it. I've seen my dad go through some of them, rubbing on the building on one side, and rubbing on the building on the other, and he said, "He didn't know whether he'd get through or not". Anyway it was low slung with a kind of a flat roof, and a little short roof on the side, but it was longer on the other side. I think there was a box stall there they'd take and put the horses in. Some horses wouldn't stand very good when they're hitched up to a buggy so they had to take them out of the buggy and put them in a box stall, and then they'd be alright then.

**R.H:** So that was on Courtwright, wasn't it?

**S.B:** Yeah, Courtwright.

**R.H:** I imagine that street wasn't too built up, was it?

**S.B:** Well, it was the same as Jarvis Street, it was muddy. There was mud holes in the street, and you'd be down this way and that way going down the street.



**R.H:** Do you remember anything about the rationing during the war, the Second World War? What was rationed?

**S.B:** We had ration books for gasoline, and for sugar and meat, and things like that. We were never rationed too strong. Well, gasoline was 50 cents a gallon then and that was pretty high at that time.

**R.H:** Did you have coupons for the gasoline?

**S.B:** Oh, the main things you could always get. When you were a farmer you had your wheat and stuff like that you know, and you had your butter and you had your milk, so you didn't worry too much about it.

**R.H:** Wasn't there ways of getting it through the black market, like gasoline?

**S.B:** Yeah, but they all frowned on the black market. They said, "Well, the country's fighting and there's no use in going on the black market". I know lots of times we'd go in for gasoline and you'd give him your card and he'd come back and hand it to you, and when you got home you'd look and find he never took any coupons out. But they frowned on it.

**R.H:** It still went on though, didn't it?

**S.B:** Yeah.

**R.H:** Did you ever hear of Mayor Guess or Herb Guess? He was the Mayor of Fort Erie at one time.

**S.B:** Oh, yeah he was the Mayor of Fort Erie.

**R.H:** Before he was the Mayor, didn't he run some boxing matches?

**S.B:** I don't know too much about that.

**R.H:** What about illegal gambling, did you hear anything about that?

**S.B:** Oh, they did a little but I didn't bother much with that.

**R.H:** Did you know the legend of Amigari, did you ever hear that story?

**S.B:** No, the only one I know of...there was Abe Beam who used to live in Amigari. He was the only person I knew that lived in Amigari.

**R.H:** You were going to tell me something about when your dad helped pull the bootlegger out of the mud, tell me about that?

**S.B:** Oh, that was one Sunday morning, a feller came to the door, and he asked "If dad had a tractor or a team of horses?" Dad said "He did", and he said "He was stuck in the mud and he'd like to get out". Well, dad says "As a rule I don't make it a practice to work on Sundays, but I'll take the team down to help". So...I think he only took the one horse, one horse down there, got down to it, and pulled him out

pulled him off the road, and then he went on. I don't know, he paid him \$10 or \$15, something like that. You know that was a big sum of money. The bootleggers had the money then you see. So afterwards they told him that he had pulled out a bootlegger. My dad was...what do you call it?. He didn't like anybody that did a lot of drinking, and stuff like that. He was a teetotaler. He didn't like any of that. The same as when the Provincial Gas put the gas wells down there they wanted him to go up to the hotel and...see the hotels were about every four miles apart. There was one up here on Bowen Road at Ridgemount, and then there was another one on Nigh Road, and of course there was one in Stevensville, one in New Germany, and there was one down in Black Creek. They all sold beer in there, in the kegs, and they wanted dad to go and buy a keg of beer to celebrate, you see. He says "I don't drink myself, and I'm not buying it for anybody else". So he didn't buy any.

**R.H:** So that was the Provincial Gas Company that was digging those gas wells?

**S.B:** That was the Provincial Gas Company.

**R.H:** I see, so it wasn't a privately owned company that was digging the gas wells?

**S.B:** No it wasn't private. They leased the land and all around it, and they gave them so much. I think they gave them \$50 a year and free gas if they drilled the wells on the farm. Dad never got, he never got \$50, and he had to go to court in order to get gas, because they wouldn't put the pipe up for the well so he could tap into it, you see.

