

Beverly Branton interviewing Mr. Arlington Freeman on May 6, 1985.
The interview is being held at 391 Argyle in Fort Erie, Ontario.

B.B.: Can you give me your date of birth, Mr. Freeman?

A.F.: March 9, 1909.

B.B.: And your place of birth?

A.F.: Chatham.

B.B.: And what brought you to Fort Erie?

A.F.: Railroad.

B.B.: Which railroad?

A.F.: Canadian National.

B.B.: Were you transferred down here?

A.F.: No, I bid this job in here, I got a steady job through bidding a job in here is how I come to Fort Erie. I come in the Wabash. And arrived Fort Erie in 2 o'clock in the morning. Didn't know nobody. Stayed in the station all night. Laid on one of the benches, you know. I didn't know I had that many bones in the morning but then I...

B.B.: Where was the station located?

A.F.: Right straight across from the New York Central. Right straight across from them. There use to be a pathway, people use to walk across there one time, oh, it use to be a board walk oh, about like that. People use to walk right across there. Instead of going around any other way you know because when they use to come there they use to come up the hill, the New York Central hill there, where it comes up in there along...just the other side of the bridge and up there where that lumber place there, right there, just in, come right up there.

When I come into Fort Erie the whole centre of Fort Erie was empty, built up all on the outside. I never saw a place like it.

B.B.: Why was it built all up on the outside?

A.F.: I don't know. I haven't a clue. But then after when the war came on they put them war time houses and then they just filled in so many places with war time houses. The a lot of people, I don't know if a company put them up like that and then people bought them after and then they changed them over, remodeled them, a lot of them. But a lot of them houses on Gilmore Road is all war time houses.

And I rented there, boarded there for two weeks in Fort Erie.

B.B.: Whereabouts?

A.F.: Mrs. Maude Brights. I paid \$10.00 a week board and I thought holy doodle. At that time I said, well..I thought that was..and then I stayed there two weeks and then I spent the rest of the time looking for a place and then I spent the rest of the time looking for a place and then I found a house on Russell Street for \$25.00 a month. And every time the wind blew the carpets would...until I found a place on Gilmore Road for \$17.50, boy I thought I had it made then. But when I fetched the wife, after I found a place, well first I stayed at people name of Thompsons for two weeks...ah, we rented the bedroom, had the use of a stove in the kitchen, I stayed there for two weeks, that was \$10.00 a week

B.B.: Was this right in someone's home or was it like a boarding house?

A.F.: No, it was right in someone's home. I was recommended to go there anyhow but then I got away from there and then after I got that, there on Gilmore Road there. Right along side by where Malcolm use to be. He use to be the..he was the judge I believe then. He was right on the corner of Gilmore Road and I don't know the rest of that, I don't know the other street there. It was right up on the Grand Trunk Hotel and I lived right along side of him. And he had a store there, too right on the corner. He use to have a big grocery store, right on the corner there and they tore that..oh, they had a big fire there and they tore down.

B.B.: Do you remember what the name of the store was?

A.F.: Malcolm's store.

B.B.: What caused the fire?

A.F.: I don't know. I haven't a clue. But I know they had a big fire and then after they, they had a barn that was kind of, on that next street there...I can't think of the name of that now...but they had a store in there for awhile and then they done away with it. He died and then she didn't want the store anymore and the girls, they had two girls and they wasn't interested too much in it, so that wound up the store. And then Malcolm's house is there yet, it's right on that corner.

B.B.: You lived by the race track?

A.F.: Right across from the race track.

B.B.: Has that changed?

A.F.: That's changed...the house, oh ya. It's, since then they've raised it up, put a foundation under it, I don't think they put in a cellar, but they put a foundation under it.

B.B.: Has the race track changed much?

A.F.: Oh, ya. You use to be able to, you use to be able to look from the front door you could see them, it use to be...well the race track then was running it was just a place for bums, you know people followed the race track, it was awful. You could come out of the race track, people coming out of the race track after the last race and they was gambling all the way out, and girls followed the races too..it was a god sent when they changed it over, you know they did, they made it so they couldn't go into the race track you know. At that time everybody had to be out at eleven o'clock in the morning 'cause the races started at two, I believe two o'clock that time..now they start at one-thirty.

