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Signed

Walter Hodgman

interviewee

Signed

Margaret Bailes

interviewer

Date

4th June 1979

Interviewer- Margaret Bailes and Dolores Sheltus

Interviewee- Walter Hodgman, Cookshire Road, Birchton

Mr. Hodgman, you were in the Eastern Townships during World War II?

I was born down the road here three or four houses except for four months I've always worked for father or myself. I worked out one winter and it was the best experience I ever had. I found out the other fellow's point of view.
You never did it again?

No, never no. Well, I was born down here in Ways Bend and probably in a two mile radius. I've always lived here.
And you've always farmed?

Well, been on the land, you know. In 1911 I showed in Sherbrooke Fair, mare and colts, and I've shown off and on every since. In fact I'm the only one living in my age that was born here, between Cookshire and Lennoxville. There was Milton Labree in Sand Hill but he was born, he was a year older than I was but he has been gone two years. Then Gladlen Blogett he is 78 or 79, he died a year ago. But I'm the only one that's lived here all my life.

So you really know the neighborhood, you know it better than anybody else.

Well, I should.

When World War II began had the Great Depression ended around

here?

I don't think there was too much, of course, the depression was quite a thing, wasn't it? on but the war had started, when the war started, well, then it began tightening up, you see. It was in the war when they started the ladies going to work, that's what unemployment is today because the women, in my younger days, were suppose to be home looking after family and looking after things. The husband was suppose to support them but today they both have to work and run cars.

Do you remember what you were doing when you heard that the war had started?

No, I can't tell you I was farming I know that but I don't know exactly what I was doing. I don't know whether it was on radio but I more or less think it was papers that came to tell about it. I wouldn't be sure but I wasn't living here at that time. I was living down where Mrs. Picken lives. You see we were born ... and then we moved to lot 20 range 5. And now I'm on lot 18 range 5 and that's where my grandfather was born in 1833, but there was a family, or two or three different ones in between that owned the place. But I've had the place over 50 years. We owned land, my father and I did, from here right through to Bulwer Store.

You owned all of that?

Yes, we had around, pretty close to 600 acres at one time. My brother was started hauling milk he took milk the first

day that they went to Carnation in 1939 the tenth day of October. And I went in with it the last day that they took cans, the last day of June in '70. It was the only one in the same name, but he was killed in '43 at the crossing in Birchton and I took over then. I had eight horses, eighty some head of cattle and was alone, I lost mother in January and he was in April. And I took over and I had eight horses and no truck or anything and went to Sherbrooke and Carnation took over then, signed a contract that all milk, what are you going to do. I hired truck before I got home and I went to Montreal. Well, this friend, that's the way you get it, I went in and he was connected with a man that I knew that I had been trucking with some and he went in to Montreal, I went in with him, and he was trucking cattle, I trucked with him some as well. We went in and we went to this old controller of the trucking and he went in and went to school together, both of them. He told me about this truck so I bought it and came back and put a body onto it and trucked milk. I got desperate and gave away the whole place, I guess the way they sold well in factory man bought had it paid for before he got the lumber all cut off. I'd had men inspect it and they said that it wasn't anything there. I knew there was but I couldn't do a thing. You can't do two jobs or three jobs at once. And that hauling milk I figure you're dealing with farmers, you're dealing with a perishable product so

you've got to look at it. I only had one claim in all the time I hauled the milk. Some boys came out and spilt some. You had an insurance.

Did you have any family members in the armed services?

Had six cousins but nothing close. You see I never was married I'm just independant.

You never enlisted?

No, well, I was called up in the First World War when I was into, put into Second Class B, you see. And then when the war finished, the First World War, I was turned again. That was down in 1910. They put me into Class B.

Rationing? What things were rationed?

What wasn't rationed you might better say. There was sugar, tea... gasoline, of course, there was a place we knew where to get sugar, not our old way. No, it was quite a thing this rationing. But we never really wanted, if you're cut down you could live with what they gave you. The rationing was very fair, we always thought. But you had the bother of dealing with it that was the trouble. Some people hoarded which wasn't good.

And there was a black market was there for the things that were rationed?

Well, you can call it what you like there was places you could get things. That's the way you had better put it. You had to know where they were.

What rationed goods did you miss the most?

I don't know. As I said, I don't think we ever had any troubles, some people did. I know that some trouble with their gas, some, well, there was people who had two, three years flour. Well, it was hoarded that was the trouble with the rationing. I'm afraid that we're going to be rationed again. I don't know if they would do it. This road, well you live on this road, a Sunday night you will get somewhere a hundred cars in 15 minutes.

Going nowhere.

Going nowhere, it's too bad. Then, of course, some of us drive in big cars that take more gas than a smaller one but I have to fold up by riding to Montreal, in fact, last Thursday I was in to the Quebec Farmer's meeting at MacDonald College he's got a Volvo I have to fold up so I can get into it. But it's not bad to ride in they have a short wheel base, you see. But they're a nice little car.

