

Beverly Branton interviewing Mr. John Stickles in his home at 3756 Dominion Road in Ridgeway, Ontario. The date is June 17, 1985.

B.B.: Hello Mr. Stickles.

J.S.: How are you today?

B.B.: Fine thank you. Could you give me your date of birth?

J.S.: March 3, 1890.

B.B.: And your place of birth?

J.S.: Stevensville.

B.B.: And your occupation before you were retired?

J.S.: Painter, housepainter, decorator.

B.B.: How long was your family living in this area before you were born?

J.S.: Oh my..my mother was a Baker, she was born in Stevensville too.

B.B.: So your family...?

J.S.: They've always lived right around here, in the Township of Bertie.

B.B.: What was your mothers' maiden name?

J.S.: Baker.

B.B.: So you've seen Stevensville go through a few changes?

J.S.: No I never..I moved out of Stevensville..I don't ever remember being there at all.

B.B.: How old were you when you left Stevensville?

J.S.: Oh, I don't know..I just don't remember at all. I was just maybe about six months old or something.

B.B.: Where did you move to from Stevensville? Did you move into the Ridgeway area?

J.S.: Into the Ridgeway area, ya. And I've been around here ~~all~~ my life.

B.B.: Could you tell me some of the different places you lived in Ridgeway.. the different areas..do you remember?

J.S.: Well, let's see...I tell you I lived down along the river one time.

B.B.: Did you.

J.S.: Where the shipyard, where the shipyard was built there, before the Boulevard was there or anything.

B.B.: Tell me about that.

J.S.: Well they were just starting to build the Shipyard down there and we moved down along the river between Frenchman's Creek and the Shipyard..along in there. It was all mud roads, road was awful narrow, could hardly walk along it. The water would wash up you know ..the Boulevard wasn't there or anything.

B.B.: Did your property go right down to the river?

J.S.: Well there was just a road in front and a little lawn and the house

in the back.

B.B.: Were you living there when the Parks Commission wanted to..?

J.S.: The Park Commissioner when they talked about, when they bought the Boulevard, they bought our property throughmoved our house. What use to be the back of the house and when the Parks bought it, they moved the house back and the pump was way out here in the front yard..they moved the foot of the basement under the house and everything and picked it up from where it was when they bought it. And they gave my dad so much a foot for the frontage. But when they built that Boulevard that was built for a trolley line and a bridle saddle was to be built between the Boulevard and that.. that's the reason it's so wide you see. They bought all that property in back and that was surveyed out from Niagara Falls, Port Colborne down through Crystal Beach and Ridgeway, there'd be a trolley line around.

B.B.: Is that right! What ever happened to those plans?

J.S.: Well things changed before they got it built and everything. They didn't..automobiles begin to come and they..there was no use for a trolley line. But that's the reason they bought so much property, you know all that land..all that nice..but it's nice, it's beautiful..it's a good thing they did. But that's the reason they bought so much land.

B.B.: So did the Niagara Parks..did they buy that other land by Port Colborne also?

J.S.: I don't think..it wasn't bought, that's where they took a surveyal out through Crystal Beach but they bought, like they took the river front, from Lake Ontario to the Old Fort.

B.B.: Do you remember when the Shipyards was starting to be built? When they started bringing ships in?

J.S.: Well I think they started, they really started to build the Shipyard before they started to build ship..it took them a year or two to get it ready. I lived up between the Shipyard and Fort Erie on this side of Frenchman's Creek. Do you know where Frenchmen's Creek is? Well do you know where Pleasant's Point use to be...do you know where the old morgue use to be? Do you know where that old home is, that Catholic..or something, they've got it setting up there in the field. In Fort Erie along the Boulevard.

B.B.: No I don't know about it. Tell me about it.

J.S.: Well there wasn't any homes..there was nobody between our house

and Fort Erie at all, along the river. There was no houses along there at all. I wouldn't have given you 10¢ for the whole thing, it was so damn muddy and the clay...you know!

B.B.: So they started to build the Shipyards...?

J.S.: Ya but that was before, I think that was before 1901, anyway that was before the Pan American because I think we went from there to the Pan American in Buffalo..my dad and my mother and I. They built the E.B. Osler there. Then it was iron works there for awhile and..and then it was shut down and lay dormant and they tore all the building down and moved them away, it's all gone.

B.B.: Do you remember the mill that use to be down that way? The old mill down by the Shipyards?

J.S.: Well the house we bought, they tell me one time out in front along the river there, there use to be a mill there and they called it the Decew Mill. But it wasn't there when I was there. But the house we bought..you know where that home is, that old school, that private school?

B.B.: Yes, right.

J.S.: Well that's where we was..that white house then was Charlie Millers and that next house was where we lived in, it was the second house between that and the Townline Road.

