

This is Shelley Richer interviewing Mrs. Shirley Beam, in her home, at 2521 Coral Avenue, in Stevensville, on September 25, 1985.

**S.R:** Hello Mrs. Beam, and how are you today?

**S.B:** Fine.

**S.R:** What is your date of birth?

**S.B:** June the 11th, 1926.

**S.R:** Where were you born?

**S.B:** In Stevensville.

**S.R:** Where in Stevensville, was there a hospital, or in a home?

**S.B:** In a home.

**S.R:** Where would that be?

**S.B:** On the main street in Stevensville. It was then called Victoria Avenue, but it's Stevensville Road now.

**S.R:** When did that change?

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

**S.R:** A little while ago, a long time ago?

**S.B:** No, a long time ago, when I was a child.

**S.R:** Have you ever heard why it changed?

**S.B:** Oh, it was just... the roads were changed, just like they have been today. Regional changed the Townline Road, Netherby Townline Road to Regional so-and-so, and that was just changed. That was Victoria Avenue when I was born.

**S.R:** Have you lived in Stevensville all your life?

**S.B:** Yes I have.

**S.R:** What brought your family to Stevensville, when did they come, and why?

**S.B:** My great grandfather was a tailor by trade, and he came to Stevensville in 1847.

**S.R:** Where did he come from?

**S.B:** He came from England.

**S.R:** Would you have any idea why he came to Stevensville?

**S.B:** No, I have no idea whether he had brothers or sisters here, I have no recollection of that. We tried to get his birth certificate and more history, but it was just not available, it was burnt.

**S.R:** Was his wife a local lady?

**S.B:** No, his first wife was from Wasaga Beach, up around Barrie. She was an Oxtoby.

**S.R:** What's an Oxtoby?

**S.B:** No, that was her name. Then he married again and her name was McDade.

**S.R:** Your great grandfather's name was Wade?

**S.B:** It was William Walter Wade, the one that came over from England. He was the tailor, and then his son, who is my grandfather was Coleman Ansley Wade. He carried on the tailoring business in our home.

**S.R:** Going back to your great grandfather, how was his business run?

**S.B:** His business was not run from the house. In those days they went from town to town and they would tailor. They would go to Fort Erie for a week, or whatever length of time they needed to stay. Then they would come home, then they would go to Ridgeway, and then come home, then Port Colborne, Welland, and all over the area.

**S.R:** Was it a very prosperous trade?

**S.B:** Yes it was, it certainly was.

**S.R:** Would you have any idea... have you ever found any records on the prices of suits when your great grandfather did it or when your grandfather did it?

**S.B:** No, no, I couldn't tell you that.

**S.R:** Did they have sewing machines then?

**S.B:** Yes.

**S.R:** Did your great grandfather tote a sewing machine around with him?

**S.B:** I think he would get... I don't know whether he would get home and make them. I couldn't tell you that.

**S.R:** Oh, so he might have went to town to dig up business, came home and sewed it, then the next time take it back?

**S.B:** I don't know. I have his original scissors.

**S.R:** What kind were they? Do they have a name of them?

**S.B:** I don't think so, but they're about 14 inches long.

**S.R:** And they're still good quality?

**S.B:** They certainly are. They're not like you get today.

**S.R:** So if you sewed you could still use them?

**S.B:** The date on the scissors is 1859.

**S.R:** They're well made scissors and very heavy to try to use them.

**S.B:** And I still use the twill tape, in my construction of suits and coats, that my grandfather bought.

**S.R:** That's how good it was? It hasn't rotted or anything, after all this time?

**S.B:** No, it certainly hasn't, and I've got a whole bolt of hair cloth that they used to use in making men's suits, that they used for the collars. Hair cloth, picky as the dukes.

**S.R:** Your grandfather then, started it in the home?

**S.B:** Yes, he started it in one room of the house.

**S.R:** Was it just him?

**S.B:** Yes, he was the only one of 14 children that was interested in the tailoring business. My great grandfather was one of the first business people in Stevensville, and he lived here until he died. He and my grandmother both died in Stevensville and my grandfather died in 1935. They both sewed for all the prominent people in Stevensville. They always said that when my grandfather, who was Coleman and they always called him Coley, and said when his suit was completely worn out, the buttons were still there. They never, ever, had to be sewn on.

**S.R:** There was somebody that you had mentioned that still had...?

**S.B:** Yes, Cliff Winger, he used to go to market every week at Niagara Falls and sell cheese, and eggs, and butter. When I did a story about Cliff when he retired, and he was up in years, he had his formal suit that he wore to the Masons. He showed me the suit that my grandfather had made. That was probably 10 years ago he showed it to me. He's still wearing it every month to the monthly meetings. The lining was completely gone but the suit looked just like it did then.

**S.R:** Would the suit be 50 or 60 years old?

**S.B:** Oh yes, oh yes.

**S.R:** And the tailoring was still intact then?

**S.B:** Oh yes, very, very much.

**S.R:** Where on Victoria, which is now Stevensville Road, was the Wade homestead?

**S.B:** It was right up near the fire hall.

**S.R:** That's past the creek going towards, or over, the railroad tracks?

**S.B:** No, it was on the south side of the railroad track. Today there's a gasoline station and the fire hall... the fire hall, the gasoline station, then my old homestead. It was right there.

**S.R:** How long was that in the family, and you had mentioned a large amount of children born there?

**S.B:** Twenty-one children, 21 of the Wade children were born in that house.

**S.R:** How long did it stay in the Wade family?

**S.B:** It stayed in the Wade family until 1967, when my mother died.

**S.R:** That was 120 years then, from 1847 when you grandfather came over, to 1967?

**S.B:** Yes, then my mother was the last one. Grant you, she wasn't a Wade, but she had lived there every since she was married. She was from Sherkston.

**S.R:** Is there anything else that you would like to mention about the Wade family, any of their achievements with the Town, or anything like that?

**S.B:** Well, there was two maiden aunts that never married, Elmira and Florence, and they always kept boarders. They would board... some of them stayed, slept there, but a lot of them just had their meals there, and it was school teachers and bankers.

