Harold L. Steves, Sr.

Interviewer: David Jelliffe

Tape No. 6 & 7

FULL TRANSCRIPTION OF TAPE - NO RESTRICTIONS

INT: You were born down here?

HS: Yes that's right.

INT: Do you want to tell me what year?

HS: I was born in 1899.

INT: 1899. I understand in those days Mr. Steves that there was no hospital down here, a lot of people were born in their own house?

HS: Practically everybody was, but they still had the Fisherman's Hospital and there was a Japanese hospital.

INT: Oh there was a hospital?

HS: Yes.

INT: But that was for, I suppose, was that for the people that got hurt in the canneries?

HS: Anybody. It was 1915 when the doctor wanted to put me there but my mother wouldn't listen to them. I caught Typhoid Fever from the Fraser River.

INT: No kidding? Wow! You were saying that the salmon used to go up the North Arm?

HS: Oh yes, I'd see them jumping all the time up there.

INT: But they don't go up any more. So the Fraser was ... so you got Typhoid?

HS: Typhoid yes. I inquired around there were about six or seven cases up around the river where the ...

INT: And that was due to the pollution in the river then? So, at that time it was customary for a woman to have her children in her own bed?

HS: Well, quite a few went into Vancouver in the hospitals there. They were equipped for it, but not out here.

INT: Your father was a farmer here then?

HS: That's right.

INT: And, so down in Steveston when you were a boy there were the farmers and the canners, the fishermen, and the mariners, that is the people in the deep sea would take he big sailing ...

HS: There would be as many as half a dozen of the big sailing ships loaded with salmon, they go around the world ... at one time here

INT: So when you were a boy then there was all kinds of men working down here?

HS: Yeah, you go down, they had eight foot board sidewalks there over the ditches in front of the stores, of course the road was planked too, and if you wanted to go down Saturday night when the fishing season closed, you had to walk down the road, too many people on the sidewalk.

INT: Really, eight board sidewalk and still that many people going around. Any jail down there?

HS: Oh yes.

INT: Was it full?

HS: I was never in any of them [laughter].

INT: You were born just at the turn of the century, were there a lot of Japanese?

HS: No.

INT: They came later?

HS: They came in around 1908. That reminds me of one fellow you should see.

INT: Oh really, who?

HS: Roy York over in the Villa, he's older than I am but every one of these Japanese come over and young men in about their twenties had to learn English so they came to Steveston School. He met every one at the gate there and had a fight with them before they came in.

INT: No kidding. That's very interesting, I'll have to talk to him about that. So who was telling me that, I think it was Rudy Grauer was telling me that during the fishing season a lot of Indians would show up?

HS: Oh yes.

INT: To work in the canneries?

HS: That's right.

INT: And they used to have fights with whites or with each other or they didn't get on. Is this right or generally there was lots of work and people got on?

HS: Well there was lots of work but they were concentrating in camps and areas, anyways, you see. In those days there was long row houses just in back where the Steveston [ ] lumberyard, one room houses with little [ ] and a doorway, and they cooked and everything in them. The Indians would come down for the summer and later on they went down to Garry Point they had a big village for Indians for the summer.

INT: Oh so they were provided for?

HS: Yeah, yeah. Fact is I'd advise you to get a copy of the history of the United Church of Steveston. You can get that from the ministry [ ] and that was written by Dr. Runnalls. That church was built as a mission for the Indians.

INT: Oh, that's very interesting. But when it wasn't in the summer all the Indians would go up?

HS: They would go home and then come back, only one or two families lived here, that's all.

INT: So then there you would really say there were none of the early settlers were Indians?

HS: No, no. Before my time there was a little settlement, out at that place they call Garry Point.

INT: Oh really, that's very interesting. So all the children then at the turn of the century they had to go to school?

HS: Oh yes.

INT: So you were in school what until about the age of fourteen or fifteen?

HS: Well, I went right through to university. I'm a university graduate.

INT: Oh, so your the first one I've talked to.

HS: Well. I was there in 1917 for a while, then I went back.

INT: So your first school was the Steveston School you went to?

HS: Oh yes.

INT: You didn't happen to meet Ms. Bothwell?

HS: She was later on.

INT: Oh she was later on? And, so you went through and then you went on to what U.B.C.?

HS: I took my high school training at the old Bridgeport School.

INT: Oh then there was no high schools down here?

HS: The only high school in Richmond was upstairs in the old Bridgeport School.

INT: Oh yes someone else was telling me that. Yes, that was John Kacer, he lives over on River Road.

HS: I think he moved now.

INT: I saw him last week he's got a house temporarily over there he is going to get another place he was telling me about the old Bridgeport School they had about 300 or 400 children in that school in all the grades. So you went straight out of the Bridgeport School into university?

HS: I was home here working the farm for a couple of years, ... the end of the war, you see, the the University ... [ ].

INT: Oh good, so you went out to U.B.C.?

HS: Yes.

INT: Did you live out there or did you go out everyday?

HS: No, well at that period was in Vancouver at the old general hospital, just shacks and various buildings, anything they could get a hold of. I took agriculture, most part, in an old private home on Broadway.

INT: Oh really, uh uh, but you went in and out everyday?

HS: I did for the first year so then I stayed in town, come home weekends.

INT: Oh right.

HS: It was quite a chore getting up, getting the interurban and getting back again, there wasn't much time.

INT: Uh uh. Speaking about the old interurban, I understand there was another train which ran along the south arm which went up to Queensborough?

HS: Yes, that's the C.N.R. put one in.

INT: C.N.R.?

HS: Yes. They still have that right-of-way now they changed it a little, but they run by Crown Zellerbach, it used to come right into Steveston and take what we called the Wye on the old B.C. Electric, B.C. Electric and C.P.R. track. In the early days, when trains went out there twice a day, that we used to call the Sockeye Limited.

