

TRANSCRIPT OF A TAPE RECORDED INTERVIEW
WITH MR. WILLIAM HOWSE, CARRAGANA
CONDUCTED BY D. H. BOCKING, JUNE 12, 1963

D.B. Now the first question is, why did you decide to come to this country?

W.H. From England?

D.B. Yes,

W.H. I was apprenticed to electrical work. I served my apprenticeship. I liked my work and I wanted to get out and get more experience when my apprenticeship was finished and I answered an ad from a firm in Woolich. The Boer war was on at that time and things were more or less booming there. And I took this job and I seemed to get along very satisfactorily. I was always a student of theory and they were up against some problems that actually were being sued by the burrough because they couldn't complete their contracts. And I was able, with my little bit of theory to do the thing for them and saved them a little bit of money, and they raised my wages.

D.B. What would you have been getting there?

W.H. I shouldn't tell you that. I wanted a journeyman's wages. Improver's wages were standard at about seven pence an hour; that's 150 an hour. But he balked at that when he hired me and he said, "I'll give you that if I find your worth it. But I'd like to start you at four pence an hour." This is the same as when apprentices get their first job. I said, "No." He said, "Well, I'll make it five pence. Did you ever have any experience in a certain line of telephons communication work?" I said "Yes. I just came off that." He said, "Well, we're up against a problem. We're being sued. If you can unravel this problem we have I'll have no trouble raising your wages. But you can only work there at nights and Saturdays." Well, it was easy for me. He gave me an apprentice to work with me and I got along good on the job. But then the war ended. 50,000 men were discharged from Woolich Aesenal in one week. Everything went flat in that country. Nobody hired any extensions in electrical work. Building all stopped and it seemed it was going to spread all over that part of England. There was maybe 10 men working there when I was hired. I saw them all go and I was the last, then my turn came. I got another job and I went to Kensington. The traveller he lost his job and he took me to Kensington. We got a job there and the same thing happened there. There would be maybe 15 men working on that firm doing wiring work. But bit by bit it slowed down until there was only two or three of us; my turn came. Now I was out of work and I felt it terribly. I was 7 weeks out of work. I couldn't get a job anywhere. I didn't complain to my father, but I saw my savings were going, my boots were wearing out and I just had enough to buy my ticket out to Canada, which were booming at that time.

D.B. How much did your ticket cost?

W.H. I think it was \$50.00.

D.B. That would take you how far?

- W.H. To Winnipeg.
- D.B. Did you pack up many goods to take with you?
- W.H. No, I didn't have very much. I had brought my clothes. I left the few little things that I had gathered up with my folks. Their home was in Monmouth, the capital town of the county. They looked after that. I told them I would be back pretty soon. But I didn't get back.
- D.B. Do you remember the name of the boat you crossed on?
- W.H. Yes. It was the Corinthia.
- D.B. Were there lots of passengers? Was it crowded?
- W.H. There were three parts to the passengers. I was Second Class. Three parts of those were electricians. It seems that electricians got hit more than anybody else, with this unemployment.
- D.B. Your meals were provided. You didn't have to bring any food?
- W.H. Yes. We had a nice time.
- D.B. How about on the train? You would be on one of the old colonial--
- W.H. On the colonist train, yes.
- D.B. Did you have to cook your own meals? And get what you could along the way?
- W.H. Yes. That's it.
- D.B. Now you didn't stay in Winnipeg very long?
- W.H. No. I got in to Winnipeg in the morning and I was not many hours there before I was hired to go with a man to Miami.
- D.B. Did they have an employment office there?
- W.H. No. They were hiring harvesters on the street for different farmers.
- D.B. How far was Miami?
- W.H. Seventy miles.
- D.B. You went out by train?
- W.H. Yes.
- D.B. You spent the fall and winter there?
- W.H. Yes. Not with the same man. I worked with this one man through harvest, but when winter set in I got another job with another farmer and I stayed with him till I left in May for Saskatchewan.

- D.B. Why did you decide to go to Saskatchewan?
- W.H. Well, there was an old timer there that had been up in Saskatchewan. He'd been a teamster in the Rebellion.
- D.B. Do you remember his name?
- W.H. Yes. Kruse. There were two brothers, John Kruse and Pete Kruse. It was Pete Kruse that had been the teamster. He said if ever he were going to move, that's where he would go. He said Battleford, oh the lovely country there, the beautiful lakes and rivers. Well, there were four of us that heard this and we all decided to go together.
- D.B. You went to Saskatoon in May and you had to walk from Saskatoon to Battleford?
- W.H. Yes.
- D.B. You told me that you made the two trips, to get your baggage.
- W.H. Well, it was really three times we did the walking. The bridge was out at Saskatoon when our train arrived.
- D.B. Which side did you arrive on? The West?
- W.H. No, the south side of the city. We came up from Regina. The bridge was out and we walked across--they were building a new bridge and we walked across--they were building a new bridge and we walked across on the structure--the skeleton structure. We clambered across or walked across, and arrived in Saskatoon proper. There was nothing on the south side, just one little tin shack for the section men to get out of the rain. That's all there was on the south side.
- D.B. Nothing else?
- W.H. Nothing at all.
- D.B. And was there much on the other side?
- W.H. Not much on the north side. Now we run into--
- D.B. The Barr colonists would have been through a year before.
- W.H. A year before was their main drive. There was some coming through that year, but none with us.
- D.B. No, of course not. How did you get directions to set off, or how did you find the trail.
- W.H. Well, it was instinct. There was a wagon trail leading to the northwestward direction. We didn't need anyone to tell us.
- D.B. Did you carry a pack or what did you do on this trip?

- W.H. Well, we had a theory that we could carry enough grub and we could cook and eat the various stuff we had. By the way, two of the party, one got sick in Saskatoon and the other stayed with him--they were brothers. So there was just the one--Joe Humble. He was quite a friend of McClarty that was M.P. for that area. Anyway Joe and I started out--we packed our grub. We met a homesteader coming back and he said, "I can save you ten miles." Well we thought that was fine, how did you say we save 10 miles?" "Well" he said, "you cross the river. When the trail forks, you take the right trail through the Doukhobor village and cross the river at the elbow on that ferry."
- D.B. This would be near the Petrofka bridge now?
- W.H. I don't know whether there's a bridge there or not. But it was 30 miles from Saskatoon. He said, "If you take the north trail, you will--it's 10 miles shorter." Now, by the way, the day was hot and we didn't take very much grub. Then somebody told us that we could always get more grub, there was a stopping station every 25 miles. When we decided on this change we never inquired if there was any stopping areas on the other side. There wasn't.
- D.B. What kind of boots did you have. Good walking boots?
- W.H. Yes, good workingman's boots.
- D.B. Were they strong boots?
- W.H. Yes.
- D.B. What kind of clothes were you wearing?
- W.H. Overalls, I expect.
- D.B. So we stopped at the Doukhobor village. They were so good to us. They put us up a nice breakfast. Joe said to me, "Look, we'll eat at the stopping house. Let's give them our grub. They've been good to us." So we left them our parcels of grub thinking we'd buy our meals every 25 miles. But there was no meal in sight until we got within 10 miles of Battleford.
- D.B. How long did it take you?
- W.H. Well we made the first house, was Lonsdales that was 10 miles from North Battleford, in three days from Saskatoon.
- D.B. So you only had the one meal at the Doukhobor village.
- W.H. Yes.. And we went the rest of the time without anything.
- D.B. What did you do for drinking water?
- W.H. Well, there were lots of sloughs.
- D.B. Would you boil it, or just drink it?
- W.H. We'd just melt it down and sip it.

