

Diana Matthews interviewing Mrs. Boyd at her home at 223 Highland Avenue,
Fort Erie, May 3rd, 1985.

D.M: Hi Mrs. Boyd, how are you today?

M.B: Fine thank-you.

D.M: Can you tell me your full name?

M.B: Margaret Irene Boyd.

D.M: How long have you lived here in Fort Erie?

M.B: 60 years.

D.M: How old were you when you moved here?

M.B: I was a young bride.

D.M: Just married?

M.B: Well, not just married, I was married for a couple of years. I came from Chattam.

D.M: Why did you move to Fort Erie?

M.B: My husband was brought here to work at the Horton Steel from DesMoines. The DesMoines Steel Company, they were located in Chattam and they sold out to the Horton Steel and my husband came here.

D.M: What did you do when you went out in Fort Erie when you first moved here, on a Saturday night, where would you go?

M.B: Well, when we first moved here we lived in a stone block house at the corner of Gilmore Road and Kincardine. It's now where the Toronto Dominion Bank stands. On a Saturday night you walked down Gilmore Road, which was then quite a hill, along the river, took the ferry, went over on the ferry and went up to grant Street.

D.M: What was there?

M.B: Oh, all kinds of grocery stores and food stores and things like that.

D.M: Didn't you do your shopping here in Fort Erie?

M.B: Well, there wasn't that much really, as far as fresh fruit and things like that.

D.M: What about Jarvis Street, didn't it have lots of stores?

M.B: Not that many as I remember. This one store called Rungs, it was a grocery store and a meat store combined....

D.M: Was that on Jarvis Street?

M.B: Yes, and across the street was Charters Bakery. Those are the only stores I can remember When I first came to Fort Erie.

D.M: Did you ever go to Erie Beach?

M.B: Yes. I went there once.

D.M: Do you remember what it was like?

M.B: Yes, I can just barely remember the amusements, the big dance hall.

D.M: Did you go in the Dance Hall?

M.B: Not to dance!

D.M: Did you go on any of the rides?

M.B: I really can't remember that because it was shortly after that that it closed.

D.M: What about Crystal Beach, did you ever go there?

M.B: Oh yes.

D.M: What was that like?

M.B: Very nice, it was just a big amusement park.

D.M: Were the railroads running alot when you moved to Fort Erie?

M.B: Yes, they were very, very busy.

D.M: Did they bring stuff to Fort Erie?

M.B: Yes. This was the... how will I say it...direct route from Buffalo through to Detroit, you see, and there was alot... not that they brought so much to Fort Erie, but it was through traffic you see.

D.M: Could you catch the train here to go somewhere?

M.B: Very much so.

D.M: Did you ever take it?

M.B: Oh yeah, in the early days I think there were 6,9,2 and 5, I think, trains up to Toronto. You could go up to Toronto early in the morning and come back on the 6 o'clock train.

D.M: Do you remember when the Peace Bridge was built, were you here?

M.B: Oh yes.

D.M: What happened?

M.B: All I can remember is going down to the river and watching the Prince of Wales go by.

D.M: Did he come to town?

M.B: Oh yes, he opened the Bridge.

D.M: Were you at the opening?

M.B: No.

D.M: Did you go to church here in Fort Erie?

M.B: Oh yes.

D.M: Which church?

M.B: Knox presbyterian.

D.M: Is that still standing?

M.B: Oh yes, that's the one down here at the corner of Highland and Central. The original church was burnt, over on Courtwright.

D.M: Were you here when it burnt?

M.B: Oh yes.

D.M: Did you see it?

M.B: Oh yes.

D.M: What happened?

M.B: Well, we had built our new church and had sold the property to some man, I think, from Buffalo, and evidently there was a gas leak and there was a big explosion, and the church burnt down.

D.M: When was that?

M.B: Oh, it must have been around 1930-31, because we opened our new church in 1930, and it seems to me that it was the next year that this... he was thrown right out through the doors.

D.M: Who?

M.B: The man who owned it.

D.M: Was he killed?

M.B: I can't remember whether... no, I don't think he was killed. He just went inside the doors and flipped the light and it exploded.

D.M: Did you ever work in Fort Erie?

M.B: No.

D.M: Do you have any children?

M.B: I have two daughters.

D.M: Do they work here in Fort Erie?

M.B: No, one lives in England and the other one lives here in Fort Erie.

D.M: Do you remember any bad blizzards or storms in Fort Erie?

M.B: Oh yes, I can remember them, but I can't tell you much about them.

D.M: What happened to you when there was a blizzard?

M.B: You just had to stay indoors, that's just about it.

D.M: Was there alot of cars in Fort Erie when you moved here?

M.B: No.

D.M: Did you have a car?

M.B: No.

D.M: How did people get around?

M.B: Walked!

D.M: Was there many horses?

M.B: No, I don't remember too many. When we moved here, it was Horton Steel people, you see, McMurtry's lived there, and Chapman's lived there and they all worked at Horton Steel. My husband was the

Chief Engineer there. This was all vacant fields. It doesn't seem possible, but that was all vacant fields across there.

D.M: How long have you lived in this house?

M.B: I have to stop and think. 54 years.

D.M: Do you know who built it?

M.B: Yes, we did.

D.M: Did your husband build it?

M.B: No no, we had a contractor. These 3 houses were all built at the same time.

D.M: Do you remember when they reconstructed the Old Fort?

M.B: I guess I did... it being down in Fort Erie you didn't...

D.M: What part of town was this when you moved here?