Was meat rationed?

Well, I don't know whether meat was rationed or not. We had our own, you see. We used to have our own meat. I was the most independant man on earth if you only knew I had to live within his means. That's the way I've always been, of course, now they're trying to control everything marketing boards, and quotas and what you can do and what you can't. They're after me all the time to buy lots. But they say if I sell one lot that will put me out of the farm catagory or two or three lots.

And we're in the zone, we're not zoned here yet. The farms in Richmond they're zoned they can't sell their crops. It's true. Now I see it their getting back to Russia I don't know.

Did the changed male-female ratio affect social life? You must have had a good time.

Not around here as I know. Well, we, of course, we had Red Cross we had parties to raise money for the Red Cross. Of course, there was one year that I got attached with Mrs. Dereseau we ran a booth at Cookshire Fair for the Red Cross and put to work all there was a lot of food and stuff brought in it was turned over.

Did you feel that there was a sence of national unity of everyone pulling together during the war?

Yes, I think there were. There was a certain amount of friction between the French. The French didn't want to go to war, you see. But apart from that French liked to major the council voice. I can't speak French that's what I went to school with French kids. But as far as I went to school was in Little Red School House. The French kids there but they learnt Englsih and I didn't learn French. And after everyone I hadn't been for some time, if you want to live in Quebec you've got to have French. I think we've fell down to a certain extent the Englishmen aren't doing it, they're running away from it. Cause I don't like this man, Levesque, brother-in-law was brought up in there, well, he was an older

man than Levesque but they came up in the same village, Newcarlyle, down in ... I know the house where he was brought up.

So do you remember the conscription crises?

Well, yes, there was two lots of it. Men were affected, you see I've got too dam old but I'm still here.

I think there was a registration, wasn't there?

Yes, there was a registration.

Everyone was regestered? But did anything come up?

No, well, yes and no. There was a certain amount of them that were given jobs for in the plants where they were making additions you see or something like that. If you got into a plant and got a job well, then you weren't picked up like you would be if you, and, of course, farmers had a kind of a ... it was in the First World War. I know some fellows that hid in the woods in '41.

Do you remember anything about the zombies? They were the people who wouldn't go, they wouldn't enlist?

No, I don't know any of those.

Do you recall the end of the war?

Well, it was quite a celebration after it. For me it was in the Fall, I think. No, it wasn't in the Fall, it was started in the Fall, in the Spring was when. No, no, I had some neighbors that were in Hong Kong and he's one of them still alive up in Ontario. Well, there's a few around but them

poor fellows that went through Hong Kong. One of them this one time was referring to he said I'll see the day when I'll be hungry but he saw the day in Hong Kong they had a picture of just a skeleton. But he ate ... worms made tea and what them poor boys went through. Of course, a lot of them of course I knew Colonel Bishop who was one of the ones that was one of the ones that was in Hong Kong. He kept the moral up then by training them and different things. Of course, a lot of them gave up. He was a ladys' man in a way. But ... that was a friend of his over there, they shot her but he got away. Because she was trying to bring in stuff for him to eat, you see. They caught her bringing it in. They shot her on the spot. He was just my age, about my age. He died a year ago but he was, no, my brother-in-law was in the First World War he's in Quebec City he's in the hospital. Well, he came in there two years ago last January. He only fought in war a few days. He had an arm, one arm his elbow was shot out. He spent over two years in an hospital. He was left for dead in Flanders and the next day when they were going over one of them said there's a little life in this fellow. And he was picked up and is alive today.

Do you remember any military installations in the area?

Well, there was

There was the prisoner of war camp in Sherbrooke, I think.

Yes, prisoner of war camp in Sherbrooke.

Do you remember anything about them? There's some talk that perhaps one of the prisoners was shot trying to escape. Do you remember?

Never, I don't remember anything like that. I think there was, of course, we had one or two that was over here from Germany that worked for us. They let them out, you see, they weren't too bad. This was a German Jew. He wasn't a bad fellow, there was a few good ones. They let some of them out, you see.

During the war?

Yes, during the war and they were in concentrations camps in Sherbrooke but of them they figured wasn't bad. We had to report every week if he was still with us. We had no trouble with him but he was suppose to be our gardener and my mother put him out to work in the garden and he pulled everything. Well, the gardening part of it, he was selling garden produce, it wasn't the garden, he didn't know what one thing was from the other you see. They didn't look like what he sold and, of course, he thought they were all weeds.

Do you remember any security measures against espionage?

No.

In Sherbrooke, perhaps?

They had, well, we was security, you see, they checked on different times and things but we never came in contact with any.

You wouldn't have had a victory garden, I guess you grew your own food anyway, didn't you?

We grew food but there was victory gardens around.

Most people had them?