**R.H:** When you got it, it was free then?

**S.B:** Oh yes, it was free and we had all the gas we needed in the house. I think they figured 250,000 feet of gas a year would supply a farmhouse, but they wasted it like...just let it go regardless of whether... They thought there was never an ending to it, you see. That's why they got rid of practically all the gas here.

**R.H:** So there was no gas bills then?

**S.B:** No. Well, then afterwards they cut them out and they charged them so much for gas then. That was in the later years, about 10 or 15 years after that.

**R.H:** You don't remember the names of any of those hotels, do you, like

the one on Bowen Road?

**S.B:** I can't recall it right now...The one on the Bowen Road was quite a prominent one. It had more accomodations for travellers than the others.

**R.H:** Was that like a halfway house?

**S.B:** Yeah, they used to call it a halfway house.

**R.H:** I think there was four of them I believe, wasn't there?

**S.B:** Well, there was quite a number of them around.

**R.H:** Weren't they more for boarding, and sleeping overnight?

**S.B:** Yeah, they would keep travellers at night. They would take them in for the night and stable the horses... Well, there was all those country roads you know and there wasn't stone roads, and there wasn't the busses or nothing. They either had to walk... There was travellers who used to come through selling clothing, cotton and gingham, and stuff like that.

**R.H:** Travelling salesmen?

**S.B:** Travelling salesmen, but they walked through, walked and carried it on their backs.

**R.H:** Did they carry it in suitcases?

**S.B:** Some of them had it in a suitcase, others had it wrapped up in oil-cloth when they came through.

**R.H:** Okay, you said that you never had electricity, what about indoor plumbing?

**S.B:** No indoor plumbing. We had a cistern. Well, after my dad remodelled the house we put a cistern in and we had a place for a bathroom, but we didn't have running water. We only had a cistern with soft water. The first cistern was just a dug well with timbers across, and it was boarded over, and then sodded on top of that. It would give way some times you know, and then you'd have to clean out the cistern and go down in there with a ladder and a lantern, and scrub the...clean it out, and let it fill up again with some eavestrough in.

**R.H:** So how did you get the water, was there a pump you used?

**S.B:** No, we used to get the water with a pail and a branch off a tree, with a limb out about 6 or 8 feet long. We'd hook the pail on it and switch it back and forth to... There would be a certain amount of scum over the top, and you'd brush that back and forth and dip

your water out, and take it in the house and have a good drink of water. We'd never think anything about it.

**R.H:** So how did your mother do the washing?

**S.B:** She'd have to dip the water. She had a washing machine, but she had to turn it by hand. Then they had copper boilers that they used to put the clothes in and set it on the stove, and boil them. It did some clean washing.

**R.H:** I guess they didn't wash too often then?

**S.B:** Every week, but they never washed every day.

**R.H:** What about baths?

**S.B:** That was once a week. I told Nancy here, "I took two baths a year, one in the Spring and one in the Autumn". (Nancy is Mr. Beam's daughter-in-law) No, that used to be a Saturday night session that they used to use the washtub. I had three sisters and two brothers... Well, my younger brother was 16 years, 17 years younger than I was but my mother used to say "Well, the girls first and the boys come afterwards". We'd get a scrubbing in the washtub in the kitchen. We never had running water at any time, but in the later years they had a well drilled halfway between the house and barn. It was real good drinking water, but it was hard water. It was inclined to be sulphured, limey. My aunt was down to see my dad one day, and mother was up at her sisters, and she wanted to bake some baked beans, so she asked me to go out to the barn and get some beans so that she could cook them. I did, and she put them in the water and she boiled and cooked, and cooked for hours, and they didn't get soft. She said to my dad "I think someone must have got some old beans that you've been keeping". Well, he says "I'll get some good beans for you". So he got some good beans and he brought them in, and she put them on, and she cooked, and cooked, and cooked, and cooked, and they never did get soft. So dad says afterwards, "I know what's the matter". He says to me, "Go down to Uncle Joe's and get a pail of water from the cistern". I went down and brought a pail up and he put them on, and they cooked right soft in no time. With the soft water they'd soften right up but they wouldn't with the hard water.