B.B.: Do you remember when Fleet started up on Gilmore?

A.F.: Well, yes but not too much about it because I..I don't know too much about the Fleet.

I remember some big storms that was here. In 1937, I believe we had a big storm there that , why it use to take three engines to push a train out through the cut. That's the part that runs out through the subway right straight through to that you know out along the Bowen Road to that first bush, they use to call that, by that bush there, they called that Duff. Trains use to get their last orders there. And I'd seen it in there that they had to take three, take three engines to push a train out through there, the snow was that deep. I went out they sent me one time to do that switch at Duff and held..that engine was held up there fifty-five minutes, they sent me out there and a young fellow and we went out there in the morning and we was right to my crotch, the snow. I was walking half the time on the rail you know tokeep from going down. I got through about, oh, I guess three o'clock. Cleaned all around that switch and he let me come home and then he sent me back out there for the night. It didn't snow any more, I'd just sit there and wild away with the guy that was the operator there.

B.B.: What was your job?

A.F.: My job? That time was section and then I got to be track patrol. I track patrolled for years.

B.B.: What would that entail?

A.F.: Oh, anything you saw was wrong. The switches that was too wide or anything, parts that wereout of gauge..you know what that is? Anything like that that you saw was wrong you'd make report of it

and they would go and fix it. You would tell them where its at, they would fix it. I done that for years. And then I got a chance to go to Black Rock. I was going to Black Rock, I was going to go to Black Rock oh, about five or six years before. There was an English fella and I was going to go. But I wasn't going to go alone because I didn't think I could handle, we could handle that foreman over there because he was tough and we got our papers. Both of us got our first papers, come along fine, we got the second papers, his papers were a bit different from mine because he was born in England. And he thought they were a bit too personal so he give it up, he said "the heck with them", well then I wasn't going over there alone. And through bidding over there I had to bid out on another job and then bid my job back into Fort Erie again. But then after, that foreman over there why he was a tough bird but he made a lot of his own problems. He lived in Ridgeway and he use to ride the Buffalo and Goderich Railroad that use to run around through Amigari. Do you remember Amigari..is the, that use to be the station that was on Gilmore Road.

B.B.: Whereabouts on Gilmore?

A.F.: Just right straight across, right straight east of Grand Trunk Hotel, only on the other side of, the Grand Trunk Hotel is on this side and that railway station sit right there, on that side. Station, train use to stop there, the passenger train use to stop there, my wife..well we use to ride that lots of times, cause we would go to Brantford see and then we would change at Brantford and get on one for London and when we use to go home, to Chatham. We use to go the C.N. that time you know. And after with the Wabash, why we never rode the Wabash, I only rode that Wabash once. Well, the wife and I rode the Wabash when we come here.

B.B.: Where did the Wabash run from?

A.F.: From Buffalo to Windsor. Well they use to go across, you see Wabash went right across the river when they use to, there's a ferry at Windsor that they use to go across on into Detroit. The C.N. owns that.

B.B.: Were there many passenger trains that came through Fort Erie?

A.F.: Other passengers...New York Central. But no C.N.'s. C.N., that's the only one when they cut out the B&G Line, what they call B&G, that's Buffalo and Goderich, when they cut that out they never run any more passenger trains..C.N..

B.B.: How many times a day would the passenger trains come through?

A.F.: One time. One time in and one time out. Come in around noon hour I guess and leave two, three o'clock, something like that.

B.B.: Do you remember when Bridgeburg and Amigari became one?

A.F.: The year when it happened. Well it was right in the early part of the thirties. I don't know just really the date.

B.B.: What was the reason for them to come together?

A.F.: To be together in the start? I don't know. I haven't any..they just called it two different places. It was just like, well at Sudbury, not Sudbury, Thunder Bay, you know ell that's two cities there, it's just the same thing as Fort Erie and..now you wouldn't know you was in the one in the other, well you didn't know then. You could be driving along and you wouldn't know if you was out of one into the other.

B.B.: Did people take pride from say being from Amigari..and Bridgeburg.. and Fort Erie or did they consider themselves all from the same place?

