

# Interview questions for oral histories

## SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

It should be noted that these are general questions and areas to be covered for a pioneer tape, and are a guide only. Remember to always ask the "who, what, when, where and why" of situations.

### Personal History:

1. Where and when they were born.
2. When did they arrive in Canada? How? (route taken and type of transportation) Why did they choose Canada?
3. Where did they first settle? How did they travel from port of entry to place of settlement? Problems encountered on the journey.
4. Where did they settle in Ontario? Why did they settle there? How did they acquire land? How did they make their living?

### Subjects to be discussed:

- A. Homesteading
  1. Type of farming
    - plowing techniques
    - how they got seed (grain)
    - type of livestock
    - food storage
  2. Survey Gangs
  3. Wells
    - water witching, sources, pumps, windmills
  4. Type of Buildings
    - materials used (e.g. sod)

5. Sawmill
6. Lime Kilms
7. Flour Mills
8. The fencing of property
- B. Railway
  1. Source of employment
  2. Land Grants
- C. Churches
  1. Main religions
  2. Description of church
  3. Clergymen
  4. Attending church
    - how did the people travel to church
  5. Sermons
  6. Responsibilities and social life centering around the church
  7. Christenings, weddings and funerals
- D. Schools
  1. Description of building
  2. Teachers
  3. Students
    - age range and grade distribution
  4. Subject taught
  5. Higher levels of education
  6. Tuition
  7. Supplies and books
  8. Public opinion of the value of education
- E. Neighbors
  1. Distance of closest neighbors
  2. How often they saw each other
  3. Ways in which neighbors came to each others aid
- F. Social Life
  1. Sports
  2. Building Bees
  3. Quilting Societies
  4. Box Socials
  5. Plowing Matches
  6. Holidays: Christmas, July 1st, Orange Day etc.
- G. Politics
  1. What parties existed
  2. Government representatives, Premiers, Prime Ministers, etc.

- H. Other Ethnic Groups in the Area
- I. Growth of Towns
  1. What services were available in your area
    - blacksmiths
    - merchants and stores
    - police
    - professionals (doctors, lawyers, dentists, judges, etc.)
- J. Catastrophes
  1. Floods
  2. Prairie fires
  3. Locust, grasshoppers
  4. Drought
  5. Sickness
    - treatment
    - hospitals

This article was reprinted from the booklet *Oral History — Basic Techniques* with permission of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature.

## *WI fee increase even for Queen*

The Queen got a pay raise of \$200,000 this year so she'll be able to pay her bills. And one of those bills has gone up by a whopping 1,500 per cent.

She is a member of the Sandringham Women's Institute, in the village near her country retreat in Eastern England, and the institute's yearly dues have just gone up from 25 pence to £4. That's about \$7.

No reporters are present when the Queen attends the WI meetings but a member of the branch has broken the code of silence. "We have tea together," she says. "The Queen pours the tea for the ladies at her table."

You might say — and my man Algernon already has — that on this occasion the Queen reigns and pours. *From the July 15 Toronto Star*