INT: So those things were built before your time or were built while you were here?

HS: The one the B.C. Electric run on was before my time but, well it was before I can remember anything, around 1902 ... but I can remember when one of the first trams came around 1906, they were electrified and electric lights coming in and one thing and another. I know my Dad had one of the first electric motors in the area there in the barn for grinding to the cattle.

INT: Oh really, oh that's very interesting. Rudy Grauer was telling me that in the old days everyone had kerosene lanterns.

HS: Oh yes.

INT: And that some of the lights inside the rooms were quite ornate. Now you said when the electric came in, not everyone took it because it was expensive.

HS: That's right.

INT: Now did many people, when it came down here, did it come down here or did it develop up at the other end first?

HS: Well it developed around Steveston. [ ] down around the canneries ... but, where we are down here my Dad built here in 1917 I guess it was 1920 before there was any power down here, they had to put your own pole line in.

INT: Oh really.

HS: [ ] they wanted too much money to run a pole line down the road here.

INT: Oh so that's what Mr. Grauer meant when he said that they charged you by the pole?

HS: Yes.

INT: So if you had two poles it would cost twice as much as one pole?

HS: We have land outside the dyke, my family still holds it, ... the poles so we would put some light on.

INT: Oh, that's very good. You certainly can't do that today they won't let you touch the electricity. So they were much freer then in those days?

HS: We had electricians who put them in you see, as that goes, ... the hook up. Mind you that's quite a bit of power for that time out here. I remember one amusing incident a salesman wanted to sell my mother an electric washing machine, ... but if you couldn't get enough power to run one of these, why buy one! About three days later the B.C. Electric people come up and cut our the wires up there and put them on their pole. It would be on their line.

INT: That's interesting. So you say the C.P. originally put down their tracks and came in with a steam locomotive?

HS: Oh yes.

INT: And then after a while the B.C. Electric electrified it?

HS: In 1906.

INT: And then the steam train came down?

HS: Well they had to run one once a year for the franchise, I think they still run it I don't know. Supposed to you see.

INT: Now, that C.N. line used to go out from Steveston?

HS: Yes right to South Westminster, Queensborough to the bridge there, ended on this side because they didn't have a bridge across.

INT: And that was, was that a passenger train or was that just for freight and stuff like that?

HS: It was more or less for freight and that. The freight was brought by [INAUDIBLE for approx. 3 seconds].

INT: Yes, they were talking about this and several fires, serious fires and I understand that when the trestle burnt that was the end of that, that little bit of railroad line? Where was that trestle located approximately, do you remember? Was that out by Crown Zellerbach? Or this side?

HS: No. It would be up farther because of the bog area ...

INT: Oh over by No. 9 Road?

HS: Yes somewhere up in that area we used to have bog fires every year there. Well, we used to get an awful lot of black berries there and we used to have trouble with the berry pickers, especially the Chinese, they liked to set the bog on fire because they got better berries next year. Where the peat land burnt off, the blueberries come up thick.

INT: That's right, there is really three kinds of berries down here, blue, black and cranberry?

HS: Yeah. The little bush blueberries, you see, that was really the only type of blueberry we can talk about, and the wild cranberry as well.

INT: But, the big blueberries were all brought in they were transplanted here.

HS: Well, the big ones they have now, but still they had a fair sized blueberry in the bog, the huckleberries. Everybody called them blueberries, but the were huckleberries.

INT: So when the Chinese came they would go out and gather them?

HS: Oh yes, they would harvest them every summer. Hundreds of them.

INT: Now um, the Japanese came to Richmond you say after 1908?

HS: That was the bulk of them come in.

INT: Right, now were the Chinese here before that?

HS: Oh yes. The Chinese worked for the C.P.R., to build the railway, in 1888 or so, there were 17,000 Chinese in British Columbia.

INT: Really, that many?

HS: Yes.

INT: And so some of them settled down here?

HS: Well the canneries hired the Chinese to work you see. At the canneries you may have seen one of those machines they call iron chink, that's one for slicing and poking fish when they got the fish, which is what the China men used to do, so when they got the machinery, they called it the iron chink.

INT: Oh so...

HS: They had at No. 1 Road between the dyke and Moncton Street about a three story building that were homes for the Chinese.

INT: Really.

HS: Yes, it burnt down twice, suspicion may be an arson we don't know and then they had another on up at the end of this side of No. 2 Road, maybe Trites Road, another settlement of Chinese cannery workers.

INT: So this was just one big building?

HS: Big, big building.

INT: And so they just rented out rooms?

HS: Yes.

INT: And this is different than for the Indians because the Indians had theirs?

HS: One room house in Steveston.

INT: And, as a young man or as a child, do you think, what I'm trying to ask you is this, you had the whites here and then you had Chinese first and then you had Japanese later, this was all before World War II, did the whites get on better with the Chinese or the Japanese or did they not get on with both or did they get on well with everybody? In other words was there a certain amount of...

HS: There was a certain amount but I don't know very much conflict with the Chinese because nobody wanted the work they were doing anyway much working in canneries, they contracted out to dig ditches one day and build roads for the farmers the next. The Japanese there weren't no problems there until later on they pretty well got control of the fisheries and there was conflict between the white fishermen because you went out there in a boat and if you happened to have a good position, why invariably a Japanese would cut you off of your net line.

INT: Really?

HS: Yes.

INT: Oh so these were little tricks of how to, right ... Because I know that during the war all the Japanese were just swept right up and moved out by the Government.

HS: Oh yes there was a lot of them, you know, really good Canadian boys too. Among the Japanese there were some of the boys that would have fought for the Canadian Army. I always remember one fellow saying good-bye, he says "I don't know what they are doing," he says, "they are treating all us Canadians just like Japs."

INT: [Laughs] that's very good. When you were a boy, um, they had the local police then?

HS: Yes.

INT: Were there many men?