A.F.: Well, I think they considered them all from the same place. Only thing it was Amigari then which was Fort Erie west.

B.B.: Where did you live after you lived on Gilmore, where did you move to from there?

A.F.: I went to Dufferin Street.

B.B.: How has Dufferin Street changed...the north end of Fort Erie?

A.F.: Not too awful much. It, well some of the stores, well there's an apartment there that never was there before. Remember we was talking about that. Fretz use to have a, right at the corner of Klauck and Dufferin Street, he use to run a car dealor place there at one time. That went through or he got tired of that or something and I just forget whether he died which caused that to close up or not, I don't know.

B.B.: What about Jarvis Street, the shopping on Jarvis Street, has that changed much?

A.F.: No, well the banks you know is been remodelled you know, because them banks and everything was there before but they remodelled it but not too much.

B.B.: And where did you move from Dufferin Street?

A.F.: From Dufferin? From Dufferin I went to Thompson Road. It was right across at that time there pm Thompson Road, there was a dump right across the road from us. I'll never forget that as long as I live. We had a big house in there you know and the rats would come in there from the dumps you know, just about time someone would be there the rats would come there and you'd hear them, all of a sudden they'd run through the petitions you know and then they'd squeel and I'd say

"Now they scored!"

B.B.: Has that changed much, out in that area.

A.F.: Oh ya. That's there, well there's no dump out there now you see. That's all finished, closed up. They had a bunch of chickens there one time. I use to buy roosters, baby chicks. And I had them nice and they was all real nice and I put them out in the garage and low and behold if the rats didn't come there and kill half of them. I said if the garage belonged to me I'd just put a wire around it and burned it right to the ground. They'd pile them right up, just kill them and put them in a pile. They'd just kill them, their like a weasel or a mink. A mink is the worst killer in the world.

B.B.: How else has Thompson changed since you moved?

A.F.: Oh, its changed. Well the cemetery hasn't changed. Well, they extended it, it's now clean to the railroad. Well, from the Thompson Road, well I use to keep chickens as I said and I use to always raise a couple of pigs because I use to keep, kill my, you know, have my own pork. From there I went to Stevensville.

B.B.: What year would this have been?

A.F.: '41. I went to Stevensville and I was on twenty-five acres. I thought I was a farmer.

B.B.: What type of farming did you do?

A.F.: I had, I had three or four cows, brood sows and I use to raise a lot of ducks you know, 'cause I use to get a lot of feed of the railroad you know and I use to veal calves you know, I'd just keep there to, ..you know there's a lot of dairy farms right in there and they don't want the bull calves coming in after a cow freshens, they keep a cow or calf about three or four days to make the milk gets good and then they'll sell them calves. And I use to buy them calves for veal you know and I use to, a cow, a good cow will veal three calves beside her own, you know and I use to veal calves. And there was a farmer around the way, I use to exchange with him and when he was thrashing I would take off and give him, or cutting corn or filling silo and when I wanted a truck to go to Welland 'cause the stock market at that time was in Welland and I use to go there.

B.B.: Were you still working the railroad then?

A.F.: Oh, ya. Getting up four o'clock in the morning, figure I must be crazy.

B.B.: Was there many people employed in Fort Erie with the railroad?

A.F.: When I started? Lots of them. At that time they use to have a gang about, about twenty-five, twenty-six men in the winter and then they'd have anywheres from thirty-five, thirty-six, something like that in the summer.

B.B.: And what year was it that you started in Fort Erie?

A.F.: In Fort Erie? Oh, '31, first part of '31, in January of '31.

B.B.: That would have been during the Depression...

A.F.: Ya, oh ya.

B.B.: ...and yet they still employed that many men.

A.F.: Ya, well it was mostly all, mostly all foreigners, the majority of them was. And they use to have box cars for them to live in and they'd have, well they'd just take the trunks right out from the box car you know and set the box car down. Well maybe two guys would live in one of those box cars and they use to have them all around in different places in there. Why one foreman even lived in one of them.

B.B.: Where were they located?

A.F.: Well they was located in different places in the yard but they was mostly for the section gang.

B.B.: And they would live there all year 'round?