And there still out to place between Birchton and Eaton Corner people come from town now and have a garden now on a piece of land.

Really?

Yes, well, they get out into the country, you see, and play in the dirt a little bit so.

And the French-English relations?

Well, we've always got along. The French and the English through this district have always got along. Never thought of anything, they spoke English or you spoke French, but, of course, it's upsetting that now this joke you've got to speak French. I don't like it, I think that's the trouble that if they'd taken it easy instead of trying to compelling it then you've got to put French onto a package of Corn Flakes what do they care about it in the West?

Yes, that's true.

It's alright in Quebec but to go clear across the dominion is way out, in my opinion. Well, I showed it very much in ...

Do you remember any homefront volunteer efforts for the war?

Was there anything going on at the churches?

Well, there was, they had parties and things to ... there was

parcels sent to the institutes that stuff over to the soldiers, you see, or they sent stuff to Hong Kong, of course, then fellows never got it, but I think they got it in France after a while. Let's see Norray Johnson went to the Bishop's College School was the head master, Millerd's there now, because he was over there, you see, and his brother was in the Navy he was down in the Nova Scotia and then Lloyds sister was in the Air Force.

And Allan Kelso was in Japan.

Yes, Kelso I think was in Japan now with my uncle. Oh there was a whole bunch, there was a slip up somewhere there because they didn't have anything to defend themselves with. It was a bunch of men over there and nothing to do. They had nothing to work with. But it's like any big operation, somebody make one slip it can ball up the whole thing.

It's the middle man who suffers?

Yes

I think that's the end of the questions on the tape, but you were saying before that tires being difficult to buy tires during the war? for your truck?

Yes, they were rationed, you see, you had to give a reason why you had to have a tire, why it was gone and so forth, why it was blown out or something. One man would tell you to put a lot of air in and the next man tell you not to put so much in, so I don't know which was the wise thing to do. But I blew two tires just going into the yard.

In one day!

One day, but I had no trouble when I got the tricks made up, right off ... we went to school together. And we had to turn the old ones in, you see. If they were fit so they could be used, of course, they took the tires they'd give back for a tractor or something in the line of a truck, you see. And if they went to ... they weren't as good as the tires today. But if they went to Great Berlin they'd accuse you of not having the proper amount of air in them or something like that. There was always a way to get around it, but you had to know how to do it.

Why would they be rationed, tires?

Well, they didn't want them to use the rubber, you see, and the vehicles over there in the military.

Do you remember anything that was made in Sherbrooke for the war effort, like at some of the companies?

Well, shelves was one of the big things, you see. Sherbrooke was quite a machine shop and there was a lot of people that went and got work, went there and worked. If you were working on the shelves well then you were given a chance if you didn't want to go over, you see. So an awful lot did that. The war took the cream off the young people and that's why we are in the mess we are in today, is what I think. Perhaps I shouldn't say it but the better class of people went to the war then the ones that, well, I had tenant a month or two up here and stayed to home and that's what we're like today. I don't know if I'm

right or not but I'm kind to the idea ... straying of cattle, I don't say people are cattle but there're pretty much the same and follow up and so that the best ones are gone ..., you see and we're suffering today for it. It's quite a game. Cause I didn't expect to be around here this long but I'm still here. My father died when he was 63, mother 73 so what they had in their generation went to the young. There was six of us children in our family and six in my uncle's family. And my grandfather and grandmother, that's in 1919 or 1918 or around that time. To me I'm the only Hodgman in Birchton, when they box me that's goodbye. Makes you wonder some.

You must have relatives somewhere else though?

Well, I've got cousins around Montreal and I've got a sister in Quebec, a sister here but they go to Flordia in the winter time, she's way out in 78, 76 I guess it is. My brother-in-law is 81. And I have anothe sister in Quebec who's 87, not 87, 78.

Where did you fall in the family? the oldest?

I'm the oldest. I went to school Mom used to come and teach fetch. Well, if we wanted a pail of water, we went and got it, if we wanted a stick of wood to put in the stove, we used to get it. And we used to have spelling B's or something. Sometimes I was pretty good and sometimes I was pretty bad. I spent a good life all the way through but the changes!

It's hard to keep up with that.

Can't keep up with it.

Have the Townships changed a lot do you think?

Yes, the people have changed, there's a different environment. We always, French and English, we never faught or anything about whether you were French or English. Cause the French used to say that English had too many religions and I think they were right. I know that they had the one but the priest always told them what they could do. We were freer you see. One fault of the French is my idea there're jealous of one another, they want to get to the top but soon as that fellow gets to the top he's got somebody else that's jealous of him and is trying to pull him down. I don't know they were different kind of people then the English people, there was a jealousy among them. Well, I'll never forget what an economist told in Lennoxville to a meeting one day, he said, he was talking on farming, he says if you get in the farming he says goes like this up and down hills