HS: Were there many police? No.

INT: Just one or two? There wasn't much crime down here was there?

HS: No, not to any great extent. Maybe gambling dens and so forth, there really wasn't much.

INT: Was there much prostitution?

HS: Now that I do not know.

INT: Sure as a boy you wouldn't know.

HS: I've been told of the buildings where they were, I don't know, some bars and that, and some clubs and that, used to be outside the dyke.

INT: Oh so, the dyke was just outside your window here?

HS: Yes that's right.

INT: And so, I know the dykes were originally built by the farmers.

HS: Yes the original dyke went along this side of this house ...

INT: And this was built by the farmers to ... drain their ...

HS: To protect their farms from ... you see then, extreme high tide and storms was the only time it can come over then, over top of the dyke

INT: So um oh yes, and that would ruin everything cause that's all salt water?

HS: No it's river water. No salt in it.

INT: Really? So you were taking a chance then if you built outside the dyke?

HS: Well outside the dyke yes. You couldn't farm it or anything because the tide would come up to it.

INT: But they did have buildings in those days, outside?

HS: Oh yes, there are still remains of some of the old ones down in Steveston, outside the dyke.

INT: So, people didn't own the land outside the dyke did they? Because what I'm getting at is, that the kind of building which was used outside the dyke was essentially temporary or was it hotels? or bars?

HS: Most of the buildings outside the dyke were homes or canneries, and stuff like that up on pilings if you go up on the dyke you can see the remains of some of the old ones yet, like Hong Wo store up at No.2 Road in that way, they are gradually going now but, the remnants of the old buildings are outside the dyke, fact is part of the old dyke, where the new dyke is inside, with ...

INT: There's a story going around that one of the policemen was killed by a China man?

HS: That's right.

INT: Do you remember that then?

HS: No that was ... I was a year old when that happened.

INT: Oh right, just at the turn of the century. They say that they threw his body in the field behind...

HS: I don't' know what they done with his body, but, I understand he went to look under the bed and the guy was standing there behind the door so, just about took his head off.

INT: Chopped his head right off?

HS: Yes.

INT: Did they have courts when you were a boy?

HS: Oh yes.

INT: So there was a courthouse here? Or did everyone have to go up to Vancouver?

HS: No no, they had a courthouse here down here, where the present fire hall is down there that one they just closed, that used to be a fire hall, and the hall right next door, which is still municipal owned was the old courtroom and the jail was there too, you could see the iron bars in the window, I remember that part. I remember that and the old fire engine in the building there, the one they bought from the City of San Francisco and it was a pumper, you see, about six men on each side, and they had that there, and the fire gong was one of those triangle irons that you sometimes see on the farms for calling the men for lunch, well that was the fire gong ...

INT: Was this pulled by horses?

HS: I think the men pulled it themselves. It could have been pulled by horses but they didn't.

INT: Because I understand that, I was talking with Rudy Grauer and he says that at the other end of the Island they had a bucket brigade and the first sort of fire truck up there was actually built onto a truck not onto a wagon, so that they would drive to the fire rather than...

HS: [ ] ... they built the first one here in Steveston ... that's what started this volunteer fire department. Now its a regular fire department, they built their own engines and put volunteer fire-fighters on them.

INT: So it was just like an ordinary truck?

HS: An ordinary truck and they built the fire wagon on there to see, and so forth...

INT: And the first one was down here

HS: It was No.1.

INT: And that was just, what? after World War I?

HS: I would say that, around there, yes.

INT: I wonder what ever happened to the little fire engine which they got from San Francisco?

HS: Oh somebody left it and they started to tow it away it broke down on the side of the road and the municipality threw it in the junk heap.

INT: No kidding?

HS: The wooden wheels on it apparently got dry, you see, and it collapsed on them.

INT: Oh that's to bad we can't find things like that and put it out so that people can see these things.

HS: It certainly is. That would be worth something today, just to see it. *** BREAK IN INTERVIEW ***

INT: Now I understand that many people came out here to British Columbia originally went up to the Caribou to the gold fields and those who weren't so fortunate came back and took up farming down here? Do you remember when you were a boy any of your father's friends who were prospectors?

HS: No, they were all farmers that I remember.

INT: All farmers?

HS: At that period, the only big settlement between, ... other than Vancouver and Steveston Highway, No.9 Road as we called it in those days, was all farmers. The rest of the island was all farmers. Even at Brighouse there was nothing, you see. As a matter of fact, I had Dr. Sparrow tell me when he first come to Richmond, he come out on the C.P.R. train in 1902 and got off at Brighouse, there was nothing there but a packing horse and a box for me to stand on! [Laughter].

INT: So Grauer's store up there by the Marpole Bridge was maybe for the farmers and also as a place where they could load their wagons and take them out?

HS: Yes.

INT: What did you do for fresh water down there?

HS: Of course, every house had a rain barrel, you see, they caught all the rain barrels full of rain. We ran a dairy and shipped ten gallon cans to Vancouver, we had the cans come back with drinking water.

INT: Very good! When you were a boy, you know how mothers are, they want everyone to be clean and stay clean, so did you have a bath once a week?

HS: We had a tub in the kitchen.

INT: Really? Was this river water?

HS: Mostly river water. We had pitchers ... [ ] ...

INT: So this was water you could wash in but you don't cook with?

HS: No, you'd never cook with it, you'd use rain water or city water as we called it. Normally, it was drain water.

INT: So when you sent your milk into town this was on the electric and you get your water back did you sell it or did you give it out or did people borrow it?

HS: No we only got enough for our own use and for the hired help.

INT: Oh I see. So I suppose you had to have a certain amount of water for the cows then?

HS: Yes, we used the river water for that, at the period we had a big, huge barn and we had a big tank up at the top and we used to pump that every time they let the tide in the drainage ditches, we'd pump that full of water. We had pressure enough in our hose there to put water over in the cow barn.