**S.R:** Was that on the homestead or was that in their private home?

**S.B:** No, no, it was on the homestead, and there was always a great big long table that always had a linen tablecloth and napkin rings, and it was very formal.

**S.R:** It was like a restaurant then?

**S.B:** No, no, it wasn't a restaurant, you didn't order what you wanted to eat, it was...

**S.R:** No, it was kept nice and respectable like a restaurant rather than just a family kitchen?

**S.B:** Yes, and there was always a lot of goodies. There was 100 pounds of this kind of flour and 100 pounds of sugar. It was the bins that would tip forward and there was always ample food. The train station was close by.

**S.R:** That helped with business then right?

**S.B:** Well, not really... it helped with begging for food, because there was a lot of tramps that would come in on the tracks in those days. Anyway, there was always a tramp at the back door, a tramp or two, and they'd be begging for food. My two great aunts would always give them food, you know, sit them in a comfortable chair. One day my father went up to the station and on the back of the door it said, "If you want a good square meal, go to the first house on the left-hand side", so he erased it and we didn't get half the tramps. But, they came back even after my aunties died. They came back and visited the old home and... just before my mother died in '67, they came back and said, "Margaret, can I go out and look at the dining room", and she said it still looks the same as it did 40 years ago. But, they were always welcome in the home.

**S.R:** Is that it for the Wade's then?

**S.B:** As far as I know.

**S.R:** Going back to your school days, could you tell me what school you attended and where it was located?

**S.B:** Yes, it was in Stevensville, and the first school I went to was a little frame building on, I think it's Airline Street, and we always called it the Little Pigpen.

**S.R:** Why would it be called that?

**S.B:** Well, that's about what it amounted to. There wasn't any toilet facilities there at all, and you had to go and go over to the brick school that is adjacent to that. These two buildings are still standing. You had to go over to the basement of the brick building to go, and when you're six years old... there was no kindergarten, of course... and you'd have to put your coat on and your boots, to go out and go to the bathroom.

**S.R:** It may as well be an outhouse, right?

**S.B:** Yes, that's right, but it wasn't that close. You had to go, you know, quite a distance to go to the brick school house. Then, I got my other education, my other public school education in the brick school that still stands.

**S.R:** What years then, did the Pigpen school... what number is that school?

**S.B:** We're the No. 9.

**S.R:** Was the brick one No. 9 too?

**S.B:** Yes.

**S.R:** The little part of the school, the wooden part, what grades did that go to?

**S.B:** One and two, I think, because in those days it was A and B.

**S.R:** A and B?

**S.B:** Yes, A, B, C, D, you know, and then the other grades, until you went to high school, was in the brick building.

**S.R:** Where would you go to high school?

**S.B:** It was a continuation school, where our public school is today.

**S.R:** That would get you ready for college then?

**S.B:** There was a grade 13. But, there were different things like... we didn't have a great, like, in this continuation school there wasn't a great science programme, and home ec., this type of thing, it was a continuation school. So, then that in turn was changed into the... when the public school, the brick and the little frame building was no longer able to be used as a school, then we changed and used the continuation school as a public school, and bused the children either to Ridgeway or Fort Erie.

**S.R:** Was it because the brick and the frame buildings were too small, or they didn't meet the safety codes?

**S.B:** They didn't meet the safety codes, no, it was terrible.

**S.R:** Would you remember approximately when that was?

**S.B:** Well, I went to the continuation school... so, I would say that it would be about the 1960s that the public school was no longer able to be used.

**S.R:** Did they ever put washroom facilities, that you know of, in that little frame building?

**S.B:** There were... like a chemical toilet type thing, but in the frame building, no, there was never... chemical toilet, because there wasn't any water in Stevensville in those days, like, there wasn't any water brought in, you know, it had to be, you know, cisterns, or wells.

**S.R:** When did Stevensville get public water?

**S.B:** Oh heavens, I can't tell you. Our daughter was born in '51 and we didn't have water then, we had cisterns, and it was costly.

- S.R:** You had to get the water trucked in?
- S.B:** Trucked in, 5 dollars a tank.
- S.R:** Oh, it's over 20 dollars now.
- S.B:** I'm sure. But anyway, it had it's advantages and disadvantages, and I'll tell you Stevensville was in a real uproar at the time. There was a great fire in the States of a lot of children burned to death, and that's when Stevensville got up in arms because there wasn't even a fire escape in the public school in Stevensville, there was nothing. People got up in arms... and all of the staircasing was going... like, to the second floor and below it was the oil barrels that they used to oil the floors with. Everything was underneath the staircase. There was nothing, and if the kids were downstairs in the basement... that's where we went to play because we didn't have a proper schoolyard.
- S.R:** So you didn't have outside recesses?
- S.B:** You'd go downstairs and play, like in the nasty weather, and you'd play downstairs. If you wanted to go up out of the basement you had to go right beside those barrels, and all the mops and everything was kept there. If any fire would have ignited, the children would have never gotten out. That was an awful, awful uproar in Stevensville. There was meetings upon meetings.
- S.R:** Did it take very long to get it changed after that?
- S.B:** Quite awhile. There was a lot of fighting that went on, yeah. No-one wants to have their children on school buses, but you have to take the good with the bad, because they were getting a better education and not just a continuation school education.
- S.R:** Oh, by changing them to the high school?
- S.B:** Yes, because you got your science programme and you got your home ec., and your... and at Fort Erie you got your workshops and everything. So, it was really better.
- S.R:** It was all for the better but people don't want to change?
- S.B:** No, because you have to get your children on the school bus early, and grant you, they're going to be on the road for a certain length of time each day.
- S.R:** Do you recall your teachers or your principal, starting at your first school first?

**S.B:** Yeah, my principal was Florence Gilmour, and boy she got every child through. She had special attention for every child. She just worked, if you had a weak subject, she was right there 100 percent behind you.

**S.R:** So she was a teacher too, and not just the principal?

**S.B:** No, she was a teacher, yes.

**S.R:** What grades did she teach?

**S.B:** Seven and eight. Then my earlier years it was Eva Sherk, and it is now Eva Sass, still living. Then my first public school teacher was Lichtenberger, she lived in Ridgeway.