- D.B. When you got to Battleford, what did you do?
- W.H. Well, we stopped at Lonsdales, and I might mention our physical condition. The mosquitos were really the worst thing on the trip.
- D.B. That was a new experience, I presume.
- W.H. We covered our heads in paper, but there were masses of them all the way, but especially the last 10-15 miles which paralleled a long slough but we'd been told to watch for Lonsdales. That was the first house. Now this other fellow with me was a lot bigger and stronger than me, but it was going harder with him than it was with me. Finally we got disappointed; every ridge we thought we'd see Lonsdales, but there was nothing there but empty space. Finally he said, "I'm quitting. I can't go on. I'm going to cover my head and hands with newspaper and you can do as you like, but I can't go on." "Well," I said "we can't be very far from Lonsdales. I'll go on and the next ridge should show us their place." So I went on, left poor old Joe lying there and just about gave up. When I got to the ridge, about three or four miles further on I could see the blue smoke coming out. That was Lonsdales.
- D.B. So what did you do? Did you call to him to come on?
- W.H. No, he was two miles behind. I thought, I can't do anything but go on back for him and spin a yard that Lonsdales is just the other side of the ridge. So finally I got him roused up. He didn't want to come and I said, "Joe, Lonsdales is just the other side of the ridge. Don't give up. I'm tired just like you are, but we're all right. They'll look after us there." He said, "If there isn't, I'll break every bone in your body." Well, didn't he swear when he saw that it was still 4 miles further. But we made it and we got to Mr. Lonsdales when he was milking his cows. But I was more in now than what Joe was. He said, "Did you fellows come from somewhere?" Joe was trying to tell him that we'd come from Saskatoon. He said, "I've been here so long--" Well, he kept talking and talking. Finally my legs gave way and I was finished. And I heard Lonsdale say to Joe, "What's the matter with that fellow?" Joe said, "I guess he's tired." Lonsdale was good. He took us to the house, his wife made tea and they got us something to eat. The next morning we did the 10 mile walk to Battleford. So that's that.
- D.B. Did he charge you for--
- W.H. No, no. Not a cent---but Joe, finally married his daughter. He got acquainted with them and took a homestead close to theirs and he married the daughter.
- D.B. What did you do when you got to Battleford? Did you file on a homestead immediately?
- W.H. I guess it was Saturday when we got there. No, it was Friday--they close Saturday and I was on the line waiting for an afternoon or sometime to file. But five o'clock, when they close chopped off when it was my turn, so I came back the next day to file. Oh by the way, the way I chose my place--I ran

- W.H. into two land guides that had been locating land for a Quaker settlement. There was this one that they hadn't put anyone on, but they said it was a very choice location and if I wanted it I could file on it.
- D.B. You filed immediately. Did you go out to your homestead?
- W.H. No. I looked for a job. I was broke, but flat. Joe paid my \$10.00 entry fee. That's how I had enough money to file on the homestead. We had to go back and get our baggage and then we separated. The next journey I made with a man named Tom Draught. An Irish lad, ignorant, no education, but I liked Tom. Well, the first job I got, I guess was on the Saskatoon Bridge, under Jack Storer.
- D.B. You mean you went back to Saskatoon and worked?
- W.H. After I came back from Battleford, then I looked for work. And I think I got that job, and my terms with Jack Storer was that if he gave me that job, could he deduct so much of my wages for himself.
- D.B. Well! Sounds like a nice arrangement.
- W.H. That was the ethics in those days. And I guess he did it with the rest of them. Half of them were half-breeds. Nice fellows. We got along. Well I didn't like that financial arrangement and on top of that, I didn't get no money. He'd always have an excuse why he didn't have my money. So that's the reason that I quit that job.
- D.B. Did you ever get it?
- W.H. Yes, in bits and pieces, eventually. Mind you, they say that he had so many debts that when the government would send the pay to disburse, they said the first thing he'd do was to go and pay his debts.
- D.B. What job did you get after that?
- W.H. Then I worked--I was the cookie on a grading outfit at the Thunderchild Reserve. That's where I saw the Indian pow-wow. I stayed there until the long hours played out one of my legs. I was first up in the morning--about 4:00 a.m. and there would be transients coming along, and it would be maybe 11:00 p.m. before we'd be done. There was very little sit down all that time--washing dishes and cooking and catering. Finally one of my legs swelled up and I quit the job and went in to Battleford. It was about a week before my foot was better and I could walk.
- D.B. Do you remember what pay you got as a cookie?
- W.H. Well, the regular pay was \$30 a month. Your food and a tent was found for you to sleep in. You had your own blanket and clothes and that.
- D.B. Now this would be what, the fall of 1905?
- W.H. 1904.
- D.B. Now after you finished with the cookie job, what did you do then?

- W.H. I think I did a little work for Bob Latimer, putting up hay at his ranch in the Eagle Hills and then he got me the work in Kissing's livery barn. I stayed there till late in the fall.
- D.B. This would be looking after the horses?
- W.H. Yes. It was long hours. Early in the morning I had to have the barn all cleaned up, the horses watered and ready to take out. We boarded at the hotel. I say, I mean just me. The man-killer of it all was the pump. There was an old pump that would hold back the water and it was a man killer.
- D.B. Now you hadn't as yet been out to your homestead?
- W.H. No, I hadn't been in it at all.
- D.B. Did you go out to it that fall?
- W.H. No, I didn't go out that fall. I ran into. I started work finishing the grading at the bridge approaches. The pay was a little bit better. Anyway I ran into a young fellow, about 20 years old who had come from southern Alberta. There was quite a story behind him, fellow by the name of Bill Haymes. I got along with him and liked him. Anyway he told me that he used to go trapping in the winter and there was good money and when he'd come from southern Alberta he'd walked the distance and he'd seen a black fox and at that time black foxes were worth money, about three or four hundred dollars. He said "I'd like to go out there; but I lost all my toes off my one foot, froze them last winter and I have no money and whether I can make a grub stake this winter I don't know." Well, I liked the fellow and I asked what I could do, if I could go in with him, and he said it was all right. I bought an Indian pony afterwards. So I went in with him up in the hills, you know where Manitou Lake is. You know there's a bunch of hills about six miles this side, or three or four miles this side, and we camped there and we trapped.
- D.B. You hadn't done any trapping before this had you?
- W.H. No, I didn't know anything about it.
- D.B. He taught you how to set traps?
- W.H. He did all the catching. I don't think I caught anything at all. No, we shared the money. We bought things in common. We had a little tent. And finally--
- D.B. Did you catch much that winter? Did you get your black fox?
- W.H. No. We got a cross fox. He got it. Then grub started showing signs that it wasn't going to last the two of us. He said, "Look, you don't know much about trapping. I like being alone better. I'll give you half the furs, which you're entitled to and I suggest that you leave me." It was 70 miles