INT: No kidding, that was very good. It must have been a very large tank then?

HS: Oh it was.

INT: And this was built before your time then?

HS: No that was built after my time.

INT: Oh, so you were here when they built it?

HS: Yes.

INT: Now, with this type of work, did the farmers do all these things themselves? you know, today, if someone wanted to build a tank did they get some guys in who knew how to do it? Did the farmers do all these things themselves?

HS: In that case the tank I think was built by a cooperage firm. Then they found themselves putting it in position and all that ... local carpenters, somebody helping.

INT: Oh right, so in those days you had to do everything more or less by yourself?

HS: Quite a bit of it. We even had to haul or tractors ourselves in those days.

INT: Really? Tell me, were there many blacksmiths down here?

HS: No, one here and one over there by Grauer's store at Marpole.

INT: And that was just about it then? And so when did the cars start coming?

HS: Well, very few until I guess about 1920, maybe the first ones around 1917 was the old type Fords where you push the pedal down to put the speed. Prior to that there were very few cars around from 1910, somewhere somewhere in that neighbourhood I saw the first one

INT: And so the cars came before the trucks?

HS: Oh yes.

INT: So then, it was up to, even then into the first World War that there were really more horses and wagons and things like that?

HS: During the first World War, everything was pulled by horses and mules.

INT: So you say one blacksmith shop would take care of ...

HS: pretty much, might be two or three men working at those. Rather interesting, my son is building a heritage village ...

INT: I heard about that.

HS: [ ] ... some of the old buildings. They uncovered a well down there, must have been where the blacksmith shop used to be. There was about 500 pounds of horseshoes in there!

INT: No kidding, the guy must have been cooling it off and then dropped it ...

HS: I think it was the ones they didn't want, they just dropped it in the old well. And you know that old well, planking in that was still good. It was put in sometime in the [18]80s.

INT: The water from that well was really river water.

HS: River seepage, yeah.

INT: So there were no springs at all?

HS: No, no.

INT: On the island?

HS: There was quite a number of people who had wells that's where they got most of the [house] water, it was kind of a hard water.

INT: They were saying that just across from Marpole there used to be a grand central hotel?

HS: Yes.

INT: Does that sound right? And they piped water from?

HS: There used to be a spring right out there and a lot of our farmers on that side of the island used to drive their cars through the bridge and get their water from that spring somewhere up at the corner of Marine Drive and Hudson Street there.

INT: Oh right in there?

HS: Right in there, yes.

INT: I understand that somebody ran a pipe over, under the river?

HS: It might have, I don't know ... [ ]

INT: Down at this end of the island, you were saying that there were several bad fires? not the peat fires, but...?

HS: The Chinese bunk houses burnt down, you see. Twice the one in Steveston burnt but they didn't rebuild. And a number of different fires with the Japanese stores and all that. But the big fire was in 1918, that wiped out half the town.

INT: They never found out how they started?

HS: Well the whole thing started back in where the present post office is in behind there's some Chinese gambling houses, except when they still had a coal lamp in 1918 and somebody upset that and started a fire and there was quite a westerly wind blowing there. I guess it was about 8:30 we saw the smoke and I went down there and I was helping the fire department until three in the afternoon.

INT: My word! So they called everybody?

HS: Well, I got the fire-fighters from Point Grey at that time, they would come out and they got the Vancouver engine out and it broke down and they got it going again, and down on No.1 Road right before the machine shops ... [ ] ... packed his safe out of his store into the middle of the road and the engine hit that [Laughter]. But they got their hose out and we had the Point Grey hose ... [ ] ... and in behind about where the [ ] is now on the dyke there. They're trying to save the cannery, but it was still right full of packed fish, they hadn't moved it from the [ ], that's last year's fish, you see. Right full of cans. We kept the fire on the inside, you see. And the Vancouver fellows stood back about a hundred yards with their hoses spraying on us.

INT: No kidding. So they kept you wet, so you wouldn't ...?

HS: They kept us wet, you see. Everything was fine then all of a sudden the fire chief from Vancouver ... says "drop your hose and run boys" because the cannery was caught on the outside ... we would have saved it otherwise, because we had it beat by then. I'll always remember that because I was holding a big door on my back, you see, between us and the flames, but when they stopped spraying the water on us, that door caught fire! I didn't let go until I got out to the fire engines.

INT: Now um, the hoses then, the pressure was manned by men pumping?

HS: No at that period they had their the fire department had their fire engines then. By 1918 Point Grey had a pumper truck. So, Vancouver used their truck and they had power. They hooked on the hydrants to raise the pressure.

INT: Do you remember when the hydrants went in? Was that a big project out here?

HS: Yes it was. I don't remember the year. That could be, I guess you could get that from the municipal records. Originally they put in all this .... long wooden pipe.

INT: With wooden pipes originally? Uh huh, and I suppose then there was a lot of work for everybody on such a big project like that?

HS: Absolutely. ...[ ]

INT: Now would you say then in those days when you were a boy that there was work for men to do if they wanted to do it?

HS: Oh yes. I remember very much ....

INT: Tell me um...

HS: Of course it was seasonal with the fishing, you see.

INT: Oh sure and then you could really make quite a bit of money then, I suppose.

HS: The wages weren't very high then but there was a lot of money at the, ... the cost of living went according ...

INT: Yeah, that was down. Tell me, um, I understand that farmers often didn't use money when they wanted to get stuff but they would trade or barter. Do you remember your father doing anything like this, in other words if he wanted to get a keg of nails or something like that he'd give a pig?

HS: Well, the store keepers used to do that for eggs and meat and stuff from the farmers.

INT: And so then they would keep track that you owed so much money, well I'll take a...

HS: That was early in my time, but I remember, especially eggs and some people churned the butter you see and they traded that.