**S.R:** Any relation to the Lichtenberger that owns Lichtenberger Electric?

**S.B:** Yes, Rupheen.

**S.R:** What about the continuation school?

**S.B:** The principal down there was J.F. McCaul. I think he's still living. My downfall in school was French.

**S.R:** Oh, they taught French then?

**S.B:** Yes, French and Latin, and Latin was fine. I could get 98 percent in any exam, and French... I was out of school, I was in the hospital, I had my appendix out and I was out for six weeks, and when I went back... Miss Corbett was my teacher, and she didn't have time for a slow student.

**S.R:** Then you can't get caught up because they're learning more on top of what you missed.

**S.B:** There wasn't any tutoring in those days, we couldn't afford it anyway. But anyway, I went back to school and she had a terrible, terrible temper and she just had no patience with me at all, so I quit school.

**S.R:** Oh, you quit school because of that?

**S.B:** Yes, I had to have my subjects or I wasn't going to pass, and you didn't repeat, not in those days. There wasn't summer school, there was nothing.

**S.R:** If you failed you were out of school then?

**S.B:** Yes.

**S.R:** What if you failed grade one or something?

**S.B:** Well no, like public schools, you just kept going on and on, but in high school, yes.

**S.R:** What kind of discipline was used then?



**S.B:** I was expelled a week from school.

**S.R:** What was that for?

**S.B:** I deserved it very, very much, and I didn't know how I was ever going to go home and tell my parents that I was told to stay home for a week. There was a fellow in school and he was not one that I preferred, a beautiful pianist, so I went and erased some of the boards and got a brush full of chalk. He was playing the piano and I threw it at him. I hit him and I turned around and the principal was behind me, and he said, "What I saw of you you're not a lady, you can go home for a week", and home I went.

**S.R:** Was that in the days when parents said, "If you get the belt at school you'll get it when you get home too?"

**S.B:** Yes, yes it was, it sure was. I got similar to that when I got home. I wasn't just too popular for a week until I could go back to school.

**S.R:** Are there any other interesting stories that you can recall from school? Did Stevensville have gas, natural gas to heat the school?

**S.B:** Yes. Well, at the public school it was... I think it was coal. It was a pot-bellied stove.

**S.R:** So they were really behind the times then?

**S.B:** Yes, I think it was a pot-bellied stove we had there, because I know that Florence Gilmour, she would, in order to punish you in your classroom, she'd hit you with a poker. Many a time, all of us children, you know, across your knuckles, or across your back, or your feet if you were making any noise, you'd get hit with the poker. But down in the continuation school it was, like boilers, it was rads, it was hot water heat.

**S.R:** But with natural gas to heat the water?

**S.B:** I think it was... I think it was natural gas.

**S.R:** Were there any stories or any interesting things from school that you'd like to mention?

**S.B:** Well, when I was going to high school, there was a pond adjacent to the school property and it was always called the duck pond, and all the children skated on that in the wintertime. That continued for many years, that duck pond. I can remember taking my daughter down there when... she was born in '51, and when she started to skate I'd take her down, because it wasn't that deep, not like the

creek. So, it was real happy times that we spent, and the kids always played jokes on everyone else. My goodness sakes, they'd save their apple cores and orange peelings and put them in my boots in the wintertime, and they'd jump on them, and I'd go to put my foot in them and it was just liquid, just juice. But these were the kinds of... they weren't tricks to hurt anyone, it was the harmless ones, and I've got great feelings about my growing up years.

**S.R:** How did they grade them? Was it A, B, C, numbers...?

**S.B:** No, it was always marks, yes.

**S.R:** Even from grade one?

**S.B:** Um, I would say so. I don't know whether grade one, whether it was, you know, you'd get a grading, an actual amount or not, or just a pass. I think it was just a pass, maybe, the first and second grades. But, we never had to write final exams if we made our grades during the year. I know, I never had to write a final exam in my life, ever.

**S.R:** So, you were a good student then?

**S.B:** I had to listen as it was taught to me because I couldn't cram at the end. No, I couldn't ever cram. I had to pay attention. It had to come to me and go in the memory block, and then I could write my exam. If I had to go through the years book it was a lost cause, but I never had to write a final exam in my life.

**S.R:** What kind of activities were there when you were growing up, for entertainment, when you were on a date, or when you were younger?

**S.B:** Well, we skated in the wintertime, we skated on the creek. It was a lot higher, we could skate right down to the Niagara River.

**S.R:** Why would it be different?

**S.B:** I don't know, but it was a lot higher and it wasn't the cesspool that it is today.

**S.R:** Now it's just kind of a scum.

**S.B:** It's terrible, just terrible. Edgar Heximer, who built the first fire-engine... he was one of them that built it... he had the garage right adjacent to the creek, and we'd have our... like the nails in the rafters, and there would be a long pole that you'd hang your skates up there, and there was a pot-bellied stove in there so you could go in there to get warm. Then you'd come out of the building and it was like

a two level hill. It was always flooded at night, the fellows would flood it, then you could just take one step out of the garage and just go down the hill on your skates. The fellows would shovel it off at the end, when we were finished skating, and flood it. Edgar would go... it had a little platform out of the window upstairs, and had a radio, so we had... you know, we skated to music. We just had a lot of fun, and it was cold.

**S.R:** Did Mr. Heximer ever join in?

**S.B:** Oh yes, he would skate too, but of course he was working. In those days the garage was open long hours. He was a mechanic and he was doing his work at night. The kids weren't lazy in those days like they are today. I mean, my goodness sakes, there was all kinds of teenagers, and they had hockey tournaments, and it was a real busy place. We had a tennis court in Stevensville.

**S.R:** Where was that?

**S.B:** That was up where the Memorial Hall is now.

**S.R:** That's on Stevensville Road, right?

**S.B:** Stevensville Road, yes. There were tournaments that used to be held there.

**S.R:** Local tournaments or teams from other counties?

**S.B:** Yes. Dr. Buell was our doctor for many, many years in Stevensville, and the funeral director Bert Climenhage, they both won the championships by playing. It was people from other areas that came in.