**R.H:** So it was the water?

**S.B:** It was the water that...it was hard water. Other than that, the

water was good. You had to know what you were cooking with it.

**R.H:** I guess it would be hard to wash with that water too, wouldn't it?

**S.B:** Well, they had soap... A lot of them made their own soap. It was homemade soap in those days.

**R.H:** Yeah, I've heard of that, wasn't it a washsoap made with lye?

**S.B:** Yeah it was lye. You took tallow, and beef-fat, and you rended it out, then you warmed it up, and you poured the...you took a can of lye, and you had to use a granite container for it, and you'd put the lye in the water and that would almost boil the water, and then you'd pour the tallow, the beef-fat in that, and then stir it. You'd stir it all up, and it would congeal so that you hardly turn it, and you'd have to pour it out into a little box, and put a paper on the bottom so it wouldn't run out if there was any holes in it.

**R.H:** Was that like a mold?

**S.B:** A mold for it. Then before it got hard, you'd take the knife and draw it through the centre, and take it, and make cakes of soap. By the next morning you'd could break the cakes off, and it was ready to use in the wash. It used to whiten the clothes good.

**R.H:** Yeah, it was good for washing, but it was hard I imagine on the skin, wasn't it?

**S.B:** Oh, it wasn't too bad.

**R.H:** The lye used to burn, didn't it?

**S.B:** You wouldn't notice too much of it. It was the grease that cut the lye too, you see.

**R.H:** Didn't the lye burn you?

**S.B:** Oh, it wouldn't burn you, it wouldn't burn you at all.

**R.H:** But the lye itself, if it wasn't mixed, would burn you, right?

**S.B:** Oh yeah, lye itself would, but the grease cuts the power of the lye, and the lye cuts the grease for washing. It goes 50/50 so... It made great soap for washing, and they used to have the old scrub-board. I have two of them down the cellar. When my mother and father were first married, they lived down on the Niagara Boulevard and they were halfway between Black Creek and Chippawa. There was a high bank there about 25 feet, and the road then, at that time was...well, the one wagon-wheel would drive over the edge of the bank, and the other would be rubbing the fence 'til they

more land from the farmers you see to widen the land up. Well, then afterwards the park comissioners came along, and they stoned along the waterfront to keep the water from washing the bank away.

**R.H:** Was that in the 20's they did that?

**S.B:** That would be before the 20's. They put the stone all the way along later, the big rough stone, and that kept the bank from breaking away.

**R.H:** So they stoned the riverbank...?

**S.B:** Yeah, the riverbank. Well, in the summertime, there used to be a team and carriage, they used to call it the Tally-Ho...

**R.H:** The Tally-Ho?

**S.B:** The Tally-Ho, and they had stables at...where would it be? Where the McAfee Cemetery is you know, on the Niagara Boulevard. Do you know where that is?

**R.H:** I've heard of it but...

**S.B:** Well, there used to be a stable there, and then there was stables at Black Creek, and they had stables at Chippawa. They'd have six horses, four to six horses, and they would sit up on the top and drive them, and the people would ride in the back to see the scenery along the Niagara River. The daughter of the man that had the horses, she said, "I'd drive them team at full gallop all the way down that road". They used to go on a gallop with the team of horses and that one wheel sometimes would be over the edge of the bank, and she had nerve enough to drive it through. They'd stop at the...up there at the McAfee Cemetery where there was a farmhouse that had stables, and they'd stable the horses there. They'd have another man there and he'd have the six horses ready, and they'd take the other horses in that had come from Fort Erie, and put the new horses on, and they'd go down to Black Creek, and they'd change again, and then they'd go on down to...from Black Creek they'd go to Chippawa. They changed teams three times going through because they used to make the horses go right through on a gallop.

