

The interview of Mrs. & Mrs. W. Hartley

Q: Uhm uhm.

Mr. H: ...was a bachelor, but most of them had wives.
Well, women, anyway. Some could...well,
Lars Olsen was married before he ever left
Norway. And if he hadn't been married, he
probably wouldn't have homesteaded here. 'Course
he wouldn't have raised a family, but, I mean...

Q: They didn't have any children when they came here?

Mr. H: They needed, they had to have the female to
give them roots. And to have to build anything
at all, or settle anywhere at all, they had to
have roots. So it all, so in fact it all hinged
on women in the final analysis.

Q: Did they all want a farm?

Mr. H: Pardon?

Q: Did they all want a farm?

Mr. H: The women?

Q: And the men, too.

Mr. H: No, no. But I mean, I'm talking in generalities.
It fits these cases, but I mean, in broad
generalities these...ah, there was men who went
out in the bush and started something, but to be
of any permanence, it had to be...

Q: Yeah.

Mr. H: social history of the world.

Q: Did the ah, did Olson work in a lumber camp or
something?

Mr. H: Which Olson?

Q: The one that originally built house?

Mr. H: No. He was...

Q: Sixty-eight.....

Mr. H: ...He came from Norway. He was married there, but
h he had been apprenticed in Norway as a turner, that's
a wood turner. And a carpenter.

Q: Is that how he built these hardwood floors, ans stuff?

Mr. H: Well, the original structure of the house, the
log part of it was done by these Finns, who are
experts with logs and broadaxes. And incidentally,
it cost a dollar a log to put this house up in
those days.

Q: That's pretty expensive.

Mr. H: Ayh?

Q: I think that might be quite expensive. There are alot
of logs.

Mr. H: That was alot of money for those days, but no,
there's not all that many logs. They're quite....

Q: I guess the wood was thicker.

Mr. H: Ah, the wood always come from right around here.
It's all Tamarac. It's resistant to rot, and
came from all around here. But then, he would have
done them--he did the most of the carpentry.

Q: Okay, I'm just going to see if this is playing back.
...Do you mind repeating that?

Mrs. H: Repeating what I said?

Q: Yeah.

Mrs. H: Well, Clara was born in

Q: Clara Olsen.

Mrs. H: Yeah. Her name was Clara Christianson, and she married Lars in eighteen ninety-nine, and they came to Thunder Bay. She came with two young children, and

Q: When did they come to Canada? Do you know?

Mrs. H: He came ah, I think it's all in there, in the book, around nineteen o-one (1901), and I think she came out in nineteen o-four (1904), and she brought two children with her. And they lived in Fort William on North Mark Street for ten years. And then he thought that the old PD railway was going to go through here....

Mr. H: Through there.

Mrs. H: No, I thought it was down this way.

Mr. H: The road was going to come, the piece of road that we got, the road, instead of the road where Belanger's are, this was going to be the road.

Mrs. H: Yeah.

Mr. H: Right through. Pearson-Pardee road. And PD was going to go along the high ground there.

Mrs. H: Well, anyway, _____

Mr. H: ... _____

Mrs. H: ...they changed the route, and it went through Hymers. And so, for five years, she never left this place. _____

Q: Except to do midwifery, and that kind of thing.

Mrs. H: Oh yeah. Well then people would come to her,
her daughter is Mrs. Colson, Mrs. Curtis Colson.

Q: Oh, that's right, yeah.

Mrs. H: And Gertie Docking is another daughter. She belongs to the south Neebing. And she lives[?] not too far from the Alpine. But Gertie was born in that corner, in there. But anyway, Clara went out, helped clear--this was all forest, and she would go out and pile things up and clear things up, and leave the children. She had some--she must have been a marvelous mother. They speak so well of her, because she thought of ways of amusing them. Walter's found little soft balls that they had. You couldn't buy balls, so they had these made out of the old heels of socks. Or she'd tell them about the time when they were to come and call her. She'd be out working, and I guess he was in town a lot of the time. She was left here. And one day, they walked all the way down to around where Shutie's are now. I don't know whether you know that or not.

Q: No.

Mrs. H: Well you go down 608...

Mr. H: (Slate?) River.

Mrs. H: ...down the Oliver Lake road. The corner of the Oliver Lake road and you can go straight through there, to buy a cow. They were gone two days. They walked all the way there, and all the way

back; the two of them, bringing this cow.