A.F.: Ya, well they could get their coal you know, see with the coal docks not too far there and at that time there was a steam engine, see everything was steam, they didn't deisel hadn't come in then. Oh, ya some of the guys in there they had to get after them to get them to cash their cheques. You know they'd just put them in a trunk and at that time ..use to go down to the butcher shop you know and buy a hog head, you know and they'd fix that up and it'd do them for a week, jell it and...ya they use to get after them thereto make them cash their checks.

B.B.: Why wouldn't they cash them?

A.F.: They, nothing, no purpose to cashing their cheques, they'd just hang right on to them. They'd never thought about putting them in the bank see and they'd have trunks there, they'd put them in the trunk.

B.B.: Why did they choose to live in the box cars?

A.F.: Well, ah, cheap rent. They could have a box car for a dollar a month and then they use to pay two dollars a month for electric.

B.B.: And they rented these off the railroad?

A.F.: The railroad, ya. Ya, the foreman lived there and an assistant foreman lived in one too for awhile, him and his wife. I don't think she was

too happy with it but...

B.B.: During the Depression time was there a lot of transients that would be coming through...through the railroad?

A.F.: Bums you mean, oh ya. There was lots of them. Ya there use to be, right at the, well right close to the end, there use to be a bush in there off from the cemetery, well it's right on the end of Gilmore, ah, Thompson Road and Bowen Road, where it comes in, there's a bush in there. There use to be a lot of them come in there and then they use to, a lot of them use to get off at Welland Junction or Dain City because it's that's a junction there where the trains lots of the Wabash's use to split there. They would bring a full train into Welland junction and maybe half of it would go to Fort Erie and the other half would go to Niagara Falls and that was what they called a "jump-off" spot. I had worked there at Dain City there for awhile too. There was lack of work. Some of them guys they'd come there and they went to one guys house and they stoled his cabbage, stoled stuff a lot of these.. and then they'd go back and ask for some salt. It was something to let them eat out of cans you know. Stay there all night. Well it was kinda like a, well, underbush in there for shelter like. One half of the world don't know what the other half lives like.

B.B.: And New York Central Railroad was in town also. Was that much competition with the Canadian National or was there enough work to go around?

A.F.: Well, when the New York Central run in here, when I first come here the P.M. use to run over the New York Central tracks and they use to divide in through the yard. What do they call that...the Pere Marquette P.M., now its changed over, the Pere Marquettes changed over to Chestopeeka & Ohio, Chestopeeka & Ohio takes over the P.M.. But they use to come in here...seems to me there was another railroad that use to come in New York Central...I don't know now, I just can't place but I remember the P.M. use to come into Fort Erie.

B.B.: Was there much competition there?

A.F.: I don't know. The C.N. didn't seem, didn't seem to be hurting much over it. I remember one time, I, well it was right in the hungry 30's, I had to go to Delhi to work all winter and I got a job in there and I use to ride the Wabash when they had the big steam engine then, before they use to have small steam engines and then they had the

big steam engines, and they use to run out of Fort Erie and they use to call it the "high ball trains", they use to call it the "91's", that was the name of the engine or the train I should say. And the first one they would never let anybody, would never stop that for nobody. That went straight through and the only time they stopped for that one was in St. Thomas when they changed crews, you know. But they use to let you ride the second one because they had to stop at Delhi to let you off. Oh, I'd stop in there maybe get on here in Fort Erie, may be eight o'clock, eight-thirty and get in Delhi around midnight or three o'clock or one o'clock in the morning and half of the time the engineer he couldn't judge about how far the, when to let you off, maybe you'd have to get off about a half a mile, in the snow.

B.B.: You had mentioned earlier that you had remembered a couple of good storms in Fort Erie...

A.F.: Good storms...?

B.B.: Do you remember when the arena caved in from a storm?