**R.H:** Where they changed them, was that just livery stables or was that special places?

**S.B:** Special places. Stables where they kept the horses in, you see. They'd take the four of them off and put them in a box stall and



take the others out. They'd have a man there who had them all ready harnessed, ready to bring out and hook them on. There'd be only a few minutes delay, and away they'd go again down the road. It was oftentimes that the wheel would...one side would be over the riverbank. I don't know whether you are acquainted with Black Creek, but you know where the Creek comes out into the river? There used to be a great big cherry orchard way out where the water is now, it washed all away. That used to be all a big cherry orchard out there. Then the park, they didn't know anything about it and they...only they knew some of the farmers had a chance to haul stone from up here at Ridgemount, and they'd go and take a load a day, take it down and dump it, and then somebody would be there to throw the stones over on the edge of the riverbank, and that's the way they hauled them along. They didn't know what they were doing 'til afterwards they found it was the park commissioner fixing the road to start buying the property. They came through and bought the property and some people sold immediately, and others didn't want their farms and houses moved back, but that was progress I guess. They had to yield to it. I know my grandfather was willing to sell but he didn't like the... He had a row of pine trees set up for windbreak, and the young feller came to him and said, "Well, I understand your condition but look, those pine trees won't last over five or six years maybe ten years at the longest, because it's on a clay ground, and pine won't grow on clay ground any length of time". It was true enough and he sold out to them, but he didn't have to move the house. Well, he had to take the veranda off the house as the park property came right up to the edge of the house. They paid him a fairly good price for the land, but they didn't like to yield to change. It's like if you go away up to Northern Ontario and see the people there contented and happy. They don't want modern conveniences. Anyway, they started building the road through there and they had big rocks about six inches square pretty well, and they laid them all down in the road, and then took the steam-roller and rolled them down.

**R.H:** So what road is that?

**S.B:** That's the Niagara Parkway. Well the oldtimers said, "that road would never give way".

**R.H:** That must have been a long time ago?

**S.B:** It was, it was... I would have been about 15 years old.

**R.H:** So it was 1910 or 1913, something like that, about 1913?

**S.B:** Something like that, and of course some of the farmers had the opportunity to work on the roads you know, and that gave them spending money then. They used to grab every chance they'd get for working, even to fixing the roads in the spring. They had a scraper for going through, and four horses, four to six horses, and they pulled that, and that scraped the road level you see, the clay road. They didn't have the graders and stuff like they have today.

**R.H:** Didn't they have those steam-rollers, did they use steam-rollers?

**S.B:** Steam-rollers was for rolling, packing it down, but this was like a grading that they'd go through and...you see them here with their power...but this was a log with a steel blade across the bottom, and a tongue on to it. Then they'd put the two horses...the two teams on each side and one ahead, and then they'd roll it over. You got owed so much for the team on your taxes for doing road work, and then the single people, if they needed help they got them to come out and... They got paid their share of the taxes too you see, for the road work they did. Of course when they started stoning the roads, that got done away with. That's progress.

**R.H:** So did it last, that road work?

**S.B:** Oh, it lasted for a number of years. They'd fix the road up and the farmers would say "Oh, that's lovely, now we can go through the road". Well, you had plowed through mud roads in the wintertime, and they knew what it would be like in the Spring. My cousin, she was going with a feller from Fort Erie. and he had the old Model T and he came down the Niagara Boulevard and the road was stoned then, and then he'd come up the townline or the Netherby Road, and he'd leave a rut so deep, all the way through up to where his girlfriend lived, and he'd turn in there. Anybody that got into that rut had to stay in it 'til they got to my aunt's place. Of course when the Spring come they'd put their scraper on and scrape that road, fill up the ruts, and everything would be smooth again.