**S.R:** What else was there to do for summer entertainment?

**S.B:** Well, we had church entertainment and there was always busy groups in the churches. We had box socials. The girls would pack boxes, provided lunch for two people and then the boys would buy it.

**S.R:** It was a way of earning some money then?

**S.B:** Yes... we were very active. I think all the children were active in the various churches.

**S.R:** What else did the church have to offer?

**S.B:** Well, we had young people's meetings, and Sunday school, of course, every Sunday. I don't remember attending churches much when I was younger, because it was usually the time that the Sunday school was on. But, I was a member of... attended the United Brethren Church for many, many years. That's where I was, really, brought up.

**S.R:** Where would that be?

**S.B:** On the Stevensville Road.

**S.R:** Near the tennis courts?

**S.B:** Yes.

**S.R:** Could you tell me any changes that have taken place in this church?  
Do you know when it was built, or any of it's history, why it's location is there, or anything?

**S.B:** No, I can't tell you when the church was built. It's been there for many, many years. I know, my husband, who's Alan Beam, his family donated the land that that church is built on. Now, I can't tell you when it was built.

**S.R:** Were the Beams a prominent family?

**S.B:** Yes, they were. Alan's father was one of 14.

**S.R:** To donate land... most people can't get enough land, let alone donating it. So, I thought they must be a prominent family that had quite a bit.

**S.B:** And I know that they donated the land that the present Mennonite Church, Reformed Mennonite Church, is built.

**S.R:** Where is that?

**S.B:** On Ott Road, just west of Stevensville. That is still in operation. It is a red brick building. Alan's father's name was Albert. Alan was born in Black Creek.

**S.R:** Could you tell me any changes that the church has had?

**S.B:** No, no I can't. We are now members of the United Church.

**S.R:** This was on the other side of the Memorial Hall?

**S.B:** Yes, it is. The two churches are practically adjacent to each other. I know our church, the United Church, is celebrating their 100th anniversary in October.

**S.R:** Have you heard any reasons why the church was built there? Would that be the centre of the town?

**S.B:** Yes, I would think so.

**S.R:** Would that be why then, probably?

**S.B:** Yes, I would say so. But, the United Church was known at the Methodist Church at first.

**S.R:** That's the first church that you had mentioned?

**S.B:** No, the United Church.

- S.R:** That's the church you are talking about now, that used to be the Methodist Church?
- S.B:** Yes, and then they amalgamated and it's been United for some years.
- S.R:** Could you tell any changes that have taken place in this church?
- S.B:** In the United Church?
- S.R:** In the one you now attend.
- S.B:** Well, it's a joint charge.
- S.R:** What's that mean... between the Methodist and the United?
- S.B:** No, no, the Methodist is no longer mentioned, or in existence, it's United. It's Willoughby, which is down in Willoughby. It's the Willoughby Church which is on Sauer Road, I guess it is, and the other church is the St. Johns, which is on the Sodom Road, and one minister serves the three branches. Their services are at 9, 10, and 11. We have a new minister now, and his name is Ken Ramsay. He has just been new to our church. He came from up around Toronto.
- S.R:** Were there any changes made inside the church, or additions to it?
- S.B:** No, I wouldn't say that there was, just keeping it up, you know, painting and keeping it in good condition, and carpeting, and this type of thing, but I wouldn't say that there was any changes.
- S.R:** What about prominent church members, somebody that might have done a lot towards the community or has been involved a lot with the church, or even a minister that was really special and really helped the members, or the community? Are there any really prominent church members?
- S.B:** Well, they were all... a lot of old church members that went to the United Church... Our congregation is getting smaller and smaller because the older people are dying, and the younger ones are moving away. Cliff Winger, who I mentioned before, I mean, he was certainly an old, old member, he and his wife, and the Hendershots, Hubert Hendershot who just passed away here a couple weeks ago, they were both prominent members. Morningstars... there's, you know, a lot... and Bakers. Bakers have long gone. The younger ones of those families, they're moved away. Edgeworths, they were old members of the church, very faithful members. Robinsons,

Mr. Robinson, Pat Robinson had a store in Stevensville.

**S.R:** What store would that be?

**S.B:** It's the store where Mae's Restaurant is now.

**S.R:** Oh, the one that was in the same building as the bank?

**S.B:** As the bank, yeah. Pat Robinson, he lived right next door. The building still stands where he lived. It was a general store. There was... he sold dry goods, all kinds of groceries, and meats, and china, wallpaper. That was a very, very big business... souvenirs, you name it. It was just a general store. After Pat Robinson sold the place, then... or after he died, the business was sold to Wally Moon, Walter Moon.

**S.R:** How did it become Mae's Restaurant?

**S.B:** Well, someone came and set the building on fire, it was an arsonist. He was upstairs visiting... there was apartments above the building... he was up and had dinner with the family upstairs, and the way going down, he set the place on fire. It was a terrible, terrible fire.

**S.R:** So, he was caught then?

**S.B:** Yes, he stood right there and watched it burn. He was a fellow in the service from Fort Erie.

**S.R:** Was there any reason given?

**S.B:** Nope, he needed help.

**S.R:** Oh, it was just mental then?

**S.B:** Yes. So, anyway, by that time, Mr. Moon had passed away and his wife was taking over the, she was conducting the business.

**S.R:** She was getting up in years?

**S.B:** Yes, she was. So anyway, they just... it was all fire damaged inside the whole place, and it was just gutted.

**S.R:** Then she sold it to Mae's Restaurant?

**S.B:** I think it was idle for awhile. Then, different people were... tried to establish business in there. Darryl, who is now there... I think his mother, who was from Fort Erie... that's where it got the Mae's place. She has a good business there now.