A.F.: Ya, ya. I remember one storm, well the storm that one that they was runnin' three trains out, I was living that time on Gilmore Road. And ah, the snow it blowed...there use to be that time the C.N. use to have a stockpile of coal. It use to run from, well right in front of the Horton Steele, where the Horton Steele has got now them buildings there along side of, right across from Russell Street there. That use to run right straight through to Gilmore Road. A big, oh an awful mass stock pile of coal there, you know in an event they had a strike, the coal mines had a strike. That was something for me at that time when I was on Russell, when I moved to Russell Street there, everybody was getting coal that time. You could tell all the people in that neighbourhood, well that was getting close in there to Amigari, everybody was burning soft coal, C.N. soft coal. But I remember, I was thinking about these storms, I come home one time when I lived on Gilmore Road, I had a pair of pigs and I had..there use to be an old school yard, let's see from the corner to..there was three houses from the corner there, I can't, I can't think of the name of that street, it ain't Arnold, anyhow there was about three houses from the corner and there use to be an old school house but the school house wasn't there but the yard was there and I had a pair of pigs back over there in pen I had fixed over there. I got permission from

the town if I could put it there. We had a mayor, a chief here by the name of Griffin, I went to him and asked, told him I had pigs and that I was using lime so there was no smell you know. But I remember coming home there when that big storm was on there and I was right to my crotch going out there to feed them, to feed them pigs, and my son was walking right on top of the snow and I was and when I came back the snow was blowing so bad I could hardly, you know you couldn't hardly see, I went right into the, into the, that coal pile, you know going back up into the yard. It was, oh, that was really, that was really a storm.

B.B.: Was that the same storm the arena was caved in?

A.F.: I kind of believe it was. I know at one time I never 'et so much bacon in my life. That was just about all you could get you know at the store that they had. The trucks couldn't get in or nothing and here I had two pigs in the pen out there and I, in the wintertime, and I couldn't butcher. I remember after that I got a big extension cord and I butchered one, onenight, the wife I said for her to put a pail out, put a thing on, one of these big boilers on and have a fire you know, I said put water on and...she had the water on in there but she couldn't get no water to boil or something so I came home and I had a fella to help me, well I had a couple of fellas to help me so I went up and cut up some tie wood and had crisol in it you know and I cut it up a little small and I had 'er, oh I guess the fire going like that and low and below the cristol you know will gum up the inside of your chimney and I got, the chimney was on fire and the one fella that was going to help me, he was the farthest away from the door and the first one out. And we laughed about it for a long time you know but it did burn out. So we butchered one, one night and one the next.

B.B.: So you lived on the farm in Stevensville and then where did you move to from Stevensville?

A.F.: I was, I rented that twenty-five acres and then after I..oh, I'm going to give up, he wanted the place and so I got rid of the stuff I had and I use to have raffles, you know. I use to have a lot of ducks but then I went on to Gilmore, onto Bowen Road, I still had, I took ah, I took ah, a couple head of cattle with me, a cow with two calves , that was it, two twin calves. And there was an old barn there on there, there was seven acres of land there on the house, place. And I kept raising those Muskovy ducks because I can pick up the feed there,

use to be really good to, so then I kept the cow in there and then the cow kept going through the fence, so I trained her off for a steer and I butchered him. And I think I killed the one calf and sold the other. But then I use to, continually to raise ducks, oh, it was great to raise Muskovy ducks. There not like these other ducks. I raised Pekings one year, had three ducks and a drake. And I wouldn't let them set, I'd just let them keep a laying and I'd all around the country after clucks. You know a hen will cover eleven duck eggs and only thing when a hen sets, she sets for three weeks. Peking ducks sets four weeks, Muskovy ducks sets five weeks. But that year I had a bunch of Pekings oh, I guess I had about seventy or eighty ducks. I said no more of that. Every time you would open the door I said, their hollering. And I troughs you know, oh, fourteen foot long and I use to mix up feed there and I'd go along and fill that up and then I had another trough in there of water, they'd fill up 'til they was right to their neck you know, go over and get a drink of water, squirt and come back and start right over again.

B.B.: What would you do with the ducks?