B.B.: When did you move from there? Do you remember approximately what year?

J.S.: Oh I got out of there when I was a kid..couldn't take any more. I came up here and I went to work for a man by the name of Wilson down here. He had the bus line between Ridgeway and Crystal Beach, horse...I went to work for him and I've been working ever since.

B.B.: He had a bus line of horses?

J.S.: Oh ya.

B.B.: And where did that run from?

J.S.: From Ridgeway to Crystal Beach. The trains use to come in here, there was excursion trains and the station use to be over here instead of down there. That station that's in Fort Erie now, you know that one use to be here in Ridgeway. Set right there on the Main Street. But the old station use to sit right across here. You got off the train and you had to walk down to the Main Street.

B.B.: It sat right across the Dominion?

J.S.: Right here, right across the track over here. Then when they built the new one they built it downtown.

B.B.: Do you know approximately when that was built?

J.S.: Well it was around eighty some years ago. I can't just tell you the ..but I know what, Mr. Tom use to be the operator over here and he was never in the new operator..Jack Cameron took that over and he was the first operator here that I remember being in there. But he, they had living quarters in the old station over here. The operators lived right in the station. Then when they shut the railroad down they took it down to Fort Erie, they moved it down.

B.B.: So the bus service you were talking about now how often would he stop to pick people up..at every...?

J.S.: Well he use to come as far as the Hotels and then to Crystal Beach just in the summertime when the boats was running. The excursion trains use to come in here loaded with..maybe sometimes the excursion train would 9:00 o'clock, the first half..and the second half would come in. Use to come from London, Toronto, Hamilton, my god they came..! Two sections of trains you know. There would be two or three excursions and all the excursion trains from the American side would come to the foot of Main Street in Buffalo and they'd get on the boat and they'd come to Crystal Beach. And here they'd come by train right in here. They use to have..these guys running all over the country making arrangements for tickets you know, giving them big deals and all that kind of stuff.

B.B.: Do you remember what the fair use to be on the buses?

J.S.: Well when I first started it was 10¢, round trip.

B.B.: Round trip!

J.S.: Ya, then it got up to 15 and then it was 20¢ a round trip when I left....I stopped up here at the Hotel and I got a load of people all that I could get in and I got across the track and there was a gang another gang standing there and they wanted to go to the Beach. And they wanted me to put these people out and take them and I told them to go fishin'. And I started up the street and they caught me up about a block or so up there and held me up and throwed rocks at me.

B.B.: Did they catch them..did the police catch them?

J.S.: Oh, they got three of them here..read the whole thing there..ya

they only got three out of the gang, got fined \$50 a piece.

B.B.: Were they local fellows?

J.S. : Oh, no all from Buffalo. I think they were all American fellows.

B.B.: So the police at that time were out of Crystal Beach?

J.S.: Ya.

B.B.: Would that have been Provincial Police or was there another office in there?

J.S.: Well there was, they always had one Provincial man out there. Then the Company had hired a lot of men I think, you know uniforms around the Park and everything.

B.B.: Was there ever a time that you remember that there wasn't police in this area?

J.S.: Well up here, around here in Ridgeway we never had any police. Use to hire some guy stand around, an old guard standing around the street in the summertime but we never had Provincial Police here. They most always had one in Crystal Beach though. Anything went wrong we had to go and get them.

B.B.: Do you remember the Peg Leg Railroad?

J.S.: Oh, yes. That was over here by the old station, right across over in here. You'd stop over there with the train, you'd get off and go along the old station and back there was the Peg Leg Station.

B.B.: Did many people ride on it?

J.S.: Not very many people. That's the reason it didn't last very long. You was up there in the air you know, one wheel in the middle, one track. And then it had, the track was up there and then they had guard rails on the side, little wheels that would balance it you see were along the side with the main wheel in the middle and it would carry it along. The motor was driven in the one car and there was four seats in front of him and two seats that would carry four people there and four people ahead and then they had a trailer car in the back of it carry maybe twenty people or something like that.

B.B.: Were there any accidents..ever any accidents?

J.S.: No I never heard of any accidents but you know whenever they had to keep it on a level..it went straight out to Crystal Beach and turned and came out through the, went through the road out there by the cemetery they dug out you know, they put a stone wall up and put a top over it and the Peg Leg use to go on it. If it was going down

a hill...well they clipped it pretty level until they got out by Brackbill Orchard and you was right up as high as the trees you know. They had to keep it on a level.

B.B.: Do you think people were fearful of it?

J.S.: I think that was the trouble. I didn't really pay any attention. It didn't run so long.

B.B.: Did you ever ride on it yourself?

J.S.: Oh I rode on it ya.

B.B.: What was it like to ride on it?