INT: I was talking with Miss Bothwell who was teaching over at the English school over at Shell Road and No.5, she was saying when she was a girl she remembers going into town with her mother on the wagon in and trading the butter in one of the stores in town for groceries?

HS: Yes, quite common, butter and eggs and honey, and stuff like that.

INT: Oh, you had bees out here?

HS: Oh yes, we had bees in those days.

INT: So you cultivated them, like having hives and everything like that. So you had the separator, there was a machine that you had to turn the handle and the wax would go one place and the...

HS: And the wax is, stayed in the frame, you took the coating off the thing and the honey of ... the centrifugal force ... you just had the wax left in the frame.

INT: Then that machine, that separator, hasn't changed very much to your knowledge as a farmer?

HS: No I don't think so. You would pretty much have to follow that principle.

INT: And so do you have ... because I hear that there are not that many bee keepers down in Richmond now?

HS: No, not many now. But apparently every farmer in the early days had a few hives. My Dad had quite a few.

INT: So, you only had honey for your own house, but the excess you could use that to take down to the store and

trade?

HS: That's right.

INT: Was there any serious disease among the animals, do you remember at anytime?

HS: Well, I'm trying to think of the year. It was one year the Government come through and tested all the horses around for [granulism]. They took quite a few from us. We used to run a lot of purebred Suffolk Punch horses and they confiscated, but nothing that ... lost the livestock.

INT: Did they just take the horses and shoot them?

HS: They took them and would shoot them and drop them in a hole, just trying to figure when that was. Must be about the end of the first war in there. About 1918 or so, as I remember we had a big hole in the field, where they drew a stump out. You see, originally they - this is all delta-built land - and to plow the land, we used to bring up logs continuously.

INT: Oh really, logs which had floated down, got buried with the silt and everything on top ...

HS: ... get your plow stuck. I remember one big one back there, and we finally, we dug it and sawed it in two, still wouldn't move. We had a fellow working with us who had been a powderman, miner somewhere, he undertook to blow it out. That ... it had a kind of bow in it, you see, the tree come down and something obstruct the centre and go right around it and made a big bow. That came with a bow underground, I would say about ten, twelve feet through!

INT: My word, that was a real big one.

HS: So it left a big hole there. That's where they dropped the horses in.

INT: The hole was about as big as the room we're sitting in?

HS: Oh yes, bigger than this room. Fact is, we sawed the timber up for the old threshing engines, were all run by steam and we had to supply the wood to run it, that lasted about three years that log! Of course, mind you, they were only here for about three days or four days threshing, but, it kept that engine going.

INT: Oh so the man that had the threshing machine would take it around to various farms and you had to supply the wood?

HS: Provide the wood and the water and feed the men.

INT: Feed the men, and did they get a percentage of the grain. Did they get some of the grain for...

HS: No mostly you had to pay them some money.

INT: They wanted money? They didn't want grain. So that was a little business all by itself.

HS: Oh yes, you see the reason they started them, they had the two section separators, one that separated the grain and then the other there was the carrier that took the straw out, you see, and then they got the newer type with the blower on it. Originally, they had the old, the first steam engine, we had to send a four horse team to the next [town] to bring it down from the [bottom line], you see, because they weren't mobile ...

INT: Oh, that's interesting. So, you'd drag a steam engine around on it's wheels by horses and then the farmers had to get you the water and the wood and so your one log which had been buried was able to keep this thing going for a couple of years. So, you'd say there wasn't much dynamiting or blowing things up here?

HS: Not here on the island. Nobody knew much about it. seconds].

INT: Oh right, so you were lucky then to get this man, who ... uh ... what did he do? [ ] ... for dynamite or did he use blasting powder?

HS: Uh, blasting powder. No problem to get that in Vancouver in a hardware store.

INT: Oh sure, because there's no big stumps down here, there's quite a bit over there.

HS: I remember he put eight sticks on this one.

INT: Oh really, that to make such a hole. And so they took all your horses then?

HS: They took about a quarter of our herd, we had horses, we won the championships at the World's Fair in 1909.

INT: Really?

HS: Yes.

INT: Where was that held?

HS: Seattle.

INT: Oh, so you sent horses down there, and these were racing horses?

HS: No they were work horses - purebred Suffolk Punch horses.

INT: Oh, so these were like, pull wagons and that sort of thing.

HS: That breed is in England, you see. It's still there.

INT: And so besides farming here, you also raised horses?

HS: We raised horses and cattle, you see. Father raised the first horse team, purebred herd here, you see.

INT: Really, and that was for your milk and you raised your horses, did you ever raise any horses for racing?

HS: No, no.

INT: These are all work horses?

HS: All work horses.

INT: And so then people if they wanted a work horse or a pair or a team they would come and they would buy them off of you?

HS: Yes.

INT: So that must have been quite a blow for the Government to come in and say ...

HS: It was, you know, they took ... lot of them were, you know, nice ... real good type horses.

INT: Tell me, you said about a quarter so that would be about twenty horses?

HS: Something like that.

INT: You ran about one hundred horses then, would you say?

HS: Well maybe not quite that many maybe seventy or something like that.

INT: Seventy, huh, huh, and they were outside all the time or did you have to bring them in the barns?

HS: No, we had big barns, stables, big horse stables. A couple of big stallions

INT: Uh huh, for breeding. So then just about all the boys down here on the island knew how to ride?

HS: Pretty much yes. We had, everyone had some kind of a saddle horse. Most of the farmers had one driving horse for their buggy too, you see.

INT: And these horses weren't used for working?

HS: No not really. More or less for cultivating the garden or the root crop or something like that.

INT: Not the heavy work ... So then it wasn't all work as a boy, when you went to school and you came home and helped out on the farm, you could also fool around?

HS: Oh yes we had our games and our teams.

INT: As a boy did you, did the schools or did the town celebrate what is it May 24th? And what happened that day? As early as you can remember.