**R.H:** I'm sure there must have been a lot of cars getting stuck then, right?

**S.B:** Well, there wasn't too many cars then. That was the time when some of them had cars and they used to take a team of horses and

pull it out...the car out to the Niagara Boulevard, the Niagara Parkway... If it was only a little ways, why-they'd put the chains on, they had chains on the tires, on the rear wheels, and go out. If the mud was too deep then, they'd wait 'til it froze up and they'd go then, you see. My dad had a 1914 Ford he bought from Fritz Bros. in Ridgeway, and he was up there one day and got the car and drove it home. He never took a lesson or anything in driving at all, and when he got into the yard he said "Whoa", and the car never stopped.

**R.H:** So you never had any lessons, you just learned on your own, did you?

**S.B:** That's all he did, he showed him what to do, how to start it and everything.

**R.H:** They showed you there, when you bought the car?

**S.B:** They showed him how to crank it, to start it up, he was used to motors anyway, and we used to have a gasoline motor on the farm.

**R.H:** What about this fence you and your dad built along the Parkway?

**S.B:** A fence? Oh they put the stone along the water's edge and then of course they bought the land back, and some places they'd buy more than others, you see. On the high bank where my dad used to live, why-they had to go back quite a ways to get more room, you see. The bank in the wintertime would be soft, and going down there sometimes, you'd go over your shoe tops to get a pail of water. You'd dip it out of the river, and come up and let it set a while, and you'd have about two inches of mud on the bottom of the pail from the water. When it was clear, the water was just as clear and nice as could be then. When we went to school, we had all the water we had to drink. We used to get permission to run down to the river, and dip a cup of water and have a drink, and we all had our own cups you know, and rinse it back and forth and dip...

**R.H:** But you built a fence along the Parkway with your dad, didn't you?

**S.B:** Oh yeah. We built it down between Chippawa and Falls View.

**R.H:** What was this fence for?

**S.B:** Just to...to fence the Park Commisioner's property, and the farmland. They had agreed to fence it so that the farmers could put cattle in, you see. They just had to... We used to take the driving horse and drive down to Chippawa. Well, it was ten miles, and we'd get a shade tree where we could tie the horse up and then walk over

to the Parkway and bore 8 inch holes with a posthole digger, and turn it around and you'd be drilling, and the ground would be hard and you could hardly get a handful of ground. We'd have to go to the river and and get a pail of water and put that into to it. We'd leave it sitting with a pail of water in the ground for...'til the next morning, and then we could go down that much further. It would soften you see. That was slavery work, that.

**R.H:** Yeah, and even with that posthole digger, was it a posthole digger you used?

**S.B:** Yeah, but it was all by hand. You had to put your weight on to it, and turn it.

**R.H:** So how long did it take you to build that?

**S.B:** Well it took pretty well the whole summer. I forget how many rods of fences, but it was quite a bit there. My dad, he took the notion to sell fences, big wire fences, and he got the order there. When he got it down, one feller said "Well, you didn't give me a gate, I got to have a gate". He says "I'll just cut the wire". Well, my dad says, "I hope you don't cut it 'til I get the okay from the Park Commisioner to get the fence fixed". We stretched the fence up and we had two rachets that we used to use, that could take 20 tons. We used that to tighten the wire up so that you could stand down to it, and you could swing on to it. Dad says, "If they ever cut that wire with a pair of pliers, they'll have a surprise of a lifetime". Well, you know, they stapled five or six posts back on each side and then they went through cutting. When they cut that wire she just went back like that you know, and of course the fence went all to pieces after that. Some of the fence is still...it still stands there.

**R.H:** And that was in the '20s too, or was it the '30s?

**S.B:** Well, that would have been when I was about 16 years old.

**R.H:** Have you ever heard of the M.T. Green? It was a boat that was at the Shipyards.

**S.B:** Well, they made several of them in there. I worked on the... I didn't work on the E.B. Osler, but I worked on two boats, the North American, and the South American, and then they had a couple of others they built too, but I didn't...