J.S.: Oh, it wasn't a bad ride, it was slow and everthing. It wasn't very fast but it went right along.

B.B.: And it would take you into Crystal Beach?

J.S.: It would take you from the Ridgeway Station to the Crystal Beach Station on the Erie Road there. Let you off from Derby Road to Erie Road and then it went all around.

B.B.: Did you ever go to the Park, the Amusement Park?

J.S.: Did I ever go? Why I worked there for sixteen years, I was with the buses, that's where we use to go, drive in there.

B.B.: What do you remember of Crystal Beach Amusement Park? What changes did you see it go through?

J.S.: Oh, my gosh it's changed awful! Put up these big rides and...

B.B.: It never used to have the big rides?

J.S.: When Crystal Beach first opened there was a cut, cut through the sandhill, maybe thirty feet wide, planks up on a..and up on top of that hill was a skating rink, a great big sand bank all there. And when it was sold out to the Lake Erie Excursion Co. they took all that sand bank down and put up a concrete wall out there in the lake and they put all that and back of it and they made 4 acres of land by moving that sandhill out. Now it's all..use to be cottages all up on that hill. Do you remember that hill, that big hill up in there Mary? Down at this end, you go down to..the hill is up there yet you know with cottages way up on the hill, there's two tiers of cottages..one way up and then half way down there's another tier on the Erie Road side. But on this side where that big ride is and everything that use to be a great sandhill. You had to walk through this cut to go out on the dock, you know the boat.

B.B.: Do you remember Mr. Rebstock? **J.S.:** Oh ya.

B.B.: Do you remember when he first started up?

J.S.: Yes.

B.B.: You have a book on Mr. Rebstock?

J.S.: I knew his children, all of his children. He was, he opened Crystal Beach the year I was born, 95 years ago. That's when Crystal Beach first opened. He was a wonderful man J. Rebstock.

B.B.: What do you remember of him?

J.S.: He was a goer.

B.B.: He had quite the dream to start up Crystal Beach.

J.S.: Oh, ya and then he went to Florida you know. He opened up a Crystal Beach down there, in Florida. Oh, I knew his family all real well, the boys. He was just an ordinary farmer around here I guess before he took it in his head to go to this area.

B.B.: Do you know what made him to start up the amusement park?

J.S.: No, well it tells pretty well in that book, his whole life. He worked back here on this farm where Cherry Hill is, golf course. His son wrote that since his father died, George. He come in one day and he said, 'John I want to give you one of these books.'

B.B.: Were you ever in the dance hall at Crystal Beach?

J.S.: Oh I was there lots of times. That was a dandy dance hall.

B.B.: Tell me about it..can you describe it?

J.S.: Well how would you describe it..it was such a big thing. It use to have a balcony up along there and you could go up and sit down and look at the dance and listen to the orchestra. They had seats all around it. You ever been to Crystal Beach..you ever seen that dance hall?

B.B.: Inever saw that one, no.

J.S.: Oh, gee that's a beautiful one. They had an orchestra out there this spring already one of the old time orchestras and had an old time dance out there. Oh who was that big band out there, they use to have Guy Lombardo and Paul White..all them fellows out there. They would come and play for a week....And the boats that ran from Buffalo to Crystal Beach, they had an orchestra on the boat. You could get on that boat and you could dance all the way to Crystal Beach and get off the boat and go in the Park. It didn't cost anything to dance on the boat. Those boats use to carry 3500 people. In the second deck on the back end they had that orchestra

there and that deck over there was all for dancing. But on the outside of the boat there was all seats, people sat all around and then you could get up and dance. And then you could downstairs and you could go to the bar and get a drink if you wanted..it'd make you dance.

B.B.: Were you ever to Erie Beach Amusement Park?

J.S.: Yes, I'd been down there lots of times.

B.B.: What was that one like?

J.S.: Well it was something like Crystal Beach. They had nice rides there. Use to go down there, they use to have Eddie Cantor down there singing "We've Got No Bananas Today" and all that kind of stuff..that was quite a place Erie Beach was. . real nice!

B.B.: Can you remember some of the names of the rides?

J.S.: Well I don't know, they had the Figure-Eight, I don't know what all rides they had in Erie Beach. They had a Cyclone and they had a Figure-Eight they use to call it, ferris wheels and oh, I don't know. I haven't been out to Crystal Beach..I don't know what they've got out there now. I don't go out there anymore. I haven't been out there in I don't know how many years.. Now they've got it all fenced in you know. You have to pay to go in, you never use to have to pay you walked right in. Only thing you had to pay was to park your car.

B.B.: Did you have to pay to go into Erie Beach?

J.S.: No that was free too, you'd park your car and go right in. They use to have a concert down there every Sunday night you know, singing. They had these people like Eddie Cantor and some more of those big guys, singers would come in.