HS: Here we had the big 24th day celebration in Steveston, a regular gala day, and boat races and horse races and so forth. Second Avenue down here was a dirt road we used to run the races from Steveston Highway right down the United Church there.

INT: Oh really?

HS: Yes. Horse races, of course they were local farmers, they rode the horses ....

INT: Did they have like a agricultural fair?

HS: Yes, originally it started in Steveston and then it moved over in my time, we held it over at about Cambie and No.3 Road, we had the agricultural grounds there. That's were the first Municipal Hall was that burnt down.

INT: Oh yes that's just back there by, I think they have the R.C.A.F. has a little hall back in there, a dance hall.

HS: That little hall belonged to the Church that's the Gun Club, that originally built a Church it was across the road from that was the Municipal Hall and the agricultural fair and so forth.

INT: Did they celebrate, that you remember, July 1st?

HS: Oh yes.

INT: They had fire crackers? No? You see, because down in the States, July 4th they have fire crackers.

HS: No we never had much of fire crackers except for China New Year.

INT: The Chinese had their celebrations?

HS: Oh yes, we kids all lit up fire crackers, because there's lots of Chinese. Come China New Year, why every kid had several bundles of fire crackers given to them by the Chinese.

INT: Really, and so then, so all the children would be running around outside shooting these things off?

HS: Oh yes.

INT: I just remembered I had another of these things, this is very interesting, your original road was either River, was River Road?

HS: River Road, the first road was [ ], along River Road to No.2 Road, 2 Road to, we called it No.9 in those days, Steveston Highway, and then in to No.1 Road, and No.1 Road into Steveston. That was the route the stages took in them days.

INT: And that was, at this end of, it was all planks?

HS: All planks, yes.

INT: And you used the foundation for those planks was rocks out of these...

HS: That part didn't have rocks, they put a gravel road down No.1 Road as far as Branscombe Station we used to call it on the railway. And that was ship's ballast brought in by the ships and dumped there and we brought in crushed rock by the scow and put it on top. That was the farmers way to work.

INT: Oh, fixing the road.

HS: Yes, they did a lot of the work, that way they upgraded their taxes, they worked for the Municipality.

INT: Oh really?

HS: Yes.

INT: That was a convenient way of doing it, so this is another way of getting around money?

HS: Around money, yes.

INT: Um, so then part of these roads are made of rocks which come from other countries?

HS: Come from other countries, yes.

INT: Oh that's very interesting. So down at again, I'm just trying to get in my head here, you had Sea Island and people living on Sea Island as farming, and then you came over to Brighouse and you had...

HS: What we call Lulu in those days west of Brighouse, that was all farming.

INT: That was farming in there.

HS: Brighouse was bog.

INT: There was nothing east of No.3 Road?

HS: No.

INT: And so then Garden City Road and No.4 all went in later?

HS: Went in later. They had put number ... they had quite a settlement at Woodwards Landing you see and No.5 Road was put in as plank road from the bridge and they ran the ferries from Woodwards Landing.

INT: Woodwards Landing is where Sir, down at the south end of the Island?

HS: Yes, its by the Rice Mill there, just west of the Deas Tunnel, Massey Tunnel I should say.

INT: Somebody was saying that there may have been an Indian midden at the Rice Mill or near the Rice Mill? Have you ever heard anything about that?

HS: Never heard of anything there but building the roads here in Steveston by the Wye, that's just off Moncton Street and Railway Avenue., building Railway Avenue when the run the graders through there they uncovered some Indian graves. One of the fellows working on these said it was kind of uncanny, he said that the grader would go over, and here was this old Indian looking, eh, and in the air [ ], it'd all go to dust.

INT: Oh my word! So okay then once you get down here you got farms and you got your whole little village of Steveston? You got the canneries, you've got the hotels, you got the big four mast sailing ships, okay, now that's that. Now if you cross the south slough, if you were to cross the south slough, or I mean the South Arm, that would be Delta?

HS: That's right.

INT: Was there anything there? Was there a village there?

HS: The village of Ladner was there it was an old place, you see. But there was farms on Westham Island, that was all farms.

INT: But the centre of activity then was Steveston?

HS: Steveston, yes.

INT: And so then the people did live over there but there wasn't any big thing going then?

HS: No it was just all farming area, the whole delta, except where a few fishermen in and around Ladner and a few along the river around Canoe Pass, all along the river, see.

INT: The river froze every year?

HS: No, no. I remember it freezing once or twice. Never froze enough ... well, I remember a little skating on the North Arm once or twice but it never froze down here.

INT: Oh so the North Arm might freeze but the South Arm never froze?

HS: Only about, the old-timers tell us about 1894, it froze from Steveston to New Westminster.

INT: Really, on the South Arm?

HS: Yeah and they hauled their produce across the river on the ice at New Westminster.

INT: 1894?

HS: Yeah.

INT: Because, um, Rudy Grauer was saying that they used to cut ice out of the North Arm?

HS: You see there, between there and Duck Island around where they are why there's still water, you see, it didn't run fast. This is the main river the boats would go up all the time.

INT: Oh right, right, so they used to cut the ice and put it in the ice house and they used it to cool the meat?

HS: We used to cut the ice here, different ponds around here to keep milk cool.

INT: Oh really?

HS: Yes.

INT: So you had ice houses down here with sawdust and everything?

HS: Sawdust, yes.

INT: My people are from the States and they had a place up at Lake George in New York State and they had an ice house up there and the men used to in the winter go down onto the lake with big saws, and they would take big chunks this thick out and pull it up and store it in the like a room I think and it would be just full of ice and sawdust and it would last all year.

HS: Later years we used to get the ice shipped out from Vancouver, you see, we used to store it in the ice house.

INT: I can't think of anything else to ask you right now. Was there a lot of people going and coming between here and Vancouver Island?