A.F.: Oh I sold them. Them, I, we picked them. My wife had trouble with her hands ever since from picking ducks. Pekings they only get eight pounds and they don't get any bigger. When they become eight pounds and that's about twelve weeks you might just as well get rid of them. You're only feeding them for nothing from then on. But Muskovy's the drakes get to be good size. The ducks gets only, not too big, only three pounds and a half, dressed I mean. But I use to have them, have raffles. Oh, I'd have peoples, at that place, come as far as Port Colborne. I've seen lots of times guys come there and lose fifty dollars, you know use to play poker, and then they'd take so much out of every pot for the fowl. And I never use to crowd anybody, if they, if you got two or three ducks and you had no place to keep them, I'd never bother, I'd let them stay there you know, come and get them when you wanted them. I'd see guys come in there and lose fifty dollars and never get a feather. Well maybe they'd get pots in the poker games.

B.B.: How would that work?

A.F.: Well, guys would go tell another, you know and I had oh, I really had, really had many people come there. I had well, the owner of the Stevensville Hotel, the one, the owner of the New Germany Hotel, oh, there was

a lot, oh, I had a lot of guys in there who had money, that, they liked that, they liked raffles. Well for the poker too, you know and then for the fowl too. And I use to have, I use to have, my fowl use to give nice...I never sold anything that I didn't want myself. Oh, I'd get rid of twenty-five, thirty ducks in a weekend, you know, they'd play maybe all Saturday night, all Sunday.

B.B.: And they'd play for the ducks?

A.F.: Play for, for, their gambling, their playing poker, you see, their playing poker but there taking out of every pot, their taking so much out of every pot and they put that into a dish, that's for the fowl and when the price that I wanted for the fowl, when that was in there, then whoever won the next pot won the pot and the fowl. That's the way that worked, you know. When I cut that out they just begged me to start in that again. Then I got in, out of that, and I got into game, game chickens. And I was raising game chickens. And they were taking pick, and across the river, you know, for to fight. Take them, oh, they'd take them across first, they they'd had a way of teaching them, makin' them jump, you know for their feed or something like that. That's half of the bargain, is jumping you know and when they'd put these steele spurs on them, these little ones. I had two little ones one time and I had a little ditch come down there and these two little devils got to fighting and there just like hawks. Their eyes, they would be really mad, their eyes would just like they turned inside out, you know and why I had to pick one up, catch one and take him way, away from the other one all together. They'd, they'd just keep a fighting, that's just their nature. Oh, ya they use to, they come there once and took a rooster from me, fixed him all up, and I think he, I think he won two fights, then they keep him for breeding purposes. If he wins three fights without getting killed, he's lucky. 'Cause those steele spurs they have, they're terrible, they're, they're, it's cruel, there's no doubt about it, it's cruel! I don't know what else to say about it...

B.B.: And then from Bowen Road where did you move?

A.F.: From Bowen Road, Argyle.

B.B.: Where you are now?

A.F.: Where I am now. I stayed there and I stayed at that place there from 1946, until 1979. I wanted to sell and a fella from out west he wanted, he was looking for land and I wanted to sell some. He's there and I'm over..Cal Hill he wanted to sell here and he just put this up for sale. And I come over and I wanted a one-storey building with a basement,

that one out there was a storey and a half and I wanted to get out of it, I put enough money into that house to...the plaster was kind of bad on one side, I done the west side of the dining room there, took the plaster all off, I got around the corner and there was a door right there, I said oh, I'll go as far as the door and I went as far as the door and lo and behold I got just the other side of the door and there was a lot of it, plaster was there, I said, I just tore the whole thing right off, ceiling and all. Then I took the laft off all the outside walls and insulated that. And I done the front room and I done the same thing with that, well I panelled the front room. Upstairs I panelled that, I put the panelling on the bedrooms upstairs, put new ceilings in, dropped the ceiling a little bit.

B.B.: Just to go back to the railroad, to when you were here working on the C.N....the 2nd World War, did that affect the C.N. railroad?

A.F.: Did it affect...oh, ya! They built us...

B.B.: For Fort Erie...?

A.F.: For Fort Erie? Well it made business for well, the railroads, you know, you see, one railroad feeds another. That's the way, that's how railroads work, one feeds the other. You see, the C.N., now picks off of the Delaware, well it's not Delaware anymore now its...what do they call it now?...anyhow, one railroad feeds another. You see before the C.N. use to feed the New York Central, the Pennsylvania, the Erie and the Delaware. It use to all come into Black Rock and they use to deliver to all them places. Well, the Pennsylvania use to come and get theirs. The New York Central they use to, they delivered over, they delivered over to the New York Central, they delivered to the Erie and they delivered to the Delaware. Then the Erie went under, or the Delaware took the Erie over so then they use to deliver to the Delaware. Well then they all went together and come instead of being New York Central, it was Penn Central and then after that finished, it ain't Amtrack, I forget what they call it now, we'll come back to it before we're through...