B.B.: Did they have good food stands?

J.S.: Oh, ya.

B.B.: Were you ever in the restaurant at Erie Beach?

J.S.: I don't..not at Erie Beach but I've been down at that Hotel, that fish fry, I've quite often eaten. I never eat at Erie Beach..Crystal Beach I use to eat around there a lot.

B.B.: Do you remember when Erie Beach closed down?

J.S.: Yes.

B.B.: Why do you think..looking back is there..?

J.S.: Well I'll tell you, I think that people you know, they use to come in on them boats, they use to run a boat at Erie Beach you know as well as Crystal Beach and they use to run a train from the ferry

dock up to Erie Beach, along the lake there and along the river. Two coaches, I think, and an engine use to carry all of them. Well they use to come down to Ferry Street and come across on that ferry boat like by the hundreds and the boat use to land about Main Street over there someplace and they'd run across. And I think the reason the boats, the people..the automobiles began to come. People would ride the automobiles. They'd come in and if they wanted to stay all day they stayed and if they got tired they'd go out and get in their car and go away. When they use to come in boats, they got in boats and come off..they had to stay there until the next boat went back. So I think the automobile was the one that put that place in..it wasn't Crystal Beach. Now you see people drive a car out there and they stay for a hour or two and they've got enough they go away but when they come by boat they had to stay. But the boat, there use to be a boat in there pretty near every hour. They had two boats the Americana and the Canadiana. They carried 3500 people, each of them.

B.B.: Do you think the Peace Bridge..the opening of the Peace Bridge stopped...?

J.S.: Well that helped out too. That made traffic a lot better. The ferry boats you know, they use to run three ferry boats there. One would be loading, one would be unloading and one waiting by the river to get into it. Oh, it use to be awful going back Sunday night or a holiday..you'd hardly be able to get up the Garrison Road, waiting to get on the boat. A lot of them would go down to the Falls and go across the Bridge.

B.B.: Did the Garrison Road look the same as it does now?

J.S.: Oh, no, no, no!

B.B.: How did it look?

J.S.: Well just like any other country road. It was stone, but it was rough you know. It wasn't wide like it is now either.

B.B.: What about the Dominion Road?

J.S.: Well the Dominion Road use to, didn't go only half way to Fort Erie, wasn't opened down through there at all.

B.B.: Do you remember where it stopped?

J.S.: It stopped at Windmill Point Road..what do they call it?..Stonemill Road. That's as far down as it went.

B.B.: How would you..was there anyway of getting across to the Garrison or...?

J.S.: Went down the Ridge Road here. We could go down to Windmill Point Road and go out to the Garrison Road. And the Nigh Road was opened too. You got to the Nigh Road and you could go through. But that wasn't opened..only until the Rosehill Road and then you had to go the Number 3 Highway and go down.

B.B.: The roads have changed quite a bit?

J.S.: Oh..we use to say you could shake you teeth out riding in a car going down there.

.....down the Windmill Point Road. That's why they use to go that way... [half-way house]

B.B.: And what is that?

J.S.: Why it's a Hotel. You could stop there and water your horses and go in and water yourself if you wanted.

B.B.: And that was on...?

J.S.: Well that was on the main road, the Nigh Road..Nigh and Bill's Stonemill Road down there, right on the corner.

B.B.: Do you remember who ran that?

J.S.: Ya, man by the name of Jake Weis..he run it one time. Walt Hoffman run it one time. Ted Hawkins, he run it for two or three years and Charlie Hawkins he run it when it burnt down.

B.B.: And what all could you do there..you watered your horses..?

J.S.: You watered your horses, and well you could take a party down there and they'd have a big time. They had a long shed on the end of it..up over the shed was what we use to call it the ballroom. They had a piano and you could take a gang and if anybody could play a fiddle ..you'd have a time down there. Take hay ride parties or something down there you know.

B.B.: Do you remember when that burnt down, approximately?

J.S.: I don't remember when that burnt down, but it hasn't been, it isn't that so many years ago. There's a house built right on the corner there where the Hotel use to stand. But who lives in it now I don't know. Oh, I don't know, time goes so fast I don't want to say how long ago it was that that burnt down but it don't seem to me it was an awful long while ago. I think Charlie Hawkins.. you know Hawkins in Fort Erie? Well there use to be Charlie and Harry and Ted and a whole gang of them fellows around there.

And Ted run that Hotel there, the half-way house..and they moved and bought in Stevensville and his brother took this place down here.

B.B.: You had mentioned you were at the opening of the Peace Bridge.

J.S.: I wasn't down there, I didn't go down..oh, ya I was down in the summertime..I didn't take time off. I think, wasn't the big doing on a Sunday though. I never knew when I was working..I was with Law's Construction Co. at that time.