M.B: Bridgeburg. There was quite a division. I don't know whether you know, but Gilmore Road was the dividing line between the two towns.

D.M: What about Amigari, where was that?

M.B: Well, Amigari was at the top of Gilmore Road.

D.M: When did they join them together?

M.B: Now what year was that... was it 1929... I'm sorry, I can't remember the exact date, but it was strange, there was such a dividing line.

Let me tell you a funny story, as I say, we lived on the Gilmore Road, and I went down to the ferry and I was told to buy a book of tickets. So the lady said to me, where do you live? And I said on Gilmore Road. And she said, On which side of Gilmore Road? I said well, we are living in Major MacKenzie's house. Oh, she said, alright. With the result that I got a discount!

D.M: How come?

M.B: Well, I was living in Fort Erie, on the other side of Gilmore Road was Bridgeburg, and you paid full fare.

D.M: Why the difference?

M.B: Well that was just it! You were in Bridgeburg, so you paid full fare on the ferry, but if you lived in Fort Erie, you got a discount. I never forgot that!! I had to tell her exactly where I lived before she would give me the book of tickets. If I had lived on the opposite side of the street, I was living in Bridgeburg then.

D.M: Why did they bring them all together, the 3 places?

M.B: Well, I think it was a good idea to amalgamate instead of having 3 little towns. At that time, it was just the 3 of them known as Fort Erie. Central Avenue Bridge wasn't built then.

D.M: When was that built, do you know?

M.B: No, I'm sorry, I can't say. That's why I said I lived at the corner of Gilmore Road and Kincardine.

D.M: Kincardine? Is that still a street?

M.B: It's Central Avenue now.

D.M: They changed the name when they built the bridge?

M.B: When they built the bridge they went all the way through Central Avenue. You'd be surprised the number of people that I have said that to and they'd say I've never heard that name. People that have lived here in Fort Erie for some time, and they say Oh, I never heard that name.

D.M: Where did you buy your first car?

M.B: At Ross Spears.

D.M: Where was that?

M.B: At the corner of Dufferin and Central.

D.M: Was it a car dealership?

M.B: Yes.

D.M: What kind of car did you get?

M.B: I think it was a Chevrolet.

D.M: Is the car place still there?

M.B: Oh yes. It's now Don Deans.

D.M: What about radios, do you remember when you heard your first radio?

M.B: Yes, my husband made it.

D.M: Was that when you lived here?

M.B: Yes.

D.M: How did he make it?

M.B: Oh, he got the parts and made a radio!

D.M: Do you remember what the first thing you heard on the radio was?

M.B: Yes, from Pittsburg. That was one of the stations that you could reach.

D.M: Did you get any stations from Buffalo?

M.B: I suppose so, but I can't remember that part, but it was alot of fun trying to get all the different stations!

D.M: Did you find that you had alot more Americans coming in to Fort Erie after they built the Peace Bridge?

M.B: Oh I think so.

D.M: What did they come to Fort Erie for?

M.B: Well, not so much to Fort Erie as thay were passing through. It was a shortcut then for people from Ohio and that part of the... Indiana and all through there.

D.M: Did the ferries stop running when the Peace Bridge was built?

M.B: Yes.

D.M: People didn't use them anymore?

M.B: Not the same. It was quite a scary trip by ferry in the spring of year when the ice was coming down. You'd be on the boat and a big chunk of ice would hit the side of it you know.

D.M: Did any of them ever sink?

M.B: No.

D.M: When you moved to Fort Erie, what was your first impression of the town?

M.B: Terrible!

D.M: How come?

M.B: Well, I had been accustomed to living in Toronto, and then to come to a small town, it was a... but I got used to it. I like Fort Erie.

D.M: It was alot different from Toronto?

M.B: Oh yes. But I got to like Fort Erie and the people.

D.M: Did you live in Fort Erie through the Depression?

M.B: Yes.

D.M: How did that affect you?

M.B: Well, how will I say it? The number of people that came every day to your door asking for a meal, you'd have, perhaps, 2,3,4 people coming to your door each day asking if you could give them something to eat. You did your best, you made up sandwiches for them.

D.M: Your husband was working at the time?

M.B: Oh yes. You see, they would come on the train and then they'd get as far as the International Bridge and they couldn't go over into the States, so with the result that we had alot of them. They had to get off the train, they'd been riding in the boxcars and things like that, so that we had quite a few transients and that asking for food.

D.M: What happened to them all, did they eventually leave?

M.B: Oh, eventually, when times picked up. They used to have camps along the railway tracks.

D.M: What about World War 2, did you live here through that?

M.B: Oh yes.

D.M: Did anything happen in town during that time?

M.B: No, I didn't think so. Not that I can remember . I had taught a Sunday School class in my church and 3 of my pupils, when they grew up of course, oh, it had only been a few years, they didn't return, they

were killed overseas. I always think of them.

D.M: Did you husband's job at Horton Steel, did they make anything for the war? Did they manufacture any parts?

M.B: I think that was done by Fleet, I don't remember Horton doing that. Horton was a steel fabricating company.

D.M: How long did your husband work there?

M.B: 38 years.

D.M: What about Prohibition, did you live in Fort Erie through that?

M.B: I guess so, I don't remember . It was something I wasn't interested in I guess.

D.M: I understood the Americans would come across the brige to come drink in Fort Erie did you ever see any of that?

M.B: No.

D.M: Do you have anything else you'd like to add?

M.B: I don't think so.

D.M: It's been very nice talking to you, thank-you very much.

M.B: It's been very nice talking to you!