**S.R:** What's her last name?

**S.B:** Oh shoot...

- S.R:** Before leaving the church part of it, was there anything else that you'd like to mention about the church?
- S.B:** No, I don't think so.
- S.R:** What affects did the Depression have on the family and the Town?
- S.B:** I don't remember of ever hearing that word when I was a child, and I was born in '26. As far as I remember, we never had a mortgage on the house. We weren't brought up on T-bone steaks, but there was a money problem, grant you. There was never any money to invest so it... Depresson never meant anything as far as I was concerned. We ate the same, we had free rights to a gas well on another farm that heated our house. We bought some coal and some wood in between. I had asked Alan who lived on a farm, and I said, "What did the Depression mean to you?" and he said, "Nothing".
- S.R:** But the farmers had all their own produce and all that stuff which helped.
- S.B:** Yes, they had chickens, they had their own milk, they had beef, they had, you know, they raised turkeys, pigs, and they had their big gardens, so it really didn't mean anything. It wasn't that there was money that they had lost through investments, so the Depression never... it wasn't any worry. I mean, we didn't have electricity so we didn't have big electric bills. It was gas, gas lights, and... so, you know, it really didn't interfere with our living at all.
- S.R:** When did you hear about it being the Depression then?
- S.B:** Well, it was just... you would hear the word... but I mean, it never had any effects with our family, and my husband's family either. It wasn't that we suffered a great loss by any means.
- S.R:** Who was the first political representative that you can remember?
- S.B:** Oh heavens... I think Fred House was the first one that I can recall... and grant you I never voted for him because I was too young. But then after that I think it was Ernie Gorham who came in, then Roy Morningstar, and I think Bruce Finch followed. I certainly can't remember any Councilmen.
- S.R:** The first M.P.P., or Parliament Member you remember was Houck?
- S.B:** Yes, Bill Houck, William. They were a well-known family in the area.
- S.R:** Are they the ones that lived on Llenroc Farm, on the Boulevard?

- S.B:** Yes, they lived on the Boulevard.
- S.R:** That's Cornell spelled backwards?
- S.B:** Yes, yes, a very kind man. His brother was Chris Houck, and he was a minister for many years, a United Church minister.
- S.R:** Coming back to the community, you mentioned Mae's Restaurant as one, could you go through describing the stores, the proprietors, the changes in where the stores were located, starting at one point and going down the different streets? Was there a popular hang-out for kids, any kind of dance hall or poolroom?
- S.B:** Well, where Wale's Plumbing Business is today at the stoplight... that was before my time... when my father was young... they used to have plays and things upstairs above that. The downstairs where the plumbing business is connected from, was an implement dealer. It was Lichtenberger's. In my days it was know as Lichtenberger's. I know that that was a real place that the youths enjoyed themselves, oh, they would practice. They would put on... I don't know if it would have been monthly or three times a year, or whatever, and they had them on Stevensville Road too. It was above what was known as Spear's Garage. Now it is... it's a stone building, and it's known as... oh, they sell tropical fish and earthworms, and what have you. In the back of that building you'll still see red bricks in a small room back there, and that was the first school in Stevensville. Part of that, you can still see it. That's where Cline's Ornamental Iron is. That's what...
- S.R:** Would you know when that was constructed?
- S.B:** No, but if you talk to Earl Beam, I'm sure that he can tell you that, because his brother... there was this place where the earthworms are sold, and then there is Rupheen Lichtenberger's home, and he has a small shop where he sells fridges, and washing machines, then there is another brick building... or not brick but a cement building, and that was the feedmill. That was Clifford Beam's Feedmill. At one time that was, the back of that, was the United Brethren Church.
- S.R:** Is that the one that's on the right hand or left hand side of...?
- S.B:** You're going towards Niagara Falls, and it's on the right hand side.



**S.R:** No... of the Memorial Hall... you said that was the first United Brethren Church. Which side of the Hall would it be on?

**S.B:** On the left hand side.

**S.R:** Okay, that was the first one then, before...?

**S.B:** Yes, and there's a cemetery back there. Then... everyone called him Daddy Beam, and he was a brother of Earl Beam, and he had the mill there for many years until he died.

**S.R:** What was Daddy's first name?

**S.B:** Clifford, yes. He raised quite a few children there, I think there was five or six. There's still the cemetery and it is being kept up by the Town of Fort Erie.

**S.R:** Are they allowed to move things like that?

**S.B:** I don't know, I don't see any need to move them.

**S.R:** I was thinking that it was on somebody's property, is it?

**S.B:** I think that belongs to the Town. I think that that land... I know that that was close to my old home and there is two graves, if not more, that is like an unknown soldier in there. Because I know my great grandmother used to come over and put flowers on these graves. So, I think it's cared for by the Town of Fort Erie, and they wouldn't be caring for it...

**S.R:** Right, if it was someone else's property.

**S.B:** I mean, Daddy Beam owned his lot there, but I think that just belonged to the Town, but that's where the United Brethren Church was first, as far as I know.

**S.R:** Continuing on on your tour...

**S.B:** Yes, anyway, that's as far as kids used to... the hangout for the kids was always on the hotel veranda.

**S.R:** Why there?

**S.B:** I don't know. It was just the centre of town and kids would be down there and hang out there and it wasn't closed-in like it is today. The hotel had an open veranda there, all around, you know, like halfway around it with a railing. They used to sell ice cream and things, in one little room.

**S.R:** So the kids were allowed to enter part of it?

**S.B:** Yes, yes. It was nothing to do with the beverage rooms, it was

just that they went and got their ice cream and, you know, chocolate bars, and whatever.

**S.R:** Who owned the hotel then?

**S.B:** At the time I remember, Ted Hawkins, and then his son took over. His son was in Fort Erie, now.

**S.R:** Is that Ed Hawkins?

**S.B:** Yeah.

**S.R:** I heard something about a bird, was that in your time?

**S.B:** Oh yes, a parrot, someone stole it.

**S.R:** It was never recovered or found?

**S.B:** I don't know, I saw Edward, oh, three or four years ago, and I didn't think to ask him if that bird was ever brought back. But those things, a parrot will live to be a good many years old.