B.B.: So you were into Fort Erie..Bridgeburg, and old Fort Erie, Amigari..

J.S.: Old Fort Erie, Amigari, Victoria...

B.B.: You remember it as Victoria?

J.S.: Oh, ya. Victoria Yard. All they had up there was a roundhouse and a Hotel. They use to call it the Railroad Hotel. And from the Railroad pretty near up to..what's that street coming through from the Bridge out there, by the back of Horton Steele, over the Bridge there you know, the main bridge coming through.

B.B.: Lewis, Lewis Street?

J.S.: No, no. The one that comes across the railroad tracks, comes past the Catholic Church.

B.B.: You mean Central Avenue.

J.S.: Central Avenue, yes. There wasn't very many houses on the other side of Central Avenue. That was all commons in there.

B.B.: What do you mean by commons?

J.S.: Bare land. People had their cow and chickens and what ever tied out there in them fields.

B.B.: Over there..would that be the north end of Fort Erie they consider now..is that what you mean?

J.S.: Ya, out west of Fort, Bridgeburg now, along the railroad tracks. You know where that subway goes out under the track out there, well from that on in there wasn't any houses at all until you got up pretty near to Central Avenue. All that along there was all..you could go down there with horse and buggy and drive right across the fields from one street to the other.

B.B.: When did it start to get built up?

J.S.: Well, it's been building and building and building all the time.

B.B.: What do you think was part of the reason?

J.S.: Well they started to get more factories and all that stuff in

and the railroad was the big thing down there. You see there was the Grand Trunk one time and the Michigan Central and the Wabash and the TH&B, they all had yards..big railroad yards. My god, they had that roundhouse up there and they had two down farther, three or four of them big roundhouses up there..when you went up to that subway, that subway under the track.

B.B.: Do you remember when Victoria Yard took on the name Bridgeburg?

J.S.: No, I don't but the railroad always called it Victoria Yard. They had a little place up there, up in Victoria Yard but when they took it over I don't know.

B.B.: Do you remember old Jarvis Street?

J.S.: Oh, yes.

B.B.: How has that changed or what did that look like?

J.S.: How it changed..well you know where the post office is, Cutlers had a butcher shop there. On this side of the butcher shop there was a man by the name of Bill Brown lived in there. And next to that Jack Anchor had a blacksmith's shop. And then there was a fellow in there, people use to call him Green Kelly, old Green Kelly.

B.B.: Why did they call him Green Kelly?

J.S.: Well his name was Kelly and he sold vegetables and stuff. And then there was..one-armed, Scotty, Scotty Jackson..he had a place in there, he sold pipes and tobacco and papers and all such stuff as that. And I think there was a fellow up a bit farther, his name was Tom Naggs, he had a barber shop. And I don't think there was anything on that 'til you got up to Central Avenue and you know that far corner where the Telephone is in there now, Telephone place..that's where John T. James use to have a grocery store and he built that building there.

B.B.: Do you remember John T. James?

J.S.: Oh, yes! Now on this side, on the north side of Jarvis Street, the Bank was on that side. The Post Office was on that side and Dicky Whites bake shop was on that side. And L'Hayes had a big grocery store up there. And then down towards the river there was a place in there they called it the Liquid Veneer. And there wasn't anything from there down to the river, that was all vacant land. And that street, Jarvis Street, when it was

raining it was just like pancake batter, it was just mud and clay.

B.B.: That place..it was called the Liquid Veneer?

J.S.: Ya, I think it was.

B.B.: What was it?

J.S.: Why something you put on furniture. You'd go like that and you'd polish it, the furniture. Same as this here..what do they call it now, what's this stuff you spray on, they call it..put on your furniture. It came in kind of a bottle, square bottle about that wide.

B.B.: Who was the..did Bridgeburg have a mayor at that time?

J.S.: Yes they did. They had a mayor..oh, I can't tell you....

B.B.: What about the business section in old Fort Erie, down in the south end?

J.S.: Well there wasn't any..all along the river there from the ferry boat up and down, a lot of shacks..it's all built up wonderful. And going from there down to the Bridge you know, the Niagara, from the ferry down to the railroad bridge, well that was nothing but shacks and boat houses and stuff like that. That's all built up now.

B.B.: Did Amigari have a business section at all?

J.S.: Oh, ya. Up in there they had a hotel and a store..Jacksons had a store up in there, Tommy Jackson. No not Tommy, his brother, Frank Jackson run a grocery store up there.

B.B.: Do you remember what street that would have been on?

J.S.: I don't know what street it was but it was the main street when you went around, going up by the race track up there that way. But it was just before you crossed the track, right down there.

B.B.: Gilmore Road?

J.S.: Bertie Street, right there on the corner.

B.B.: Did you use to come into Fort Erie quite a bit?