**R.H:** Do you know anything about the Village of Victoria? Before it was

called Bridgeburg.

**S.B:** Not too much, just what I heard from my mother and them talking about it. It wasn't much different than when it was called Bridgeburg. It was practically the same thing, it wasn't too much different.

**R.H:** They more-or-less just changed the name, did they?

**S.B:** They just changed the name, that's about all they did. They had practically the same stores. They had Jarvis Street and then they had the one over towards the railroad tracks. That's Courtwright, isn't it?

**R.H:** Yeah.

**S.B:** There was a store in there, some stores along there, but mostly on Jarvis Street was there a lot of stores.

**R.H:** Did you ever see the soldiers that patrolled the Niagara Boulevard to catch the rum smugglers? Did you ever see the soldiers, 'cause I know you went to school along that way?

**S.B:** It was never done much, only at night time, but there was one time they had permission from the government, the Ontario Government to ship liquor to Cuba. They used to come in to the dock by the Royal Hotel, and the trucks would come there with the liquor, and they'd shove them down the chute with the rollers, and they'd come down there, one right after another, and they'd load the boats just about that far out of the water, and away they'd go for Cuba. The next morning they'd be back. They never got to Cuba, but on to the lake and met their other partner there, transfer it, and then come on back. That was one way they got around the American Government. They granted them permission for Cuba and... If you had a rowboat, and you rowed that boat across, you didn't need to touch it, all you needed to do was to go down there at a certain time and row that boat across to the other side, get out, and walk down the road about a quarter of a mile, and come back and get into the boat, pick up the money, and row across to the Canadian side. You weren't doing anything. That's how people...some of them made their fortune that way. I know one family that, he used to row the boat across, he never touched anything. He just got into the boat, rowed it across, and asked no questions or anything. He docked on the other side, and then came back and his wife used to stand at the window and watch him. He used to go across when



the wind was blowing strong but he knew the part of the river where he was going, you see. She didn't like him to do it, but he did it for the money. He got \$50 or \$60 for taking the boat over and coming back.

**R.H:** That was good money, wasn't it and I guess it was tempting for some people.

**S.B:** Oh it was. A lot of them would do it and others wouldn't. I know one feller that used to... He didn't touch liquor himself, and he had nothing to do with it, but they wanted to store it in his barn and he said "Yes, you can store it there". They put it in there, and he got quite a bit for just not saying anything at all. There's a lot of people who never knew he even did that. They found out afterwards that he stored it there for them.

**R.H:** So you didn't see any of these soldiers because of course you went to school in the daytime, didn't you?

**S.B:** Well, we didn't see so much of that. It was nothing to row across the river. You could row across to the American side and nothing was ever said about it. When my uncle lived out on the Niagara Boulevard he worked across on the island, and he'd row across and go to work at the island clubhouse...

**R.H:** What island was that?

**S.B:** Grand Island. He worked at the clubhouse and if he wanted to go to Buffalo why-he'd walk on up across the Island to the ferry on the east side, take the ferry across over to the mainland, and catch a Niagara Streetcar up to Buffalo and buy what he wanted. If they needed kerosene, or coal oil they'd go to Buffalo and float a 20 or 30 gallon barrel down with a...on the outside of the boat, this kerosene...

**R.H:** Did he pay duty on it?

**S.B:** No duty, no duty or nothing on it.

**R.H:** That was great, times have changed and not always for the better. Did you ever hear of the New Orleans, the ferryboat that went into the International Bridge?

**S.B:** Oh, the New Orleans. Yeah, I've run across the ferryboat, the New Orleans.

**R.H:** She was a sidewheeler, what do you mean by a sidewheeler?

**S.B:** They had kinda like water wheels on each side. One on one side and one on the other and that's where they'd steer it, you see. It



would make the one wheel work more and the other one stop. It was quite a trick to get through the river when the ice was coming down. Sometimes they'd have to go way down from Fort Erie, from the dock, pretty near down to the International Bridge before they could get across to the other side, and then they'd have to come back up again. It would make it a little longer ride. It was 15 cents to cross over on it.