... Dummy use to be right in front of the C.N. station. People use to get on there and then go to Black Rock. They use to ride that and then they use to ride the ferry. There use to be the ferry, the ferry use to run. Well it was right down there where the old Red and White store use to be, it use to be right in there, right across from

the King Edward. It use to run there and it use to ride, well part of it was passengers up on the top, cars on the bottom. We use to go across the river and go to Ferry Street. I remember one time, I went across on the ferry like that and I don't know, somehow or other, and then for some reason or another, some of these colored fellows that was in here got into some kind of a problem going across the river and they must have been deported. Because they would nail me every time I went across the, the every time I went across. And I went across on the ferry there once and they let everybody go but me. And then they pull me off to the side, he'd ask me some questions, then they'd play the record, what they called played the record. In ten minutes time they could tell you where you worked, where you lived. But they let me go after that, but...The same way buses use to run out of Fort Erie, too, go to Fort Erie to Sheldon Square. Do you know where Sheldon Square...?

B.B.: Where's Sheldon Square?

A.F.: Where Niagara Street comes right in there, you come to the big round circle there, then you can go to Sheldon Square, well then if you go right around you go into Lafayette. Well the buses use to run to Sheldon Square, from Town Hall. And I rode that. And they'd hold up the bus for me ever..nine times out of ten they'd hold the bus up. Ya, that use to be something when they use to run the buses..

B.B.: As you look back since you've been in Fort Erie, which is the early '30's have you seen Fort Erie go through many changes?

A.F.: Oh, boy. One thing about it I never knew that Argyle, that there was a street called Argyle. I never knew it until it was up for sale, this place was up for sale, I never knew this place...Yes there's been a lot of changes in Fort Erie. Well, the industries. These little, ah, what's that place now, there's a little place in there along side of the Gasket Co. there, they use to make aluminum windows and doors in there. One of the fellows, that worked on the railroad, his wife she worked in the office in that building there, that place there, and I guess it's gone under. And the roundhouse, when the roundhouse was there, that use to be something to go in see these engines all around in the round house and now they got that just about all torn down. And the turntable that use to let them in.

B.B.: What was the turntable?

A.F.: Engines use to go in like this is the turntable here, it's a up about

that high, I would say about three foot. Engines run onto that and then they can turn that whole thing, that whole unit, to go into whatever tracks into the roundhouse, what they want to put that engine into, that's what they called the turntable. They use to do that.

B.B.: Would you say the railroad is as strong today as it was in the '30's?

A.F.: I would never advise anybody to work on the section. No, sir I would never advise anybody to work on the railroad anymore. Nothing, my point of view is before you use to you done a lot of hard work but now it don't matter what you do, you can't do enough. That was part of the reason I took an early retirement, because there was going to be a lay off and that would give a young fella a job and they offered me a good supplementary to go, which I didn't think they would. I couldn't believe the railroad would do that. I wanted to see the fine print until I found some higher ups that was taking it too. And that's the reason I took, that's the reason I went off, I worked forty-three years lacking three months, that's a long time.

B.B.: Why do you think the C.N. railroad is still in Fort Erie where the other railroads aren't there?

A.F.: Why do I think that the C.N. is which...?

B.B.: Is still running in Fort Erie?

A.F.: Well, this is a terminal here. This is a place in here...Fort Erie is a terminal see, they, it's a place, they fix cars, they repair box cars, they service deisels, everything is here to service these deisels and everything here. And another thing there Fort Erie connects up to east Buffalo to the Norfolk & Western but it runs in here, it runs over the Canadian National tracks and they run straight right through to east Buffalo. And then the C.N. they deliver to, they deliver to ..I can't think of that railroad...the one that took over the Deleware and New York Central, the Penn Central,...I can't think of the name of that...