J.S.: Oh, ya.

B.B.: What about Ridgeway..how's Ridgeway changed?

J.S.: When I moved here I guess there was about 300 people. When they started to make the breakwall in Buffalo...it brought in lot of people here.

B.B.: Why is that?

J.S.: Well they had to have some place to live and board. 'Cause there was a lot of people moved in. They had two or three..men working down there you know getting stone out and sending it over, when

they built the Buffalo breakwall out in the lake. That was built before 19...that was built between 1900 and 1908 or 1909.

B.B.: Where did they get the stone from?

J.S.: Well Windmill Point Quarry down there. Do you know where that is? Well right out of that..that's how that hole got in there. The one this way not,the one the other way is where Law got but the one on this side. They use to call it the Burger Quarry. That's where they got the stone..there was two holes down there, one this side and one on the other side.

B.B.: Why was it called the Burger Quarry?

J.S.: Well Burgers lived down around there. And the other one over there was where Law use to, Arty Law got stone out of. He use to build a lot of roads around...

B.B.: So that's why a lot of people started coming up into this area?

J.S.: Well they did you know. They got in here but Ridgeway use to be quite a bit more..there was saw mills and planing mills, flour mills and everything. You know they never use to have a planing mill in Fort Erie. And they use to grind and make flour here and they use to draw all the flour from here to Fort Erie and Niagara Falls and Chippawa and Crystal Beach, down here in the mill.

There was no high school in Fort Erie, there was none in Ridgeway there was none in Port Colborne. If you wanted to go to high school you had to go to Welland. And if you didn't have any money you got a kick in the ..and that was all you got. That was me in public school.

B.B.: What grade did you..you were unable to go on?

J.S.: I went all through public school and that's all about anybody got around to in them days. Unless you were a millionaire and you could send your kid to Buffalo. I know some of them use to go over to Bryant & Stratton in Buffalo. And some of them use to go to Welland but there wasn't very many.

B.B.: Where was the school that you went to?

J.S.: The old school is up..you know where Bickells store is..that building this side of it. That's when it was a four room school. It was four rooms and there wasn't enough kids to fill them. They only

used three rooms and that took in Crystal Beach, Ridgeway, all the surrounding country around here, everybody went to school then and there wasn't enough to fill three rooms. The fourth room upstairs they used of a library.

B.B.: Why wasn't there enough children..was it because they didn't come?

J.S.: Wasn't populated enough.

B.B.: Just not enough children. Was it compulsory to go to school?

J.S.: It was yes. I don't think they started kids to school 'til they was seven years old and then you had to go until you was fourteen. If you wasn't through public school you could quit if you wanted to but you had to go 'til you was fourteen. And there was no sidewalks here. Only sidewalk in Ridgeway was from this corner here up to the railroad track, on both side of the street. Rest of these streets all around..well this street wasn't here at all, it's only been here about..well it's been here 73 years that I know about because I've been here 73 years. But this was..my dad lived in that next house. Ya I built down here and he was the last house on here. There was no houses over on that street. There was a maple sugar bush over there. We use to go out maple syruping..see those big maple trees.

B.B.: You could go buy your maple syrup right there?

J.S.: Oh, yes, sure. You could get it for about 75¢ a gallon. Now it's about \$20 a gallon. Also they had to boil sap. This street up here..well this street wasn't very many because there was no sidewalk or anything down here when I built down here. No gas, no lights.

B.B.: Do you remember when the telephone came in?

J.S.: Ya.

B.B.: Where was your telephone office?

J.S.: Well it was down on South Mill there. It was Welland County they called it.

B.B.: Do you remember who the operator was?

J.S.: Ya.

B.B.: What was her name?

J.S.: Kennedys. They bought a house and they put a, they operated a telephone business in the front of the house there. That's when

they had to sit there and shove those plugs in you know.. They had a telephone hanging up there on the wall and if you wanted anybody you..three shorts and two longs maybe or two longs and a short or one short and three longs or..that's the way you got your telephone, anybody hear that ring and they'd answer it. Well the Bell Telephone they bought out the Welland County and made it all one. Then Bell moved in here. But you couldn't call, like if you wanted the Welland County, all around the country everybody had it but the Bell if you wanted to call to Buffalo or Toronto or anyplace you had to go through Bell Telephone..but you could call Fort Erie, Bridgeburg, Stevensville and Port Colborne and everthing in Welland County. Then Bell bought out the Welland County you know. Did you know Glennys in Fort Erie..Glenny's, well Charlie Glenny was one of the first ones, him and a man by the name of Tait that use to live in Ridgeway and Fort Erie and a couple of other farmers down there, there the ones that started the Welland County Telephone. Charlie Glenny he was a farmer that lived down in there then. He use to live in Bridgeburg. Do you know where the Anglican Church is just off the Bowen Road there? Well Charlie Glenny use to live way off down that road. That's how it developed..then they kept stretching out and stretching out and taking, buying people was taking stock in it and one thing and another and first thing they had they were in Stevensville and Ridgeway, had a regular telephone. They had a good central..between everything but you couldn't get into the States here, you couldn't get to Toronto.