Q: The children and mother or husband....

Mrs. H: The mother and the father.

Q: Oh, husband, yeah.

Mrs. H: And who looked after the children, I don't know.
Maybe one of the older children. But she had her
share of heartbreaks, but another thing that...

Q: How many children did she raise?

Mrs. H: It's all here. (flipped through book)

Mr. H: Well, little girls in those days, was six or seven
or eight, started lookin' after the house, doin'
housework.

Mrs. H: _____. But ah...and she would bring them
porridge to bed. Now I didn't hear this until
just recently that to get to, some of them slept
here, and Alf, the boy, whose store you were at,
slept upstairs and she had to go up a ladder.
But she'd take his porridge. She made it on a
stove out there. And that heated the house all
night, and then she made their porridge, and
brought them all porridge in bed, before they got
up. And they always wanted their porridge warm,
so they all sat up and ate it.

Q: Breakfast in bed!

Mrs. H: But imagine a woman with all that she had to do,
and yet she was so wonderful with her family, and
they all speak so highly of her. And she was
awfully good to all her neighbours, I think.

Mr. H: She was a doctor woman, so...

Q: I wonder....She was what?

Mr. H: Down in (Osaks?) they called them doctor women. Midwife, and general sort of That book Foxfire, if you've ever read that, it--well no, yeah, Foxfire. In some parts of the States especially, the old English expression is doctor woman. Well it's a midwife and... In those days, the doctor would come out from Fort William with a horse and buggy out here, twenty-five, thirty miles. Half a days work for him, at least. So they depended-- it had to be very serious before they went to the doctor or went to the hospital, so they depended on the local talent. Naturally.

Q: Well, she was city woman, from a big city in Norway, so how did she get these skills?

Mrs. H: Well, I think it was just sort of, you know, necessity is the mother of invention. in her family. Ingrid was eighteen when she died. She died of the flu and pneumonia, at the end of the war.

Q: With that epidemic, yeah.

Mrs. H: I guess they didn't--well, once again, they couldn't get out. And by the time they did get a doctor here,....

Mr. H: She'd have died in town, anyway.

Mrs. H; Yeah. And this Mary, one of them died of diptheria. Another child, she---the mother had typhoid, and

she lost her baby when, well, the baby was premature. And I think it lived two months or so. But it wasn't very well. So there was--out of all these, I think there were five left.

Q: What, Mary, Alf, Borfield, _____

Mrs. H: Now this Borfield is Mrs. Colson.

Q: Oh.

Mrs. H: And the youngest was, well, the baby boy died.

Q: Why did they move to Fort William eventually, because Mr. Olson working there?

Mr. H: No, no. Mr. Olson died here.

Q: What year was that?

Mr. H: Her daughter Gertie, that lives on 61, was married to a chap named Docking, and they took over the farm. But he was away all during the war. But then he came back, they came back here, and sold-- 1956, wasn't it, they sold this place?

Mrs. H: Yes.

Mr. H: And they moved up to the Mountain road. And they took the old lady with them. The old lady died in the house, at least she died on the Mountain road, when they were living on the Mountain road.

Mrs. H: But this daughter that was born here, this Gertie, is well worth talking to, because she's had a lot of...

Q: Gertie Docking, yeah.

Mrs. H: ...Gertie Docking, and she lives on highway 61, just past the prison farm. Now Murray worked at

the prison farm, you see. But he joined up, and went overseas, and she and her parents ran the farm. Now she was just a young woman; you'll see pictures of her in here. Until he came home. _____ husband working at the country club. She's a very capable person.

Q: She's sixty now?

Mrs. H: Yeah, she'd be sixty, but you'd never know it.

Q: And her sister's older than her, Borged?

Mrs. H: Borged, yeah. Now this is a picture of a Christmas here. And this very room, when we bought this house, it was practically in the ground.

Q: You didn't buy it in 1957, when they moved out, then?

Mrs. H: No, a German family moved in here. _____.

Q: And they had it for how long?

Mrs. H: From '56 to '72.

Q: Oh yea, so you just bought it recently.

Mrs. H: And they really, almost, well, you'd say they abandoned it, wouldn't you?

Mr. H: Well, sure they abandoned it.

Mrs. H: They were going to tear it down, they didn't think it was worth fixing.