- W.H. to Battleford. He said "I'll look you up when I get through. I'll be coming in towards Spring." So I left him. I never saw him again. But I did heard about him. When I landed in Battleford, I went to the Queen's Hotel; I forget the circumstances now. But a man came to me and he said, "You're just in from the West, eh?" I said "Yes." He said, "There's a rancher in here, he's inquiring what the conditions are in the hills, west of Battleford, if the snow is deep. He wants to get through on horseback to southern Alberta." Well, I said, I'd tell him. So I went to him and I told him, "You can follow my track, if there's no storm. I'll take you to our camp and there you'll find a man named Bill Haymes and he'll put you up. "Bill Haymes?" he said, "What's he like?" I described him, frozen foot and all. Then he said, "Did he ever tell you why he left his brother's home last fall without letting anybody know?" Well I told him the story that Bill had told me. He'd been away from home several years and then he was determined he'd go back where his brother lived. He lived down in Montana, herding and ranching and working out, gambling too, I guess, quite a bit. He was quite a gambler. He came to his brother's place. His brother made him welcome and they put him up, gave him a room and the brother said, "You stay with me until we get a good job for you. This was at Sounding Lake, but he didn't sleep good, and he went to bed early and then he heard a visitor come, a lady visitor and she was talking to his brother's wife. And the brother's wife said 'Our wasteful brother has turned up and I guess we'll have to keep him.' Well, that wouldn't suit Bill Haymes. So he waited till they were all asleep and then he hit the trail--200 miles from there to Battleford. So I told Walker, that's the name of this rancher, I told him that I'd always been sorry for Bill because I shouldn't have told him that. The poor brother's wife getting the blame. This Bill Haymes was very independent-minded. He insisted that I take half the furs, although I'd caught nothing by myself.
- D.B. You had ridden a pony back, did you?
- W.H. Oh, we took a pony. I had a little pony and towards the last he got away on us. I hunted and hunted for a long while, but I never found him. My own little bits of effects that I had and blankets and furs--
- D.B. Where would you sell the furs?
- W.H. To a fur dealer or Hudson Bay Company. Every individual there was out to steal your furs. There was the farmer, and the storekeepers. They were all hunting me up. I had quite a nice little pack of 300 muskrats and the foxes, a few badgers, one or two other things. Oh, they wanted my furs. They'd pay better than anybody else, but the market price had gone so low, really, I'd better sell them quick or I wouldn't be able to sell the furs. They thought I was ever so green, but I finally did. I sold them to a storekeeper for a little bit more than the others offered. They knew how to work on men coming in with furs.
- D.B. What time of the year was this?
- W.H. I got back there in February. Then I had a stroke of luck. I was walking along the street and I ran into a little boy, the son of one of those men that I had worked with on the Saskatoon trail. Sid, his name was, and he seemed so overjoyed to see me. He said, "Will you come down to Dad's place. Dad has taken on the job of delivering water in Battleford and he's having it

W.H. pretty hard. Promise you'll come down. I'll take you down if you'll come." Well, I don't know many in Battleford, but that was the warmest welcome I ever had anywhere, from this little boy. He said, "Dad will want you to stay with us." And actually he did. As soon as I told him that I had nothing, no job or anything, he says, "Won't you stay with us. You can help me a little bit with the work. I sure would be glad if you would stay with us. So I did. We didn't have much else to eat but porridge. We were all right. I helped him. I had a few strokes of luck come my way. There was a man that owed me some money. Poor old Jack was out of hay and his outfit was badly mortgaged to the man that he had bought it from. The man was going to foreclose and Jack couldn't raise the money to buy hay. I got enough hay, a great big ton and a half load from a man that owed me a few dollars and that saved Jack's business. So he didn't hurt by having me and I stayed there till I got a job on the C.N.R. bridge west of Battleford. I stayed there until the river was breaking up and then I thought I would like to go and see my homestead, build a shack, which I did. Then I came back--

D.B. How did you go out to your homestead? Did you have a horse and wagon?

W.H. No, I can't remember how I got out there. Oh, I ran into a fellow from Swathmore and went with him. His name was Tom Slack and he said "Come along with me. Ride in the wagon." He took me with him 10 miles and I walked the rest of the way.

D.B. Did you have any difficulties in finding your quarter?

W.H. No, I followed the stakes. It was all staked out. The surveyors had left it easy to follow.

D.B. What kind of a shack did you build?

W.H. I built a sod shack.

D.B. How did you get the sods?

W.H. The settlers about three or four miles away came down and plowed me the sods and brought me some string and roof poles, and a few more poles to do the framework with.

D.B. How long did it take you to put up the shack?

W.H. About a week. Then I was staying, while I was building with a fellow that I had worked with on that last job on the C.N.R. bridge. His name was Harvey Wismer. I stayed with Harvey. He was alone until I went back. Then I thought I could get back on my job for the winter, but they were filled up and they referred me to the wellman's job in tie laying.

D.B. I'm interested in how this job was carried out. They bought the ties by rail.

W.H. Yes. There was a material train that came up morning and after dinner.

D.B. Did they have a boom for loading the ties? How did they load the ties on your wagon?

W.H. You had racks made out of four ties, four slanting ties and two bad ties. They were well designed and they fitted onto your heavy wheel wagons and you drove alongside the car where they might be loading four or five cars at the same time. There would be a loader in each of the cars. A man with a pickaro. Did you ever see a pickaro? It's about the size of an axe handle with a hook on the end. They can handle ties well with that. Well they assisted you. They threw out the one end and you took that. They threw over the other end and you guided the tie onto its place. It was dangerous, for sometimes a fellow got hurt. I got nearly hurt a couple of times myself one time, I had a runaway one time because I slipped and fell on the team's back. They bolted with me caught in the doubletrees about half a mile.

D.B. How did you unload them?