B.B.: So they started just with lines?

J.S.: Ya.

B.B.: Do you remember the fires in Ridgeway?

J.S.: Oh, ya..ya I was here. I lived up on Elm Street then.

B.B.: For the first or second one or for both of them.

J.S.: Both of them. First one, I say 1912 but there's a fellow in here this morning that was trying to tell me 1913. It was April the 1st I know that, April Fools Day.

B.B.: How did it start or...?

J.S.: I don't know w t started it but it burnt through Cutler Street up that, to Anthony's store..through that whole block.

B.B.: was there a fire station around here at that time?

J.S.: No, no..no!

B.B.: How did they fight the fire?

J.S.: With a bucket, pail of water wherever you could get it.

B.B.: So the men would just go down..was it all volunteer or...?

J.S.: Oh, all sure. Use to go around to somebody's cistern or pump or if you could get water to a pump, run dry and then you'd quit. Let's see there hasn't been firemen in here..let's see, how long ago, 20's sometime I think before they had a fire department.

B.B.: Do you remember the second fire?

J.S.: Oh, ya....was that 1916 or what year was that? Ya, that didn't burn so much. That was from the Harris Street, up that way. And the first one was from this block...Hibbard's had a store there. The first house that burnt was Fred Hanns, a beautiful big house there right at the Oddfellows Hall. And the next one was Dell Sietz, a 5¢ store.. the Hibbards had a store there and that hadn't been built so very long. It was the nicest store in town, big birch store and nice front lawn and everything. Then Wally Wilson had a barber shop, that burnt. And Dr. Brewster, they had a drug store, that burnt. And old man Hibbard he had a little office between Brewster's drug store and Anthony's store. Then they tore that building out to keep the fire away from the other buildings..and it got scorched but it didn't burn. All the block around there. And then the second fire was over on the other side of Anthony Street, that was from Cutler's store down toward the railroad track. That didn't burn but got burnt, the store on the corner and I don't think there was anything else there. Just..the biggest one was the second. Well the second one I think it was when they brought the water up from Fort Erie by the railroad. They run the engines down and fill the tanks up and run up to the crossing there and they had pumps and they'd pump a lot of that and the engine would run back and pick up another load. Then the firemen from Buffalo came up, the Peace Bridge was opened then, they come across the Peace Bridge. Oh, I don't know how many firemen from Buffalo they had over here. The Salvation Army brought their lunch wagon over here.

B.B.: Where were they located..the Salvation Army?

J.S.: They came from Buffalo with the firemen. They use to furnish coffee and everything, set it up for the firefighters.

B.B.: Do you remember some pretty bad winters around here? Are the winters getting better or worse?

J.S.: They didn't plough the roads or anything like they do now or sidewalks. Horses are the way you got through it you know. When I first lived here there was no houses or anything. When the saw mills moved down here..that's seventy-three years ago when I moved in here. I use to see them come in here at night with six, seven teams of horses. They'd all be coming into the saw mill down here. Great big logs on those big logging sleighs and there'd be two teams all on one log, you know, taking it through.

B.B.: Where were they bringing them from?

J.S.: Up here in the country. They use to cut a lot of timber up here. They use to saw it up down here and load it on the ties and carry it away.

B.B.: What about Point Abino..do you know much about that area? Do remember much about that?

J.S.: Well, I've been up around there a lot but I don't remember the old timers or anything. But that's built up so now.

B.B.: But you wouldn't go up there much?

J.S.: Oh, I'd go up there every once in awhile to the light house and what they've got is all fenced off. If you don't know somebody out on the point you can't get back there. They have a watchman there and the gate is shut. It's all private. They do their own work there. I know the guy and he let's me go through.....But I don't blame them people because up there people use to go in there and they'd picnic out in front of their houses along the lake and they'd leave a lot of stuff..and they put a gate up to keep them out.

B.B.: Have you noticed a build up of homes along the lake? Was it always so, so many homes along the lake?

J.S.: Oh, no, no..no, no. It use to be all grass along the lake.

B.B.: Did people want the property at that time? Did they think it was worth much?

J.S.: Well a lot of people wanted it but the people that owned it they were holding it for a big price. They knew they was going to get it. So they put tax on it. They finally taxed them so much for lakefront property, they payed more taxes than we did back in the country because they weren't going to sell it off. But I know down through here there wasn't..well from here down to Six Mile Creek there was only a couple of houses. All the way 'til you got down

Erie Beach pretty near, there wasn't ..farmhouses, just farmhouses along.