**S.R:** How many is a good many, 10, 20?

**S.B:** Oh heavens, 50.

**S.R:** Did it learn anything bad, being in the hotel?

**S.B:** Oh yes, it had a lot of choice words, yes. But someone came and stole it off the veranda. It was always out in the summertime and in the winter it was in the beverage room.

**S.R:** You would think that somebody would have heard it?

**S.B:** No, it was quite willing to have some attention I guess. It's not noisy in the hotel I would say.

**S.R:** Well, you said that it was a hangout and stuff, unless it was that late at night.

**S.B:** I don't know, you know, kids go home for supper and there's not too many around at suppertime, and people coming out... they used to get a lot of traffic from the races because the Queen Elizabeth wasn't going, operating, at that time, and there used to be a great deal of traffic in Stevensville. People would come from the races and they'd... of course, I don't think they got drinks down there then. I don't think there was any lounge then. People would stop in at the local establishments and have a drink or two and the kids would be home for supper.

**S.R:** Could you continue on with your tour?

**S.B:** Well, we had several butchershops in Stevensville, and we had the

second store in Stevensville, like the second general store, like Moon's, and then the one that still exists. It's called Frank's now. That is on West Main Street. It's not as general as it was in the days when they used to sell yardgoods and everything, but you can get a great variety of things in there.

**S.R:** Is that the old Hendershots store?

**S.B:** Yes it is. It was Hendershots and it went to the Lake family, then it was back to Hendershots again. No, I think it was, was it... Detenbecks I think in the first place, yes. I think it was Detenbecks in the first place instead of Hendershots, because Detenbecks were relatives of the Hendershots . I think it was Detenbecks first, and then Lakes, and then Hendershots, they got it, Crosby and Irene, before Franks came in. Now it has been sold again. There's... I believe that the couple that have the store are Korean. They're very nice, very obliging.

**S.R:** Is the store a very popular store or do people travel to Ridgeway or Fort Erie more?

**S.B:** Well, it's a handy store, and there's a lot of things that you'll get cheaper in that little store than you would if you went to one of the newer stores, like spices and things like that. There is no comparrison, and they have a pretty general... things that they keep in the store, like vinegar and stuff like that. I grant you, the big chain stores, they will put a price on them, like a sale price on vinegar at the time when you're pickling, and stuff like that, and I wouldn't say that they would be competitive to that. But the regular price I feel is very good, and they keep a lot... like milk, and all dairy products, and frozen food. They're very obliging to get anything that, any brands that you particularly want, they are very obliging to get them for you.

**S.R:** That helps.

**S.B:** Yes it does, but it's a convenience store.

**S.R:** Well, if you're going to travel someplace else you're going to spend it on gas so you may as well spend an extra nickel on your product.

**S.B:** Now grant you, you don't have any meat. There's frozen... like Schneiders baccon, that they'll keep frozen, and steakettes and

things of this nature, but there's not a variety of meat. It's as I said, a convenience store. Anyway, we had... I remember the post office on Stevensville Road, and there was a furniture store there as well. Mr. Climenhage, who was also the funeral director, he was the postmaster and he had furniture, really good, good quality furniture. Then, they tore it... it was just a very, very small building, and they tore that down and then moved over... they built another one in front Baughn's home. That was a much larger store, and that was a... they built this post office in front of the store. At one time that was a grocery store as well and Mr. and Mrs. Baughn operated the store. I don't know how many years the post office was in this building, but it's the corner of West Main and Airline, and it's an apartment building now. Then from there the government went and built the existing post office, so it moved from there.

**S.R:** Was postal always government?

**S.B:** As far as I know, I mean, who else would operate it, who else would pay for the expense?

**S.R:** Through postage, and stuff like that, it used to be handled through the trains. First it was the wire services...

**S.B:** The postmaster had to be paid, you know, and whoever, like the clerk or whoever would work for him. So, I would say that it was always government funded. We had two... Michigan Central and Canadian National railways, and we had passenger service. It was more than ample. Freight used to come in on the Michigan Central, and you would get an order of something that was a bulky parcel and it would come in, up to the station, and they would call you and tell you that it was in.

**S.R:** Is that what put Stevensville on the map, do you think?

**S.B:** I would say so. It was good rail service. We had butcher shops, we had ice cream parlors, we had, Brodie's Drugstore was in Stevensville.

**S.R:** That's in Ridgeway now, isn't it?

**S.B:** Yes, there was two brothers that ran the store, Bob and Mel, and they had the drugstore there for a number of years. I know, when I was a small child, it was still in operation. Then the business just... people went out of town and it just didn't allow them to keep going.

**S.R:** How do you think Stevensville is doing as a town, is it going down, going up, staying the same?

**S.B:** No, it's growing.

**S.R:** It's growing?

**S.B:** Yes. Yes, it's growng, I mean, the younger people are coming. I know, we've been married for 39 years and we are very, very happy to have lived here all of our life, and we don't care to move to a city. It's a good place to raise children. You have your public school education here, and your high shcool, we're centrally located with the colleges and universities, Brock, you know, that I feel it has ample to offer to a family, a growing family.

**S.R:** I was just wondering, because with the churches you had said that the older people are dying and the younger people are leaving.

**S.B:** But they're not going to church. The younger people are just not church inclined. They just... I can look all around on this street, and it's just a small street, and there's only a handful of people that even go to church. You know, it's sad but true, but it's... I know, our daughter was born in Stevensville and she, when they were first married they lived in Ridgeway for about three years, and have bought a house in Stevensville, and is certainly Stevensville oriented. I don't ever want to move from here. Her husband's the plumber for the C.N., and they have three boys, and the boys are very active with Cubs and Beavers and everything. Now, grant you it has it's disadvantages. They're taking swimming lessons, and have for many years, and it's going to Port Colborne which is time consuming. But, anyway, there's service clubs, there's not Lions in Stevensville, but there's a lot of people that belong to the Lions' Club in Ridgeway. There's the Kinsmen who certainly have done their fair share, the Kinettes, the Hall Auxiliary. They have come a long ways, I'll tell you. The have the Hall Board (the Stevensville Memorial Hall), which operates the running of the hall, and they're very active, they meet once a month. We certainly have a Memorial Hall to be proud of. The old hall burned down and we're very proud of the new one. The Kinsmen have just put a building up on Ott Road, a Kinsmen building that they have executive meetings in, and then

part of it is for the ball games that are held up in Stevensville. They have a committee that serves hotdogs and pop and what have you. It's very active, but we've had a lot of business. We've got Bertie Printer, and they have added a great extension on their building. That was Win Baughn who was the postmaster for many years, Winfield Baughn. His son Bills has taken over the business since his father retired, and Bill is operating the business. It's very successful. Then we have Morningstar's Feedmill, which is a large operation. Oh, we had blacksmith shops, and things like that, meat markets, ice cream parlors.