W.H. You stood on the front of your wagon and the helpers on the grade under the direction of the straw boss named Mike, A Swede. He would tell you where to dump them and then this one man would jump on the hind end of your wagon and you would take the front end and throw them over bodily. That left them at the side of the grade. Then there were men that followed and put them crosswise and then the pioneer, which was attached to the trail would keep moving up and unloading the steel cable on top of the pulley wheels each side of the flat cars where the steel rails were. They were unloaded on the rollers and they were pulled along until--I think there were 30 men on each side--would manhandle those rails, lay them down into place and there they were spiked and guaged for width and then each pair of rails was laid down and the pioneer and the train would move up that distance. We made as much as 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles in a day.

D.B. Of course all the grading had to be done ahead.

W.H. Yes.

D.B. Grading would be a hard job I presume.

W.H. Some of it crossed the swamps as much as two or three miles. That was all wheelbarrow work--all done by hand.

D.B. No scoops--

W.H. Well, where the land was dry enough to work they used scrapers. Teams and scrapers. And where the fills were heavy, they would use the four-horse outfits there.

D.B. You would be kept going all day, loading and unloading?

W.H. We were roused at 3:00 a.m. We had to see to our teams first of all. Then get breakfast, and by that time it would be time to harness your team and hitch on your wagon and then head for where the end of the steel would be. You would work there until noon. Then the ties would be empty and the field cars would be emptied. The material trainmen would go back 30 or 40 miles to the material yard to load up another trainload of stuff. That would arrive at around 1:30 or 2:00. Then you would work at that until it was all unloaded and then you were free to go home.

- D.B. They moved your camp often?
- W.H. They would move camp about every three or four days. It might be eight or ten miles each time.
- D.B. I imagine that camping conditions would be pretty primitive.
- W.H. Yes. They had a couple of fairly large tents for our sleeping accommodation and one large tent for eating. Mind you, there was aroundas hundred men. There was 80 teams doing this tie-laying work. The average distance that you would haul from that car to the grade might be half a mile or it might be a mile.
- D.B. You would probably drive in the ditches, would you?
- W.H. No. You didn't drive in the ditches, but you'd find the old grade camps had left tracks, wagon trails here and there and you could find a way. If you didn't find a way, the foreman would.
- D.B. They'd find it for you?
- W.H. Yes.
- D.B. You didn't have to care for the horses or anything?
- W.H. Pete, the corral boss would have part of your bale hay put for you. You would feed your team oats in a bag and the hay in a slice of the bale. You would water them yourself. The wagons were lined up in a circle and the teams were tied to the wagon wheels inside the circle.
- D.B. And you stayed with this until you got from Battleford to Edmonton?
- W.H. Yes, Battleford to Edmonton. To the Edmonton job.
- D.B. Then you had that very interesting ride back. It's rather incredible, this boxcar business.
- W.H. I can't hardly believe it. You haven't got that with you, but maybe your memory would tell you. I'm not dead sure, but I believe I was right when I said there was 200 men to two boxcars. I was quite sure when I wrote the letter that that's what there was. Well, approximately.
- D.B. Well, the point is that only half could sit down, while the other half had to stand up.
- W.H. No a half--one in four! But when they put an extra car on, they also took on extra passengers. Then we were able to gearrange it that a half could sit down and a half stand.
- D.B. How cold was it outside?
- W.H. Twenty below zero. They said it was twenty below when we left Edmonton. Baldwin, that's the lad that I roomed with; he had a place at Swathmore--

- W.H. you know where Swathmore is? His folks might still be there. Anyway he and I shared our trips. We got off together in Battleford. We thought that we would never recover, we were so far gone.
- D.B. Was there any trouble about your land?
- W.H. Yes. A little.
- D.B. Did anybody try to cancel on you?
- W.H. One man in the middle of the summer put a cancellation on. I got a letter from my friends, Wismers to say I'd better look after it. I got no other notice. I managed to get down there--by the way the construction train crews all made me dip into my pocket for a dollar or something, or they'd throw me off the train. There were no passenger trains. You had to sweeten them up. Then when I got to the land office they told me, "You had written to say that you were going out to work, so we had stopped cancellation procedure. You didn't need to have come down at all."
- D.B. You got back in December?
- W.H. Yes.
- D.B. What did you do then? Did you go out to the farm?
- W.H. I went out to the farm. I went down and stayed with Wismer until I fixed up the farm a little bit--fixed up the shack and made it habitable.
- D.B. Then you went into residence?
- W.H. Then I stayed there that winter.
- D.B. Did you stay there that summer?
- W.H. The next spring I bought a team of oxen and I stayed on the farm.
- D.B. I gather oxen were---
- W.H. Well oxen could live off the land; horses couldn't. You had to have oats for horses. When I bought that team of oxen, my finances were pretty low. We were all in the same boat.
- D.B. Did you borrow implements?
- W.H. No. I was able to buy a walking plow.
- D.B. So you broke land; did you seed any that year?
- W.H. No. I didn't seed any. I had a little bit of garden. But I put a crop in the next spring. Now conditions were very different then. They didn't have the modern grain or varieties of wheat. We had old Manitoba wheat--Red Fife. It was three weeks longer in maturity than these wheats we're

- W.H. growing here now. We didn't know what the frost situation was. We thought land was land, whether it was Manitoba or Saskatchewan. I had a wonderful crop, a little over 30 acres. The weed inspector said that it was the best crop in the whole country that he travelled. He'd travelled all summer. So it was good. But it froze in the milk and it froze in the dough and although I threshed and got a little out of it, it wasn't worth very much. It didn't hardly pay to thresh it, so that was that. There were 9 acres of oats that I had that was very good.
- D.B. Now actually you did some breaking. How did you spent the winter? Did you stay with residence or batching?
- W.H. I got a pig that winter. I stayed on the homestead. I don't know whether you ever heard of that very hard winter. There's never been a winter like it since, or really before. I put that winter in the shack. I used to walk over to the neighbors a mile or two away, or they might walk over to my place and we'd spend our time together.
- D.B. So your first crop was a failure because of frost. Did you manage to put in a crop the next year?
- W.H. Yes. I put in a crop the next year and it was a fairly good crop. Then we got one very good crop--a bumper crop. Then we had a succession of off-years again.