B.B.: Where's Six Mile Creek?

J.S.: Down here about a mile. Right straight down Domnion Road.

B.B.: It's just...?

J.S.: It's just a little creek down there, this side of Stonemill Pt. Road, Windmill Point Road. Clause's down here, they owned clear..they owned the whole thing down there.

B.B.: So there was major property owners in here. People...

J.S.: Well you know we owned from here down to the ..1st property land, down to the lake and then the next was the Rebstock farm and the next was the Haun's. And then there was Schooley's and so on..Ebsels, Ed Baxters, Haun..all the way 'til you got to Point Abino, oh there was a lot of them.

B.B.: How many acreages approximately would each own? Were they quite large?

J.S.: Oh, ya they were good size farms

B.B.: Your father, stepfather, he..how much did he own..what type of, how much property did he take in or area did he take in?

J.S.: Oh I suppose he had maybe..let's see there was 28 acres in that golf course.

B.B.: Where would it start and where would it end?

J.S.: It started up in the main road here and went down through to the Crystal Beach...

B.B.: And then down to the lake?

J.S.: Well it did one time but I don't know who got that, how they..but Crystal Beach got some of that too. But I think my stepfather, his father owned it to the lake at one time.

B.B.: And then Rebstock he owned from the other side of...?

J.S.: He owned from Rebstock Road right straight down to the lake. And then he bought the next farm up there, what was the Ed Baxter farm..Schooley farm, then the Ed Baxter farm. He bought both of them farms. And then the American people bought all them..like Baxter he bought a lot of farms up there and Coatsworth and oh...bought them farms from Gordie Haun..oh, there's so many of them I can't think...

B.B.: Then as this place started to become more populated they would sell off different sections?

J.S.: Oh, yes. You go up there now, go up the Erie Road to Point Abino, that's all built up on both sides. These farms I was telling you about that Rebstock bought..he opened that up all up. And there's houses along the lake so thick, you know all the way from here clear up, all along the shore of Lake Erie. You go all up Point Abino and Sherkston and all up them places, you can't hardly get out there anywheres.

B.B.: It's gone through some changes.

J.S.: Oh, I know because I worked all along them places.

B.B.: Can you think of any other changes as you look back that you would like to tell us about?

J.S.: I don't know... Walt Brackbill and his son-in-law, Rizely had the pop factory. They use to make all the pop for Crystal Beach and Fort Erie and they use to pedal it all around, all over.

B.B.: Where was it located..the factory?

J.S.: Right out, not very far, down there on the Rebstock Road.

B.B.: And they use to pedal it to the different amusement parks and...?

J.S.: Oh, ya. They went around to the different stores and hotels and out there they use to sell them in the park. They use to sell an awful lot.

B.B.: What was the name of their factory?

J.S.: Northern Springs. They use to take it down all over..Fort Erie, and..a lot of people use to go right to the factory to get it. But they had an awful business there. 'Til these bigger firms like Coke, Pepsi..all them got driving in, cutting prices. Well they..you know the smaller ones they got, these bigger firms like ginger ale, Niagara Ginger Ale..all that kind of stuff, soft drinks and they got coming into the Beach. It's the same way with the milk wagon, the bake wagons and everything else. They all come in and cut the small fellow out. No more 5¢ bread and 5¢ milk. You can't get any of that stuff anymore.

B.B.: You had a golf course during the Depression?

J.S.: Ya.

B.B.: Where was it located?

J.S.: Between here and Crystal Beach.

B.B.: How did that get started?

J.S.: Well there was a fellow from Buffalo come over and put in a driving range out there. And my grandfather made it a nine-hole golf course.

And of course my grandfather got rid of him and he wanted me to run it for him. So I went out there and run it for two or three years for him. Now it's all sold off, all built up with cottages. You know where the Catholic Church is in Crystal Beach well that was a nine hole golf course we use to have along there.stepfather...

B.B.: So it wasn't your grandfather who owned it, it was your father who owned it?

J.S.: My stepfather.

.... When that fire was..down the street here there was a house dance. And we went out to go home and we looked up the street and we seen the fire. We went back in the house to tell the gang and they wouldn't believe me. They thought I was April fooling them. And they wouldn't come out. And Geneva Clark, she went in and got them out and we all run up the street.

B.B.: And they finally believed you. It wasn't an April Fools joke. Well can you think of anything else Mr. Stickles?

J.S.: Changes,no.

B.B.: Well you've done fantastic Mr. Stickles. You've given us some really good information and we appreciate it.

J.S.: I don't know..I'd hate to tell you some of the tricks we done around here. I'll leave that up to somebody else.

B.B.: Okay. Thank you.