**R.H:** I just heard that the New Orleans hit the International Bridge one time, did it?

**S.B:** Yeah...

**R.H:** Well, we were talking about the New Orleans, and you were saying how they used to have to go towards the International Bridge to...

**S.B:** Yeah, in the winter when the ice was flowing. They put that cable across now or that... not a cable, but logs that hold the ice back, and they don't have as many big cakes coming down.

**R.H:** And they don't have the ferryboats either, do they?

**S.B:** No, they don't. We used to have to wait our chance to drive into the ferry and we'd have our ticket, and we'd crowd in, and there was two cars on each side of the centre of the boat. Two on the left side, and two on the right. They would dock on the other side, and they'd motion us for to come, and we'd have to run up the gangplank and out on to the land again. We'd then run around to where the customs people would be. Then, you had to go up quite a steep hill to Niagara Street from Ferry Street, the dock. It was quite the grade up there. We used to go up there quite often.

**R.H:** Do you remember when Douglas Hospital was built?

**S.B:** I do, but I don't remember too much particulars about it.

**R.H:** Where did you go before that was built? Where did people go when they were really sick?

**S.B:** A lot of them never went to the hospital.

**R.H:** So the doctor would come to the house, would he?

**S.B:** The doctor would come to the house. My sister had diphtheria and she would have been about ten years old, and she was sick for...oh, I guess six weeks. She developed an abcess on the side of her neck, and the doctor says "Oh, I'd like to lance it, but I'm scared of the Jugular vein". He said "If I'd ever make a miss, that'd be the end of it". They poulticed it and then finally it broke, and she got better.

That was just at the start of when they were giving the antitoxin. If you'd seen the machines they had when they came to fumigate the place...

**R.H:** Did they fumigate because of the diphtheria?

**S.B:** Yeah, and they sent my brother and I, there was just the three of us then... They loaded us up one night, it was ten o'clock, and they got us out of bed, put us in the sleigh, and drove out to our grandmother's. When we got out to our grandmother's they had the bed fixed up for us, but imagine this, it was a straw tick and not a...

**R.H:** A straw tick?

**S.B:** A straw tick that they slept on, and it was piled up in the centre. I can see my grandmother and grandfather, one on each side trying to level it down so that we could sleep on it that night. We spent about three weeks out there. When my sister got better the doctor said "Well, we're a little slow in getting the fumigation done, but oh, it will be alright to bring them home", and he says "If they should contact it, we will know what it is right away, and we can treat it". So my mother was anxious to see my brother, 'cause he was the baby then you know, and so they brought us home. We weren't home more than two or three weeks when we came down with a sore throat. Oh, it was terrible.

**R.H:** Is that how it started, with a sore throat?

**S.B:** A sore throat. The doctor says "That's what they have, but we will be able to use the antitoxin on them, and that'll check the whole thing". I remember him coming down one night and they took a wash dish with warm water, and they washed my brother's back off with warm water and soap, and then the doctor gave us the needle. My brother, he screamed and hollered and he said "When I get big, I'll stick that needle in you". "That doctor!" he says. Then they came in to me, and I remember the doctor says to me "Oh, you're a man now, you won't be hollering like your brother, who's a baby". I remember me gritting my teeth and... It was kind of a crude method. They'd get right in the centre of your back you know, and stick the needle in. We had the needles and everything for 15 or 20 years afterwards. Dad just saved them 'cause they would throw them out after they used them. We weren't sick long, only a week or ten days and we were running around again, you see.

**R.H:** Do you know who the doctor was?

**S.B:** Yeah, Dr. Buell.

**R.H:** He was from Ridgeway, wasn't he?

**S.B:** No, he was from Stevensville. He was the family doctor. He went to the Fort Erie Racetrack. He used to like the horse racing and he won enough to buy himself an old Hupmobile.