- D.B. This was a bush quarter too, was it not?
- W.H. No.
- D.B. There wasn't much bush?
- W.H. No, no bush at all. All prairie.
- D.B. So you didn't have any difficulty breaking?
- W.H. No, there was some stones; quite a few stones.
- D.B. But you acquired your patent without any difficulty?
- W.H. I qualified, but I had put on a mortgage. We all did. And so I didn't get a clear patent. I never really did get the clear patent.
- D.B. Then after the war you went back to Cutknife, did you?
- W.H. Yes. I bought what you call a purchase homestead--an adjoining quarter. The mortgage company forced me to sell my own quarter. That's how it was. I lost it. But I had the other quarter and I'd got breaking done on that and I got the crop in on that one when I came back. I bought seed and put it in. I had friends that had looked after my stock. There'd been an increase in the horses and cattle and they'd looked after them just for having their use. It cost me nothing and when I took over I had to buy seed and I put the crop in. Then I saw it burn up. All the crops were burning up. They'd come up six inches and turn yellow. Mind you, it's not all the fault of the climate. People didn't know then how to farm like they do today. They know how to conserve moisture today from one year to the next.
- D.B. Then this was when you decided to come up here?
- W.H. Yes. I saw the crop burning up and I thought it wasn't going to bring me anything at all. And I saw a mention in the newspapers about opening this for returned soldiers.
- D.B. And what did you do? Sell off your purchase homestead?
- W.H. Not then. There was no sale. After the war there was no sale for land for some reason. You see during the war there was a terrific sale because every farmer that had a son and he didn't want to go to war, he put him on the land. Bought a quarter for him and he got exempted. But the war was over and I tried to see if I could sell, but there were no buyers. I didn't get any offers until, oh, in the Depression and a fellow bought it and then he died--he hadn't paid for it, he'd paid some down, and he died and his widow took up the matter with the Deby Adjustment Board and I didn't get very much out of it altogether. I think I got \$600 altogether.
- D.B. Now when you came into this area, I suppose there was a railway line through here?
- W.H. Oh yes.

D.B. Was there any settlement here at all?

W.H. There was a lumber mill at Prairie River, that's all.

D.B. There were no farms?

W.H. No farms.

D.B. And it was all heavy bush?

W.H. Most of it was heavy bush like around Prairie River, but when you got out into these townships out here, there have been some fires and it opened up quite a little bit of it. And it was, well we could say, 10 or 20% bush, something like that. But there was no real open land.

D.B. Here, when you came in here, you would start by building a log shack I suppose.

W.H. Yes. I think the first building I built was a little log building to store grain so that I had oats for my horses. And then I built the walls of my shack and then I went back to Cutknife to get the rest of my stuff. I couldn't get the lumber to put on the roof. The man at Prairie River, he hadn't got, he was handling Lumber and he had got an arrangement made with these lumber mills and they would not sell to the settlers. They had to sell through him. I don't know but I couldn't get the lumber until it was July or August, the following summer before I could get lumber to finish the roof and things were touch and go in every way. I wrote to Mom; I'd been writing her off and on, and I wondered if she'd ever had a notion that she'd like to come out and wrote the letter and mailed it in Prairie River. Now the mail had been handled by the lumber camp people there. They had a post office. But at that time I didn't know they were transferring the post office to the storekeeper that started up, Bill Long. Well, time went on and I never got any reply to my letters, and I'd just about given up the idea. Along about fall, well it was getting on towards fall anyway, by George, somebody brought me out a letter and it was from Mom, and it had been about two months getting to her. In the transfer from the one post office to the other, I guess it would get thrown into a corner or something like that and then eventually it got found and put into circulation.

D.B. And her answer was in the affirmative?

W.H. Well now, that was a pretty serious question, but maybe she'd come if I did this, that and the other thing and so on. Well, I met her in Winnipeg. Yeah, I'll never forget the moment when I see her come up the steps at the C.P.R. subway. And we had two or three weeks in Winnipeg. We had a good time there. When we landed in Prairie River the hotel was full of hunters. I'd sent word to them that I was bringing my wife, but they wouldn't believe me, so they hadn't left a place for me. The place was chock full of hunters, so the hotelkeeper's wife took her into bed with her; and the next day we ran into a neighbour that was in with a load of hay and we rode out on his hayrack. That was December then. I bought her a fur coat in Winnipeg so she wouldn't be cold. And felt boots. A dog skin coat.

- D.B. And you brought her to a beautiful house--a one-room shack?
- W.H. Yeah, that's all it was.
- D.B. And all the amenities that you could wish for--beautiful cook stove.
- Mrs. H. He had picked out all the mortar between the logs the night before he left for town and when I got back, well it was still there.
- W.H. I worked all that night replastering, but I hadn't time to sweep up all the mortar. I had to rush and get my team ready and get in to Prairie River just in time to catch the train. But when I got to Prairie River, I enquired at the C.P.R. and they said that the boat had been delayed with heavy storms, so it would be a week late, so there you are, I'd rushed all for nothing.
- D.B. You could have done the plastering after all. Well now on the homestead, rather the Soldier Settlement Board, you took your land under, did you have to clear a lot of the land?
- W.H. No. I don;t think they required it--
- D.B. They didn't require it, but to farm it you--
- W.H. Oh, to make a living? They said--we didn't know anything--we were so glad to get out of the war. And there were no jobs, at least there wasn't anything like enough jobs to go around for fellows getting discharged. They said, 'that land is so easy to clear--three cracks with an axe and out will come the biggest tree that ever grew.' But then there were lots of other things too.
- D.B. Was there any big trees?
- W.H. Yes.
- D.B. How did you handle it? Did you cut the stumps high?
- W.H. Well, some were with teams and some worked by hands and the teams in the barns, the mosquitos were so bad. Anyhow, you could get rid of it. My first clearing I did all by hand. I didn't know how to work with a team in clearing land. So others that had got better ways I did like they did. But there was no engine outfits at all.
- D.B. No. How did you handle it? When you perfected your technique?
- W.H. You had a grub hoe and you scraped away the dirt from the base of the tree and exposed the roots and then you cut them off with an axe and let the wind blow the tree down if there was any wind and if there wasn't you left it alone and the next wind that come up would blow it down.--Once it was wobbly a bit.
- D.B. In other words, you'd cut the roots and then haul the tree out whole?
- W.H. Yeah, and load it on the wagon and that would make your fire wood or your building wood or anything you liked. You could trim it down and pile up the brush.

D.B. And there would still be roots in the ground to be picked up and cut?

W.H. Oh yes. I cleared three acres the first summer. Cleared and broke the three acres. The next year was so wet I only got about two acres done. And to show you how much water there was around I started to go down-- they had a store here then, a Prairie River man had opened a store. It was five miles away from our place. And I was walking down to see if he had a pair of high rubbers and I met a neighbor coming back from the store and I said, "Jim, I don't know whether to go on or not, can you tell me if Law has got any high rubbers?" He said, "Knee rubbers? Why do you want knee rubbers for?" Well I said, "I want to get on the land and do a little bit of clearing." He said, "You don't want knee rubbers, you want neck rubbers."

D.B. Well, how did you manage to exist all this time...

W.H. We grew our own. We grew most of our vegetables. We had milk from the cow.

D.B. And I suppose you would kill the odd haifer?