HS: I couldn't say. Of course the fishermen, the fleet used to go out especially with sailboats. I know that in some of the early days, some of the fishermen used to go across there in the off season and go to where these, I guess maybe where some of these Indian places were where there were a lot of clam shells. They would go bring across this grit and sell it to the chicken farmers.

INT: Oh really?

HS: Yes.

INT: And the chickens would eat it?

HS: Oh yes, they got the limestone and the grit.

INT: And there's places out on Lulu Island?

HS: Oh yes, Cambie Road ... piles of it ... just ground up shells, clam shells, ten, fifteen feet deep.

INT: Oh, so they would go load up their boat with this?

HS: Load it up, bring it across, sell it for so much per hundred pounds to the chicken farmers.

INT: So there was always something to do to keep busy and make a few things. You didn't have any really big trees down here?

HS: Oh, a fair size, but there used to be a big fir tree right here at Garry Point and that was used by all the pilots to guide in the river.

INT: Oh really?

HS: ... Until it washed away. Then there were some good sized spruce trees up here and there along the river. Up where the Thompson Subdivision is there used to be a grove of evergreens there, I think, mostly spruce. And then where the Deas freeway is, there must have been forty acres of timber at one time. The rest of the island was jack pine and bog and clover, ... west side there was a grove of wild crab apple trees in ... Steveston, to Terra Nova right across to Sea Island ... [ ] ... that's a native tree to Lulu Island. I told them they should have one in the Nature Park, pretty near all gone, the crab apples.

INT: You could use the fruit of it?

HS: You could make jelly out of it. It was pretty tart. ... and then east of that you had your bunch-grass, wild, hardy, lots of that. Used to be blue and purple colour, bluish- purple in summertime, until you hit the bog. That's the type of .... the [cover] of the land was like. Down here there was a lot of bunch-grass if you're near the water in an open space.

INT: So um, until they started getting the ditches in, the bog was just about impossible to do anything with?

HS: You couldn't get across it even. They told me that in the early days the fellows at Woodwards Landing were on the Council, they had to come down here, [ ] and go around this ridge, up to Terra Nova side and then up the river to Eburne. That was the only way to get across, had to go straight across.

INT: Oh right, so they had to walk where the line of trees...?

HS: Yes, this was a high ridge of clay around here, this is quite a bit higher along here than anywhere on the island. As a matter of fact, even one time the old wild crab apple - there used to be poles where the Indians put their dead.

INT: Really?

HS: Yes, had these platforms behind the trees.

INT: In the tree?

HS: Yeah.

INT: And they put the body out?

HS: ...put the body in that.

INT: The dead body?

HS: The dead body.

INT: Didn't it smell?

HS: It likely did, I don't know they didn't have any ... the platforms were still there but ...

INT: Oh ... the platforms were still there but, they'd take the bodies back up ...

HS: I guess that's what they did, it was before my time. In my time the platforms were still there.

INT: That's very interesting! I never heard of that! Oh sure - it only makes sense you know, because you can't leave a body laying on the ground.

HS: No, fact is there used to be the odd skull laying around here, I don't know, one, a couple of kids kind of played football with it. People were kind of horrified at that, then they set in on a post, a fence post and it sat there for two or three years before somebody took it.

INT: Uh huh. Was there much hunting here, I mean for birds or pheasant?

HS: Oh yes, lots of birds.

INT: Did all boys have guns?

HS: Yes, some did.

INT: So your father showed you how to do it? Made sure that you didn't shoot each other.

HS: Yes, that's right.

INT: Tell me, did the men have revolvers?

HS: I have seen some with revolvers, but in those days, before my time when they used to ... I know, back in those days practically everybody around had one or had one at home or somewhere.

INT: Um huh. But the farmers all had shotguns?

HS: Shotguns, yeah.

INT: Yeah right. So this thing about ...

HS: ...not many of the farmers had revolvers, mostly the townspeople.

INT: Oh yes, oh sure because you don't have to hide a shotgun, you just go and shoot a pheasant or a duck

HS: ...ducks and geese, used to take ... I have pictures taken right out the window here, all the geese along the shore just up to the back here - thousands of them.

INT: You even see today, you know, there is a flat area here someplace...

HS: Yes, this is a flat area.

INT: The Canada geese go over, and there are thousands of them.

HS: Yes, that's the white geese, the Waives, in this area. Canada supposed to go in the Okanagan. Once in a while there's a flock this way.

INT: ... with the long necks and they go like a "V". I've seen them.

HS: We get a flock of swans comes here. Some winter here even yet. There's a swan right now just past this CBC station. I didn't know they were there, but I was talking to [Paul] in one of the houses up there - he's the superintendent of schools here - and I asked him if the swans are here - says, "oh they're here his year," he watches them through his field glasses.

INT: You know, I live over on Garden City Road just about three houses down from the Landsdowne Race Track and we have about an acre of land and a little garden there, and every year we have about four pheasants.

HS: Used to be a lot of pheasants here. Now, too many people around here I guess, getting scarce. I think a lot of them [ ] too.

INT: So all the bog then, until they started putting in drainage canals, um, it was bog and it stayed as bog, you know, and all the original ditches were all done by hand, eh?

HS: The first ones, until about 1908, then with these canals, it was all done by dredge and scow, self-propelled.

INT: Now how does that work?

HS: You pull yourself by winch, you see, along ...

INT: Oh, so you tie on to something ...

HS: Yeah, I think that's the way it worked, as far as I can figure, or else they [ ] the shovel out, and pulled on it, and pulls themselves up.

INT: Oh right, and so then they'd throw the dirt on both sides of the ...

HS: At least ... the dykes were all built that way, you see, that's why they'd need the mud. Otherwise the [plow] went into the road, you see, piled it up and then levelled the road off. That's why the roads are raised a bit.