**S.R:** How would it compare... you had read an insert from a book from about the 1850's because the book was written in 1880's or '70s and it told about the 30 years prior to the book being wrote. How would it compare from then to now? When you were younger, have many things pulled out of Stevensville?

**S.B:** They were burned out. A lot of things were burned out.

**S.R:** That was in the 1800's, right?

**S.B:** Yes.

**S.R:** Well, even the planing mill, and Morningstar's have had a couple fires.

**S.B:** That's right, and it was sad, you know. People of Stevensville are very, very resentful that our planing mill has gone. They really and truly are.

**S.R:** What, the family just didn't feel like reopening it?

**S.B:** They couldn't afford to.

**S.R:** On, it wasn't insured good enough?

**S.B:** No, they... I don't know. I don't know the technicality of that one bit, but the one owner was considering retiring and the other just felt that it wasn't worth it. They had three fires.

**S.R:** In what time span would that be?

**S.B:** Over about three years. It was nothing but a crying shame.

**S.R:** Were any of them arson?

**S.B:** They all were, yes.

**S.R:** Were they suspicious at all on the owners?

**S.B:** Yes.

**S.R:** Then not having rebuilt...

**S.B:** Nothing ever was done, nothing ever was done. It never came to... it was always, the court case was always remanded, remanded, remanded, and it was disheartening.

**S.R:** Mr. House, the father, should have been around still.

**S.B:** No, I'm glad he wasn't, I'm glad Wilfred never lived to see that.

**S.R:** It wouldn't have happened then, probably.

**S.B:** I'm sure they didn't have a grudge against the owners, I'm sure. I'm sure they didn't, because, you stood down there and listened to people's comments and they said I have never, ever been treated kinder by those men, why did this happen? It was just too bad, because we could go, if you wanted some putty, a piece of putty fell out of your window, you could go down and get it, and you didn't have to get in the car and drive six or seven miles to Ridgeway and back again. If you wanted a handful of nails, if you needed two nails, you'd go down and say, I want a handful of nails and you bought them.

**S.R:** And you didn't have to wait until your shopping week?

**S.B:** No, it was... they treated you more than kind, and it was an old, old established business. But, now we've got the factories in town and, you know, Canada Colour, you know, all the factories down Eagle Street there, that employ a lot of people.

**S.R:** Is Stevensville self supporting or do a lot of people have to go out of town to find work?

**S.B:** I would say that a lot of people go out of town for employment. Atlas Steel was, a lot of people worked at Atlas, and they work at Fleet, and Horton of course, there was quite a few people that used to work at Horton. Then Inco, there were many that worked at Inco in Port Colborne.

**S.R:** So it's always been this way, not just now?

**S.B:** No, no, my husband worked for 36 years at Niagara Falls, New York.

**S.R:** So then Stevensville has basically been a trade place, family owned and operated businesses, and different things like that, so people have always had to go out of town for work?

**S.B:** Until these factories came in we had Cline's Ornamental Iron, and we had Wales Plumbing, which we still have. We still have both

of the businesses. But we have the insurance place at the corner. That, I don't know how many people they employ, probably six, seven, eight, and that is certainly active. Then we've got three garages, the one right in Stevensville, we've got Stevensville Esso out over the track, and then we've got, I think it's a Sunoco. So, there's three service stations and we've got the restaurant. Now, the barbershops are gone, there used to be two barbershops in town and that had the big poolroom. That was a big hangout for the boys.

**S.R:** Who operated those?

**S.B:** The last barbershop to close was owned and operated by Art Otterman, and then he sold it to... or his wife I guess, after Art died, he sold it to Ted Bushel. Ted has passed away so it's vacant, but there's a business I understand going up in that place. There's a gentleman in the same building and he is a piano tuner. I don't think he employs anyone. There was people that put siding on houses. Back where the schools used to be, the public schools, they had an aluminum siding buisness. Now, that has gone by the wayside. They used to employ several people. We have two body shops in Stevensville. One is Oren, and one is Normy Page, and they both own and operate the body shops. What else, of course, the hotels. We had a hardware store that was owned and operated by Roy Morningstar for many years. Oh, he sold eaves troughs and things of that nature. Then, he decided to move to Ridgeway on the main street in Ridgeway and Jerry Coulis got it. He did... continued and bought quite a supply of saucepans, and roasting pans and things, like carriage bolts and things, besides doing eaves trough work, nails and hammers, and all kinds of utensils. Then he decided that there wasn't enough business so he sold out. Then the Wade building came next, the telephone, besides the tailorshop, the telephone office was there. First it was in the front room of Alvin and Ethel Siders, a house next to the C.N. track, but the telephone office was in our house for many, many years.

**S.R:** The Wade family owned it?

**S.B:** No, no, it was just that they rented this room. Anyway, my mother worked at the telephone office for a month less than 20 years, as



a telephone operator, and we lived upstairs, then my great aunt lived downstairs. This was just in one room. Someone had to operate the switchboard all night long. After my grandfather died, they took over that room where the tailorshop was. It was not... it was connected to our house but it wasn't as interfering to our home. It stayed there until Bell Telephone came into existence.

