

MR. HARVEY FRASER

Pembroke Street East, Pembroke

Meeting with Mr. Fraser was held on July 12th 1982 at his home.

I first met Mr. Harvey Fraser on July 12 1982 at his home in Pembroke. When I arrived at his home he met me at the door and invited me into his home. He invited me into his living room where we sat down. The first thing I noticed was all the beautiful plants and flowers he had in his backyard.

The Heritage Committee recommended that I meet with Mr. Fraser before I start interviewing people because he would have some suggestions for me that would help me with the interviews. This meeting certainly did prove to be worth my while.

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I met again with Mr. Fraser on July 22 1982 this time to interview him. Mr. Fraser chose to talk to me about the time his parents came to Canada. He mentions what the conditions were like on the sailboat in which they travelled on their journey to Canada many years ago.

I enjoyed this interview with Mr. Fraser. I found him very friendly and very easy to talk to. He was very helpful and told me if I ever needed any help with interviewing, editing or taping to give him a call and that he would be more than glad to try and help me. He also gave me the encouragement that I needed to start this new job.

On tape Mr. Fraser shares with us the life experiences of his parents probably in the same way that they shared them with him. See tape of this interview.

HERITAGE COLLECTION  
File: Interview Mr. Item  
#IV

DONNA BOWES

Taped interview with Mr. Harvey Fraser, by Donna, July 22, 1982.

Mr. Fraser has a very clear voice and speaks without prompting; he is vague about details at the beginning, and the interviewer does not ask him for identification of his family surname, etc.

Mr. Fraser has volunteered to talk about how his family came to Canada. He is vague, e.g. "I guess a couple of generations back conditions were very bad in Europe, in England, Scotland, Wales, the land had been divided up and there was not enough to feed them, so the British government decided to pay passages for people ... " Mr. Fraser thinks that they gave immigrants a few tools, maybe a little grain to plant.

His mother's people came out in these conditions, horrible conditions on the boats, worse than cattle boats today; there were diseases like dysentery. One of our family was actually born on the sailboat. They expected the sailboat to take only 2 weeks, but it took 3 to 4 weeks, so they had difficulty with water - it was rationed. Food was cooked in big pots and doled out. They could only take what they could carry on their backs or in their arms. The women took sewing tools, I guess, and the men took tools that they would need. They landed at Quebec City and came up the river to Kingston. The war of 1812-1814 was going on and every man was pressed into service whether he wanted to or not. Half the men would be fighting and the other half would be resting about 3 miles back from the front; the women stayed behind, 3 miles back, and looked after the sewing and the cooking. One of my family was born at Chrysler's Farm, which is now Upper Canada Village. There was a Mr. McConnell, he was Major McConnell in charge of the ammunition store. There was no pay after the war, but the men were given a grant of land free, so they came up the Ottawa River to the Westmeath area. Lot of land was taken up, so they chose a piece on Allumette Island. McConnells' Farm, where they built a home from scratch. Chimneys were made from stones and mortar that they got from manufacturing lime. Food was dried in the sun, such as wild berries like blueberries and then stored in jars to protect them from the mice. The house had earthen floor. The food was cooked in iron pots and an arm swung on a crane to place the pot over the fire.

They were not short of food because there was plenty of wildlife in the bush and plenty of fish. The home was set up near a spring so there was plenty of water. It was difficult to keep animals out of the garden, so they had spiked posts around it.

Mother told me that once they had let the fire go out and she and her brother (they were about 9 or 10 years old at the time) had to travel three miles through the bush to get coals to put in their iron pot. If there was a bees' nest in a "chico" tree, they would wait until freeze-up when the bees were quiet and then they would open it and take honey - not all of it, they would leave some for the bees.

Remember mother telling me of a bad hailstorm which was so bad that it broke the two windows - they only had two windows.

She told me how they chased young bears and how they skinned animals. They used to put squirrel skins inside their hats to make them warm. They sheared sheep to get the wool and then washed it. They could fish all the year round. They built a root house and a bank with earth and put

(more)

(Brenda B. Lee-Whiting, Deep River, Ontario.)

vegetables in there in the fall, such as carrots, beets, turnips. As time went on there were 2 boys and a girl. They could only get Grade 6 education on the island then, so they came across to live in Pembroke. At that time Pembroke consisted of Lowertown (where the museum is), Middletown, (where the I.G.A. is) and Uppertown (where the city offices are). Mother's people had a store there and Dad was going to school, so I guess that's when they met.

The first train that came to Pembroke, in 1876, only came as far as Lowertown. The next year there was a station and the train came that far. All the children were let out of school to see the train. The train had to back out, it could not turn around, but that makes no difference to a steam engine. Mother went to high school, and I remember her telling me that she had to go down steps to a raft on the Muskrat River and then up steps on the other side. On the left side of the Muskrat River there was a sawmill with a water wheel; on the right side there was a grist mill built by a Mr. Moffatt.

The high school was in town. Mother would stop on her way home to visit a girl friend. In 1945 I bought the property where the girl-friend used to live and I live here today.

My mother's brother, George McConnell was a carpenter and built a lot of houses in Pembroke; he used to build circular staircases and was good at it. Once when Uncle George came to visit from Noranda. Mother hadn't been back to the farm for 60 years - she was over 70 by then and George was older, so I took them back in a boat with a motor.

As we travelled along the shoreline, George recalled a place where there had been an eagle's nest when he was a boy - in a "chico" tree. Fraser had some field glasses with him and they saw Canadian eagles were still there. Again, George recalled a place where deer came down to drink at night on the shoreline. They looked and sure enough there were deer tracks! When they reached a big bay, Sullivan's Bay, they recalled how they used to fish for bass. Fraser said that he had a line over the boat and when he caught a fish he told them "You left a bass behind!". Chuckle. He remarked that they threw the fish back because it was a hot day. On landing it was about half a mile to the farm, and they took their time about getting there. They reminisced about the currant bushes and the flowers such as lily-of-the-valley and sweet william that used to grow there.

When they reached the house, they found the clump of black raspberries still there (a variety that George had found in the bush and brought home one day), even the orange lilies were still there although un-tended all those years. The barn still had the marks of the hailstorm on it. The orchard had grown up but the fruit trees and currant bushes were still there. The root house had fallen in. Mother and Uncle George told how they used to core apples and string up circles of fruit to dry in the sun. Asked if there were flies in those days, they replied "No" "It was a real education for me, life was turned back 100 years" The old house was still standing, shingles and logs just as solid. "I was so glad that I had been there to share that with them".

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Interview with H.F. ends abruptly, less than half way through tape. After several minutes there is part of an interview with Mabel Hunter.