W.H. Yes.

Mrs. H. Dad never killed any wild animals.

W.H. We had milk and eggs and chickens and butter and garden stuff.

Mrs. H. We made our own cheese.

D.B. Now this would be rather novel, Mrs. Howse.

Mrs. H. Well, it was work.

D.B. Well, you were not accustomed to any of this?

Mrs. H. No, but I got along as good as the rest.

D.B. Nobody was better off than anybody else. How did you learn to make butter, for example? Was he able to tell you?

Mrs. H. Well, I'd seen butter made before; but I'd never made bread, I'd never seen it made.

D.B. This was a great experiment, was it?

W.H. One batch of bread she was making she threw some salt in and then she didn't remember whether she put the salt in or not, so she put another lot in. Well when it come to be cooked up--I can't bear salty bread. I can't eat salty bread. She stormed at me like she generally does. After dinner along a neighbor's wife and she said, I had to get away from home. You know I made a batch of bread today without putting any salt in it.

D.B. What did you do here the first year or two for entertainment? Did you have any dances or this sort?

- Mrs. H. Well, will you believe me. I've been here all these years and I have never been to one dance!
- D.B. Never once?
- W.H. Well, I didn't like taking her to dances. There was things there I didn't like. Well, there was drink there.
- D.B. Well, did you play cards or visit the neighbors?
- W.H. Oh, there were lots of visitors.
- W.H. There were a lot of bachelors here, and they knew they could always get a good meal at our place. Nobody every went hungry.
- D.B. They beat a path to your door then?
- W.H. Well, they knew where to come.
- Mrs. H. Let me tell you a funny story. You know in England they make what they call Roly Poly, a raisin pudding. And they had a sawing bee--there were 7 men altogether--and so, you know, I thought whatever can I make for dessert cause we hadn't a lot. I'd make roly poly duff. So I made this. It would be about that long, and about that big around. You rolled it up with raisins. The men had a good dinner and then I put this pudding down. You know one man looked at the other, they all looked around to each other and th they laughed. Well, I couldn't think what was funny until Bromhead said, "You know, Mrs. Howse, I haven't seen a roly poly pudding in years." Oh, I felt awful shy about that, you know, I don't believe I ever made another one.
- W.H. No, she didn't. She put in plenty of baking powder and did it swell up!
- D.B. You did build a Red Cross place, did you?
- W.H. Yes. What was the date. About two years after the opening in the settlement?
- D.B. They could handle any emergencies?
- W.H. Oh yes.
- D.B. For example, if someone sliced a foot cutting trees?
- W.H. Oh yes, first aid and minor sickness. But if it was anything serious they would have to go to by train.
- D.B. And was there a weekly service?
- W.H. I wouldn't say for sure.
- D.B. The people in this area were all veterans. Did they work together on any projects, helping one another?

W.H. Well, just where we were they would pull together very, very good. Then in some parts they didn't and in other parts they did.

D.B. Did you have things like 'bees' for building?

W.H. Yes, sometimes, not always though. Oh, for sawing wood there was always a bee for that. No use one or two men doing that themselves. You'd have to have at least four or six men to handle the saw. And, by a stroke of luck, I traded a small team for an engine and a saw and a small grain grinder. The fellow that bought it on the deal didn't know how to run it. He wanted my team. And then the dollars started rolling in. But actually, that saved me from going out of the district to get jobs, which most of them had to do. Most of them had to leave the district. I was able to stay home.

Mrs. H. Well, he would leave Monday morning and come back Friday night. Saturday he'd go crushing for people.

D.B. Of the veterans that came in here, did most of them stay? Or did a lot of them give up?

W.H. Most of them gave up. There were 150 files the day of the draw. Now there was 500 locations available, but out of those there was only 150 filed. I don't think half of those stayed enough to put in residence. And then every year there was more dropped out. 1926 Bishop Lloyd--he was a young man, he had piloted the Barr colony when old Barr turned haywire--and so when he got on in years he got rather swell-headed. He thought he was the appointed man by Providence to engineer these settlement schemes. So he hit on a settlement scheme for this district here. The Soldier Settlement Board--mind you, I'm giving away inside secret information that I shouldn't--but the Soldier Settlement Board very nearly came to being closed out. But that wouldn't suit them, they'd lose their jobs. There was collusion between him and the Bishop Lloyd or some schemes. So the scheme was that they would get this district here turned into another kind of enlarged settlement. And under the Soldier's Settlement Board they would retain their organization. And they maneuvered it very very smartly. We didn't know what we were in for. But they got us to hold up our hands in favor of it. And the way he rushed Bishop Lloyd up--his resolution was this: that we the settlers of this Soldier's Settlement district, we request the government to reserve this area solely for British settlers and not allow foreigners to homestead here, but to reserve and make available for British-born settlers. Well he got this typed out and he read it to us. Well, I wasn't one that held up my hand because at that moment, just when the vote was being took I heard my team start trying to break loose from attacks by mosquitoes, so I'd left the crowd, but I heard when I got back what had happened, that they'd--enough of them had voted in favor of this resolution. He didn't bother any more once he got the thing voted for. He packed up and he was on the train the next day for Ottawa and presented this petition to Minister of Interior Mr. Lloyd. And Lloyd gave him the authority to go to England and organize this British family settlement scheme. So the next wave of settlement that come out here--at least half of those people had quit--and they came back to the Soldier's Settlement Board. Their loans weren't paid and they saw a chance to resell these lands through another loan to these British settlers. And that kept up the organization of the Soldier's Settlement Board. Out they came, out here--about 60 or 70 British families, and very few of them were any good at all.

W.H.

The arrangement was that there was about 500 possible locations and the Soldier's Settlement Board had surveyors and guides that looked the country over and then it was to be opened for entry Dominion Day was July 1, but that came on a Sunday so they brought down the Soldier's Settlement clerks to Prairie River so that you could file on the land there. In order that there wouldn't be any rush on that, they spent about a couple of hours making a lottery out of it. You could put your name on a piece of paper and the location that you wished to file on and put it into a churn. Anybody could turn that churn all he liked. But they gave that honor of picking out the papers in their turns to an old forestry official named Shand. Shand Creek is called after him. Well, that's pretty well all there is to it. The night before all the officials had come down from Prince Albert and they'd set up their desks and books and papers and when your turn came and you were ready to file, you walked from one to another and signed the different papers that they had in front of them. Well, you could put as many choices as you liked, in case the first one was gone. I think that was the procedure. It may not have been exactly like that. But there was only one of those when my turn came at the end of the draw, so I filed mine. I hadn't seen another place that I liked and so I went to the man and turned my head away and said, there, that's goes. And that happened to be the one I filed on. I took the number of that. It was open and I took the number of that and filed on it. Really you couldn't tell one place from another. You could climb to the top of a tree and just get a very faint idea of what a place must be like and that's all. So, it was just a gamble. But only 150 files out of the 500 possible locations.