Mr. H: Maybe not consciously abandon it. The didn't probably draw up some _____ they were going to abandon the house, but it was in a state of abandonment and would never have come back and fixed it up. Never.

Mrs. H: This is the story of the family...

Q: I'd like to read it.

Mrs. H: Well, you can come back any time you like, or if you want to read it now. This is written by Mrs. Colson for the history book. And every story that is in this book is about families that...

Q: Oh. Are there any pictures?

Mrs. H: These are the Dockings. Yeah. She was the daughter. There she is.

Q: Oh, what a pretty bathing suit!

Mrs. H: And this is sort of a family picture of all the families. Oh, this is the Sedwich's, but they couldn't get very much about them. But this is what this place looked like when we bought it.

Q: Where did you come from? You and your husband?

Mrs. H: I lived in Thunder Bay. I was born there and raised there. He came from Ottawa, but he was born in England. He grew up in Ottawa, or near Ottawa.

Q: Would you say they were a fairly typical family, the Olson's, of this area?

Mrs. H: Yes, I would.

Q: Because, I know a lot of Scandinavians settled out here.

Mrs. H: Yeah.

Mrs. H: I don't mean anything derogatory about them, but they're self-sufficient. They've had to be. There only meat would be what they got through hunting, so that.....

Q: What about cows and that?

Mrs. H: Oh yeah, they had cows.

Q: Did some of them have sheep?

Mrs. H: I don't think sheep would be very practical out here.

Q: I know the Kamstra's have sheep.

Mrs. H: Maybe they have, but there are too many bears around.

Q: Oh.

Mrs. H: Even with cows they can be a danger. There's still wolves and bears.

Q: What about chickens_____.

Mrs. H: Most of them still have their own chickens, but they have to provide enough to keep them going through the winter. So, hunting--oh, I don't approve of it. For them, it was necessary for their survival. And...

Q: And the women hunted too?

Mrs. H: I couldn't tell you whether they did or not.

Q: I know my grandmother Garrett used to carry a rifle and could shoot one.

Mrs. H: Well, there have been women that have been left to raise families. It seems I heard of someone just recently left, ^{heard about} a woman on a farm without her family and she was left with a bunch of young children, and, what else can you do?

Mrs. H: ...logs, and white pine, red pine. And all through that section down where they lived, they weren't

too far from the border, and so you had all these lumbar jacks, and so on.

Q: So, whereabouts was the prostitution house, exactly?

It says--I don't know where Concession Eight and (Neebing) is.

Mrs. H: Well, this is Crooks.

Q: So that's closer to Fort William?

Mrs. H: No, no. That's down towards the border. The last township along the American border.

Q: Oh, okay.

Mrs. H: So they were very close to the, not too far from the American border. Well, then you have, the Pidgeon River was used for timber, too, you see. They had all those falls....

Q: So this is those woman entrepreneurs came up from the States?

Mrs. H: Yes.

Q: Cecile McGuire

Mrs. H: McGuire, yeah.

Q: Or maybe Sicily, I guess it would be.

Mrs. H: So, you see, she had a dance hall, so it was just like, well, the Yukon. They had quite a house. Now whose living there now, -I don't know, but they had all kinds of old clocks, and all kinds of antiques and things. Then it was used as a Sunday School.

Q: What a change!

Mrs. H: Yes.

Q: Is it still standing_____, I guess
it must be.

Mrs. H: Yeah. But their not living there anymore....

Q: The Held's.

Mrs.H:, they've gone down to ah, they're living in
Virginia. So I don't know whose living in that
place now. We used to visit the naturalist always,
made a point of calling there, because they fed
birds and it was very nice, very nice area. But
I think that would make a good, well, I would be
interested.....

Q: If you want to write something on that for us, we'd be
glad to credit you for it. You see, what we are, are
more editors than authors. We're just trying to, you
know, kind of coalate the material.

Mrs. H: I don't know where I'd go looking for material.

People would be giving me a queer look.

Q: What about the Held's? Maybe they know more than they're
telling, I don't know.

Mrs. H: Well, of course, as I say, they're away down in
Virginia, right now. These people are very close.
She ah, Mrs. Manaseau's American too. The present
Mrs. Manasteau.

...hard time of it really.

Q: Why do you suppose they were the pioneers?

Mrs. H; Well, I can see what happens today.....

(end of tape)