**R.H:** An old what?

**S.B:** An old Hupmobile.

**R.H:** What is that, a Hupmobile?

**S.B:** A car. Well, that was the make of them, and he used to drive that. He had two horses, and then the neighbour feller had two other horses, and he hired them sometimes if his horses got tired. They'd come through the mud, he had a big fur coat, a big bearskin coat and he'd wrap it around his legs and sit in there, and hang on to the reins and let the horse go. He had a...he went at a a gallop... a two-wheel cart. His satchel was in between his feet so he wouldn't lose that, and he'd come down and the mud would be flying this way and that way from the wheels, and he'd pull into the driveway and my dad would go out and take the horse and walk him around, while he came in the house to see the sick. When he got back into the buggy the horse wouldn't hardly stand, you know, and the minute that he'd get in and sit down and pick up the reins, the horse was right off like a shot. He had a little water spaniel that used to come in and he'd get about five minutes rest, and then he'd have to take off after the doctor again. He'd go the whole round with him. He used to be muddy and wet and tired, and he'd make the rounds with the doctor.

**R.H:** Did he charge a lot for his visits?

**S.B:** Oh, he never charged, he never charged much money. I don't know what he would charge, maybe a dollar or something like that on the trip, never was much. Anytime, day or night, it didn't make any difference when you called him, anytime. You can imagine, it wasn't getting into a car and turning the heater on, and driving down. Now they won't go a block away from home.

**R.H:** I know. Did he leave medication or did you have to...?

**S.B:** Oh, he had the medicine right there. He'd mix up some of the stuff that he'd made up himself, and if he didn't have any, why-he'd tell

my dad to come up to the office and he'd have it ready for him.

**R.H:** Oh, you didn't go to the drugstore then?

**S.B:** No.

**R.H:** No! Just right from the the doctor?

**R.H:** Just right from the doctor. We very seldom ever went to the drugstore for anything. That's modern.

**R.H:** Have you ever heard of the Peg-Leg, or the Dummy or the Sandfly?

**S.B:** Well, the Peg-Leg was running from Ridgeway into Crystal Beach, but that didn't pan out at all. The Dummy, I used to travel that a lot.

**R.H:** Did you? Why did they call it the Dummy?

**S.B:** Well, I don't know. It was like an electric car, that's all it was, and that's the name they gave it. I don't know whether it seemed to be a dumb thing to ride on it, I don't know. Well, anyway it would hold around 20 or 25 passengers. They would make regular crossings back and forth every 10 or 15 minutes or something.

**R.H:** Where was that, on the International Bridge?

**S.B:** The International Bridge, from Fort Erie to Buffalo and back, you see. If a freight train came...well they had them...it would take you longer to get across, but if there was no train on the line, he got the okay to go across, why-he'd be across to Buffalo in no time at all. If you wanted anything, why-you could buy rubber boots, and clothing a lot cheaper over there, and you never paid too much duty on it. Some of them would say "Oh, that's just for your own self, forget it". They done that then, and of course during the wartime they had the soldiers stationed there and guarding the Bridge. There was one particular one had M.P. on his shoulder, letters on his uniform, and there was a young girl with the passengers, going across...I forget what we were going across for, but she says "I wonder what that M.P. stands for", and he straightened up to attention and he says, "Mother's Pet", and wheeled around. Now, the Peg-Leg ran from Ridgeway to Crystal Beach, but I don't know too much about it, but I know it didn't pan out. It ran on one rail, and I don't know if it was balanced by a wheel, it was spinning at pretty heavy rate and that would balance it. It would go down the rail that way, but I don't know much about it. The Dummy, I was on that, and then I was on another train that ran from the dock there at Fort Erie

where the boat docked to Erie Beach. There used to be a train that run there, and that didn't pan out too long. There was something happened, I don't know, it just seems that the manager didn't manage it right and Crystal Beach took over, and Erie Beach then folded right down. That's all I know.

**R.H:** Well, that was interesting. Thanks very much for the interview again, thanks a lot Mr. Beam.