B.B.: Can you think of anything else as you look back over Fort Erie and the changes? Or maybe some of your first recollections of Fort Erie?

A.F.: My first recollections of Fort Erie? Ya, I remember I use to, use to, like to bet horses and I use to go to the bookmakers that they had there, use to be one there off of Bertie Street, not Bertie, Queen Street. They had a place up in there like a, overtop of a garage, kind of a long place you know, they use to go up in there. You could go

in there and it'd just be the same as being at the track, you know, go in there. I remember they said something about the police, coming like that there, said you'd see guys going out of there like rats going out of a burning ship. But they use to have the tracks up there, just like they had Leehigh,..or Delhi..or ah, ya, Delhi, not Delhi,..Leehigh, these big tracks you know they have in the states,and they would have them right up in there you know. But they had it rigged up in such a way that they had wires that they would get it right from Buffalo, right after the race was run but they would give it to you just like the race hadn't run. You could make your bet there just the same as you could at the track and they would pay you off right there, if you want or you didn't win..I remember one time there use to be a fella along side of me there, well I think he was kinda on the borderline there of being retarded, you know, but he had a family but he would just, nothing was in his mind but horses and he would, he'd be out in the back yard there doing something or something, if I'd have done this or if I'd have done that and..he pretty near, he did..wind up, wound up in Welland hanging himself, Well his wife she wasn't the best either, that might have had something to do with it. But he was neighbours of ours see, oh, for awhile while I lived on Gilmore Road.

I remember too when I was in Fort Erie, they use to..well I changed over once on the trench for a gang, for a bet, on that time they was unloading cattle here, they had the stockyards. Do you know where that is down there by Hart & Cooley? Just before you come to Hart & Cooley, there's a place in there, they use to have a place in there for to feed them. If cattle or anything had been so many hours there suppose to feed them and water them. At that time, they were unloading cattle here like anything because it was cheaper to truck them over then it would be to take them over by cars. They gave me the job of unloading them. I had unloaded them. And I remember one time I was unloaded bulls there, too, they had bulls in there and one guy behind with a rope on it and a guy ahead and I, I said, this is for the birds. I said you've got to give me, they've got these hooks you know that they put right in the wing of their nose and they have a stick about two foot long you can keep their head up. A bull is powerless if you keep his head up. You let him get his head down and he's hard to control and they have to tie them you know by theirselves. The other cattle that is in there, I'd be in there to one o'clock in the morning

before they'd truck them. Them big trucks from east Buffalo use to come over here and they'd take a half a carload in a truck load. Ya, I done some of that.

B.B.: What else would you do for entertainment in Fort Erie?

A.F.: For entertainment? We use to, there in the hungry '30's you didn't work all the time, you know sometimes you was off. And you use to caddy at Erie Downs for seventy-five cents. You'd go six miles around that track, around that course for about six miles, for about seventy-five cents. And then there use to be a fella by the name of Anger, Anger. He had two little shacks, right across from the Erie Downs Golf Course on Thompson Road there. And lo and behold, they'd shoot crap there, in that building in there, some of them kids in there would,..you'd get seventy-five cents and lose it in ten minutes. Use to be, there's a guy here in Fort Erie that use to always holler: "You can't beat luck and you can't buy it." Yep, he use to be...And they use to have crap games there all Saturdays and Sundays, they'd be there...there would be guys in there that worked at the Gold Refining Company, this Gold Refining Company. They use to be in there playing, shoot crap. And every once in awhile some crazy dude would come along in there and put in a pair of phony dice you know. You couldn't go out on them. I remember one time, the police come there one time and run right across, all through the swamp and everything to keep from getting caught and they caught a fella name Jimmy Bright. They just reached right through the window put their arms right around him and caught him. He was the gamekeeper then anyhow.
...I'm still trying to think..

B.B.: Well, is there anything else you'd like...?

A.F.: Well, you better shut it off for a bit 'til I can think of something.

B.B.: Well Mr. Freeman can you think of any thing else that you can see where Fort Erie has gone through different changes?

A.F.: Hardly. I guess,I guess I've just about said everything I know.

B.B.: Okay. Well, you've done really well and I thank you very much for the interview.

A.F.: Thank you.