**S.R:** Do you know when that would be?

**S.B:** No, I can't tell you. I'm sure the library would have when the Bell Telephone came in, the dial came in, because it was Welland County in those days. We always... in the back of our home, one of the first doctors had his office in the back of our home too. It was a great big old sprawly house. I don't know how many rooms, probably 16 rooms in it. Anyway, Dr. Culver... I can't tell you his first name. He was an awful drinker and he drank himself to death. So anyway, he operated in our home for a long while. For many years before his death in 1904 his office was behind the tailorshop. The existing fire hall was built in 1952. Before then the first motorized firetruck was housed in where the library stands today. That's where they have the children's stories and this type of thing. That's where... it was like a separate door that would go into there, that's where the first motorized firetruck was held.

**S.R:** That's the one that Heximer helped to build?

**S.B:** Yes it is. We had a cidermill that was very, very productive. It was operated by Charlie Wale. He was a very kind, old gentlemen, and the kids used to do all kinds of pranks on Halloween, but they never did anything back there to the cidermill. He'd always leave a great big barrel of cider with a cup hanging on top, and you'd go back there when you'd be hot and sweaty from tramping the streets. Mr. Wale... he would press grapes and apples as well. Coming home from school you were always welcome. That barrel was always full and every child just loved him. Then after he... well, I guess he kept with it until he died. Grant you it was a seasonal thing. It wasn't in operation all the time, but you could hear that old chug, chug, chug. The first cidermill was burned, then Charlie Wale went and operated the second one, built the mill for a fresh cup of good

cider, using a granite cup that hung from a nail. If you did that today, every kid would be stopping, wouldn't they? Then Mr. House, the owner of the planing mill, Wilford House, he gave considerable property to the Town of Fort Erie, which is operated by the Town of Fort Erie, and his only stipulation was that it would be called the United Empire Loyalists' Park, because that's what his people were. There's nice signs, and the Kinsmen's have erected a little pavillion, and there's a place where you can go up and have hotdogs, and they've got swings and slides, and things for the children. It's adjacent to the creek. Then, the Horticulture Society have planted a lot of trees on this property and it's maintained by the Town of Fort Erie. Then, you go up to Ott Road, after the Memorial Hall, the new one was built, then they've got the ball diamonds up on Ott Road. That was also land that Wilfred House had donated, but that's on the opposite side of the creek. It's certainly very well used. Where the Memorial Hall is today, there used to be a bandstand at the same time where the tennis courts were. Local people used to use that and we had quite an active band. It was a wooden bandstand where many concerts were performed.

**S.R:** Was it mostly locals?

**S.B:** I would say so, yes, I would say so. I can well remember that pavillion.

**S.R:** Were dances held there or anything like that?

**S.B:** No, it was just... dances used to be held where Wales Plumbing is, in the upstairs, and then it was condemned. It wasn't safe for people, the amount of people that would be up there. I can remember as a child, when the continuation was still being used. There was... oh, the different area churches, they'd have programs and plays. Oh, that was always a highlight for us kids, you know, some was kind of a mystery, like a novel... it was really an interesting time to go, and they would just perform one night and the place would be packed. The Kinsmen used to have them down at the school. They used to have Halloween parties to try to keep the children off the streets, and judges. There were nice prizes for the children, like best costume, scarriest, and what have you, and then they would give them a real nice lunch. That would be... but it kept the children

off of the street, just in the time when there are strange people in the world not being too kind to children. The Kinsmen over the years... and I know that they have just paved the driveway over at the Memorial Hall, and that was \$27,000.

**S.R:** Just to pave the parking lot?

**S.B:** No, not the parking lot, that's just the driveway.

**S.R:** Oh, that circle out in front?

**S.B:** Yes. And the Horticulture Society are very active in... it's not just Ridgeway, but it's Ridgeway, Crystal Beach and Stevensville, and they have done the planting at the hall, and the Town of Fort Erie has done the sod, so it's starting to shape up. It's a community effort.

**S.R:** In closing, could you please tell me what you can remember on the Bertie Fair?

**S.B:** Yes, all the school children in the area, they participated with their writing, and arithmetic questions, and in those days they knew how to write, not like today, they knew how to spell. It was all on the walls. The walls... oh there would be huge walls, and they'd all be covered and marked. There would be ribbons for it, not prize money but ribbons where you had won. There was all kinds of crafts. It was a fairly large size. It was in the basement of the Racetrack. You would go down steps, ramps, and... oh, there would be cars displayed and things like that. A lot of displays from all the different dealers from both Stevensville and Fort Erie. I guess the last few years it was, kind of lack of participation, and people were losing interest. The Welland Fair was starting to really build up and the children all got, in the whole area, got free passes to go, and they were urged to go over to the Welland Fair for half a day. I think that kind of drew some of the crowd over there. Then, with Polio, that was a terrible time. It was an epidemic. I think people were frightened to have their children among other children.

**S.R:** What did they do for school?

**S.B:** Well, they would go to school, but this... I don't know whether it was in the summertime, in August. No, maybe not, maybe not until September. See, it would be involving Stevensville school children with Fort Erie and Ridgeway and Crystal Beach, you know, that

it was a lot of children, and of course you can't control children. They're drinking out of the taps, and they're eating food that is covered with flies, and things of this nature. I think that it just got to be too frightening for the parents to take their children to this. Then, with the funding situation, and the Welland Fair getting bigger each year, they had more to offer.

**S.R:** It just kind of slowly closed out?

**S.B:** I think it just kind of slowly closed.

**S.R:** Is there anything you'd like to mention in closing?

**S.B:** Yes, I'm the third generation that was born in Stevensville of the Wade family, and my daughter still lives here, and her husband and three sons, and they are certainly Stevensville oriented, my husband and I, and we don't want to leave. We feel it's a nice little community and we're happy too.

**S.R:** Very family oriented?

**S.B:** Very family, yep, you could go to any of the neighbours, and I wouldn't lack for any help with any of it. Yet, I'm not willing to be living at the neighbours for a cup of coffee three times a day, and gossiping, but I know if I went to their house and said, "Could I have a slice of bread, an egg?", they would certainly give it to me, and I in turn would do it for them. It's terrific for raising children. Happy to be a citizen.

**S.R:** Thank you for the interview Mrs. Beam.

**S.B:** You're more than welcome.