W.H. They were recruited from all the indescribable elements there. Anything at all. Their passagas were paid and they were brought out here and given a loan and a team of mules.

D.B. And they didn't stay wither?

Mrs. W.H. The best did. There are some very good ones.

D.B. And then when was the next trip. When did they come in?

W.H. Well, finally outsiders came in--Ukrainians most of them. Any land that was opened was filed on--and they were more adaptable. The old Bishop he stirred them up, he called them the scum of the earth, that was his term, and it was awful and he said that they wanted to keep this for the fine British stock. We were all just sick when he talked about this. And I think the Ukrainians contributed a very good deal to making this country as good as it was. It would do you good now to drive out. It's a nice country. Good gravel roads and people pay their taxes and they work hard. It's a credit, really it is.

D.B. How did you make out with the Soldier's Settlement Board? A lot of people had difficulty, I gather.

W.H. I had mine.

D.B. They loaned you money, was that it?

W.H. Yes.

D.B. This was a mortgage against the quarter. You had what a quarter or a half-section?

W.H. We never sold a dollar's worth. They reserved another 80 acres alongside that you could buy it from them. Then, within the year after we came in they wanted to collect. Our payments were due. Well I said, 'I have nothing, no crop.' 'That doesn't matter' they said, 'that's your affairs. It's due and you've got to pay it! The squeeze was on right then. But they didn't do anything about putting people off until the depression hit. And when the depression hit, and wheat was down to twenty or twenty-five cents here. Anybody that had any grain then, then he got the squeeze. What happened to me, he come along and said, "How much wheat have you threshed?" I said, "I threshed 1200 bushels. One grade No. 2 Northern." "Well, he said, "will you sign here that the first payment will be made to the Soldier's Settlement Board?" I said, "No. My first payment is to provide for my family!" The Superintendent was a member of our own Battery in France, he said, "Well, lock Bill, this is serious. Don't try to fool now, this is serious. I know it, and even if you're not going to do it, you'd better sign it." I said, "Not on your life. That grain, first of all, represents a living for our family, for the children." He went and talked to Mom and tried to get her to persuade her to get me to sign. But they would have took all that grain. I was in arrears a half a payment and then there was taxes. It would have took it all. All there was to make that payment. So I said no. So they put a seizure on and notified me that I could be put off in two weeks notice. I was not allowed to sell anything, without their consent. The money had to be paid to them. Not a load of hay or a bushel of grain or anything. Finally

W.H. I got the MP, Malcolm McLean, to take it on to Parliament. And they didn't let it go very far there. But they permitted me, provided I paid my taxes, they would give me another season to make my payments or something like that. That was the places they were after, places where they were fairly well improved a little. Those that had done nothing and never paid them anything, they did worry him, not one bit.

D.B. I suppose the other would be a hopeless situation. They couldn't get anything from him.

W.H. Well, that's it. They wouldn't gain anything at all. But I'll tell you what was behind it. It wasn't the Soldier's Settlement Board. I can't blame them for wanting to perpetuate their jobs. But it was the old financial system. R. B. Bennett represented the old gold standard. He said, "Canada must pay her debts in the terms of the contract" which was gold. They would have had a revolution in Canada very soon if they'd had.

D.B. But you were eventually able to clear off the---

W.H. Oh yeah. If they would have given people a decent chance they wouldn't have had any trouble collecting. Now, they made me sell all that for faxes at .20¢ a bushel, some at 18¢ a bushel. And if they'd left me alone, in the spring that wheat went up to .75¢ a bushel. But it wasn't their payment they wanted. They wanted to get a bunch of fairly well improved places.

D.B. You're convinced of that?

W.H. Oh yeah. It looked the natural thing to do. They were a callus lot. Oh they were. When I made a trip up to Prince Albert and I saw the Supervisor and I said, "You know it's harsh treatment." "Well" he said "you're behind with your payments." I said, "I'm behind one-half a payment." He said, "Well, you should know those things when you sign your contract! You'll have to take a loan." Oh, he lectured me and I couldn't answer him back. And then there was other things. Like I had my figures--what was the grain worth and how much I owed. I owed, at that time--I'd owed money for fuel, to run that separator. I owed wages for some of the fellows that worked on it, and a small store bill of \$20 or \$30. And these things were just as much in need of paying as the Soldier's Settlement bill.

D.B. I suppose you had to make most of the clothing [directed at Mrs. Howse].

Mrs. H. Oh yes, out of flour bags.

W.H. They had the power of issuing currency. We'd gone through enough all ready in France there. Fellows had gone through risked their lives, put in three years of hardship in the army, war and then treat us that way. Why they couldn't have treated us worse if we'd been slaves! They'd had to have fed us.

D.B. What were the educational opportunities in those days for your children?

W.H. Well, of course the first school was the amalgamation of two districts. Blockeley and Greenview. They built a school on the line between the two and they got a father of a settler to come in here to act as teacher.

D.B. Now this is what a one-roomed school? Taught up to what grade?

W.H. Yes.

Mrs.H. Well, there weren't very high grades at that time.

D.B. What happened when your children were ready for high school?

Mrs. H. Then they built other schools in the district.

W.H. Well, Jimmy never got a chance in highschool.

Mrs. H. He took his grade nine.

W.H. Ellen took hers by correspondence, except her Grade 12. We sent her to Melfort for grade 12. And she had to work. She took care of two little girls, part payment for her board. That's how she took her grade 12.

Mrs. H. It was \$15 or \$18 a month for her board and whatever else it cost you see, was for looking after these little girls.

Mrs. W.H. Howse

My first trip out for the birth of our first child. Well, we left home at 9:00 in the morning and Prairie River was 16 miles. And it took from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. to get there. But on the trip out the buggy pole broke, the roads were rough, the horses were up to their stomachs nearly in mud and water. Nearly all the way. When it got too rough for me, I had to walk. And I walked off the trail and tread from log to log to keep out of the water too. Every now and again he'd stop and he'd call, "Are you all right?" I guess maybe I was crying a little. And I'd say, "Oh yes, keep a-going." Well, when the buggy pole broke, I had to sit in the heavy bush, a couple of hours I expect. There was nobody built on that road for many miles back. He ran back and got another buggy pole and had to carry that all the way. Then we proceeded to Prairie River. It was raining hard all the time. Of course I'd never been stranded in the bush like that before. He was always with me wherever we went. And I imagined bears and everything else. And I could hear cat calls of all descriptions through the bush. I didn't know what they were--animals of some kind. We got to Prairie River. I wasn't fit to be seen. I'd gone out dressed to travel up to the hospital. And I had to go to Prince Albert by train from Prairie River. The lady at the hotel helped clean my clothes a little bit. I am telling you, I was in a muddle. I'm telling you they were hard times, those sort of things that women have to go through. That was in November. No, I went out in October, because there was no hospital ready here. So I had to go out a month before, which was better for me anyhow. Of course, I was all alone in Prince Albert. I didn't know a soul. Then I lost the baby, she only lived 48 hours. So that was a poor trip. But there was many more like it. Mrs. Gibson was similar. She lost her baby too. We had to put up with a lot of things here when we first came. Nobody knew very much. So, one woman would go and help another woman.

D.B. I suppose there would be many babies born here without doctors.

Mrs.H. Certainly. They couldn't leave. We didn't have much money either, but I just managed to get to Prince Albert and pay our way. But when I came back from Prince Albert, I don't think we had a nickle left. But I paid my doctor's bills right up. Maybe I shouldn't have done, but I did.

D.B. Were there any practical nurses around or midwives?

Mrs. H. Well, there were a few around, but they didn't want to with first babies. They didn't mind after that. And then, of course, in time there was the Red Cross came in and then we were O.K. But I had three babies in Prince Albert. The first one I lost; I had two others there. Then after that, I took a chance and stayed in. You couldn't find people to look after your families. So that you just had to do the best you could. But I was lucky.

D.B. Now, you would have great difficulty, I presume, clothing your children. Would shoes be a big problem?

Mrs. H. Well, we always managed somehow. I never saw my kids ragged.

- D.B. They never went barefoot?
- Mrs. H. Oh they would if the summer was nice and hot you know. They had shoes they could have put on.
- D.B. You were able to provide these essentials? And the boys, I would presume, wore overalls?
- Mrs. H. Oh yes, and the girls too, lots of times. Flour bag dresses. I remember making Dorothy one in a hurry. And I told her that I hadn't washed the bag and I thought I'd got Mother's Flour on the inside and when I put it on her, she got Mother's Flour down the back. So she couldn't wear it. Oh, we had lots of incidents that were really amusing afterwards to think back on.
- D.B. But not so amusing at the time?
- Mrs. H. Oh no.
- D.B. You must have put in a pretty long day.
- Mrs. H. Well, I don't know. My kids had to go to bed at 7:00. Like they are today. Stay up until Mother and Father go. At seven o'clock we all had to go to bed. There was no peace for anybody unless you did.
- D.B. What time would you rise usually?
- Mrs. H. Oh, in the spring and summer around 5:00 or 6:00. But we never stayed up late. We'd put in a full days work and we'd be glad to go to bed, too, but not 7:00 when the kids went.
- D.B. When did you first get a radio?
- Mrs. H. Mr. Howes built the first radio that was ever in this district. They were little peanut sets. Peanut tubes, you know. And he sold them up and down the line. He didn't hardly charge anything for his work making them. There was no manufactured sets then. And I don't know how he managed to do it but he did.
- D.B. Were they crystal sets?
- Mrs. H. Yes.
- W.H. No. Single tubes regenerated. Just a single tube and then I put on a first stage audio and then if they wanted it they could have a first stage audio and a loudspeaker.
- Mrs. H. Had you designed these entirely yourself?
- W.H. Well, when I was working in electrical work, Marconi and Hertz and these pioneers were working. I was interested in it. I knew and understood the theory and we did experiment in our workshop as apprentices. So I knew a little of the theory. But as soon as the tubes were available, well that made them feasible. The first one I built I got nothing at all. I could get all kinds of ships at sea on it, but I couldn't bring it down to the broadcast wave length, for some reason. Then all at once I got a new circuit and I

- W.H. I worked all day on that and I hooked it up at night and everything was roaring and music! Mom had gone to bed, and I called to her and she come down and really, the music was beautiful. And she started to cry. She said, I haven't heard music since I left England, like that.
- Mrs. H. It was just as if you could hear the angels singing. You didn't know where the music was coming from. And it was so beautiful!
- W.H. Just head sets, you know.
- Mrs. H. Then he fetched us down another time and by the time we got down there, there was nothing. It had gone. We had that sort of thing. Even the cat didn't dare breathe when he was trying. If you'd dare to make a noise, you'd spoil everything, you had to stay perfectly still and quiet, so I used to go to bed.
- D.B. Did he continue this type of experimentation?
- W.H. Well, the next year they manufactured sets came out--they could sell you a set as cheap as I could buy all the parts.
- Mrs. H. But you sold a lot up and down the line.
- W.H. At Prairie River they bought four sets. I made about \$10 on each one that I sold them around \$30.00.
- Mrs. H. Then I had another venture--telephones. I saw an add for used telephone boxes for sale. So I sent down and I got a couple and hooked up with the next door neighbor and they worked fine. So I advertised it around and everybody thought it was gine. We used barbed wire fences until we had 22 sets of telephones, it was overburdened. There were so many sets on the line that it was a bother for everybody. But you couldn't refuse one at all. Then, I got them interested up east, and they got a bunch of sets and they organized it a little bit better and finally they replaced it with little better boxes and finally they got that going still today.
- W.H. Yes, the telephone company has taken over and put in proper ones.
- Mr. H. But ours fizzled out. There was so many on it.
- Mrs. H.so I told young Bill there, and he took the crows eggs out and put chickens eggs in and in good times crows hatched out of the hickens eggs and he brought them home and made pets out of them. They were so loaded with lice belonging to the crows that they injured their heads and only one survived out of the four. And this one became such a good pet in the home that we give him a name--Alexander, and you know every day at dinner it was comical--as soon as I'd had my dinner little Alexander would get on my shoulder and put his little head next to my neck and go to sleep. But eventually he got lost. They never told me until this last year what happened to him.

1903. to 1963.

Pioneer experiences

Cut. Knife

August 1903, twenty years old arrived from England landing as a harvester at Miami Man. Staying in Miami that fall & winter left in Spring for Saskatoon, & travelling by trail from there to Battleford & filed on a homestead in the Cut Knife district in May 1904.

Later that year took jobs on grading C.N.R. & building bridges on the Saskatoon - Battleford trail & in J. Kissack's livery barn Battleford

In Feb. & March 1905 worked on Bridge abutments for C.N.R. bridge 8 miles west of Battleford & in May joined the C.N.R. type laying outfit, staying on that outfit until Dec. where it had finished at Edmonton. & came back then to stay on the homestead in Cut Knife district

In June 1916 I enlisted in Regina in the Can Field Artillery Dept Battery 77 & went overseas in Feb. 1917 & arrived in France in Sept joining the 43. battery in time to experience six weeks in Paschendale front & later on various fronts until end of war Nov. 1918

Arrived back in time 1919 to put in a crop on homestead & seeing same burn up by drought left for new settlement south of Prairie River