INT: Um huh, oh right, right, so the ditch was ... yeah, and they threw it up into the roads, and the road was a little bit higher than the rest of the land.

HS: They'd grade it down, you see, it'd be higher ...

INT: But you say the original dyke, that was all done by hand.

HS: That was done by hand.

INT: A man out there with a shovel.

HS: Either the farmers would do it or hire the Chinese to do it. The Chinese used to contract it, dig all the drainage ditches, but it was very little money in those days.

INT: Um huh. And the Chinese even then had this gambling?

HS: Oh yes, always big gambling, the Chinese.

INT: Um huh. Did you ever hear of anything about opium?

HS: Oh yes.

INT: Did the Chinese used to do opium?

HS: They had their pipes, water pipers.

INT: Oh, so it would go down and bubble through the water and ...

HS: Yes, I don't know how, the principle of it. I think they've got one or two of them in the Museum over there.

INT: Oh, so the Japanese down, didn't have these vices?

HS: No, there were problems in the earlier days, first the Japanese men were here - no women - I think they had quite a bit of problems then.

INT: You always have problems when you having nothing but men and no women.

HS: It's in the Japanese history, they tell about it. I don't know if there's any in that church book or not. But I know that the Japanese have an early history too.

INT: Oh really. They all came from one section of Japan apparently?

HS: Pretty much yes.

INT: I was talking with Henry Anderson, with the Mayor yesterday and he was saying that they had made sort of a Sister City at that place in Japan where the early Japanese came here. So then ... all the Japanese were sent off during World War II and some came back I suppose?

HS: Most of the younger generation came back. Before the War they were all in cannery houses and houses all bunched together, you see, used to say little Tokyo, they were all together. But since they came back, they've changed their standard of living altogether, they adopted ours, and if you go into the subdivisions, some of the best houses are owned by the Japanese people.

INT: Yeah, well, They're hard workers?

HS: Yeah. They're really [ ] with them now. As a matter of fact, there's quite a bit of inter-marrying going on now.

INT: Really! I saw some photographs of the early airplanes out there by Lansdowne Park. Were there any airplanes down in Steveston?

HS: No. The only place they had them, the first air fields was Lansdowne there, north side of it. Oh, they'd land in the odd field here at time, we've had them land in ours, in fact.

INT: Really? Oh the gut must have run out of gas or something like that.

HS: Run out, come down. Quite often you'd have helicopters, even now. Time of the Hope slide, there was one fellow, ... hit the backyard here. Radioed quick to the airport so he could go home, it'd be about a couple of winters ago, the same thing happened, one of them had two of them land here on the dyke here some years ago.

INT: Uh huh, oh, so they can't go out to the airport without letting them know that they're coming.

HS: They got to have their radio equipment on, got to make contact some way.

INT: Oh, so they land down here in Steveston because they've got places to land.

HS: They can land right here on the dyke quite easily, you see, we've had several like that. The last was [you may have], because he had just come down from the north, you see, and you can see the pylons sitting out in the water, well, the Department of Transport put them out there as guidelines for the, for the, these people and the sea planes, you see, and they are supposed to follow that along there rather than come down to close to CBC, before that they'd use the dyke as their roadway, follow it, you see, back and forth. The Department of Transport [ ] ... the old-timers still ... [ ] right over the house here ... [INAUDIBLE approx. 15 seconds] ... I took a picture one day of two of them sitting right in front of the house. [INAUDIBLE approx. 10 seconds]

INT: Oh, I've never heard of that, planes come down here.

HS: Oh, that's just helicopters. Small planes, years ago, the odd plane would land, but not very often, just emergency. But in Brighouse, they used to land in the old racetrack. They even raced the race horses, one raced a horse.

INT: Yes, I heard about that.

HS: The horse beat him though, he gave the horse too much of a head start [Laughter]

INT: Yeah. The horse beat 'em! Is anyone allowed to walk along this dyke?

HS: Oh yes. Fact is, its getting to be quite a very popular walk here. Of course, little know that CBC has the right-of-way right here, up to this station, on the gravel, that's where people really like to walk that.

INT: Yeah, I understand that at least up in Brighouse there used to be a, used to be three planks, they'd be three feet wide they would plank the top of the dyke so you could walk from Bridgeport out to about No.2 Road.

HS: Yeah. The walk used to be on top of the dyke there that was a pedestrian walk. Yes, as far as that, I'd forgotten that.

INT: Then you could walk right around the Island?

HS: Right around, yes. You'd probably be barred at Crown Zellerbach. Otherwise you could walk ...

INT: Right on top of the dyke?

HS: Right on top of the dyke. Yeah.

INT: And so the dyke up there particularly by River Road up by the end No.1 Road and No.2 Road and so on, up that way, although that was originally made by hand, its been re-made by machine.

HS: Oh yes. Its been dug up.

INT: Yes, because that's quite high, you know, if you're standing on the road its almost as high as the ...

HS: I don't seem to ... when I went to high school on Bridgeport Road, it used to come over once in a while up at the bridge. One morning, got over there, there's whitecaps in the school yard at Bridgeport School.

INT: No kidding! It broke through?

HS: Yeah. I think, we had about four days holiday until they got the [ ] basement pumped out that time.

INT: Oh that was good.

HS: Yes, we got off the interurban, we come from Steveston by interurban, we got off the tram that morning and here are the waves lapping the rails [Laughs] at Bridgeport Station.

INT: So then that was a serious business this thing about the dykes?

HS: Oh yes, especially 1948, the time of that flood.

INT: Yes, I'd heard about that.

HS: I tell you, it was just touch and go at the Queensborough end of it. It was [ ] water, getting to that narrow point of the Island. Fact is, we had sandbagged, Richmond sandbagged Queensborough so if it broke through Queensborough, we still had a barrier up there to stop it. We just had a little gap at Westminster Highway for the cars and trucks to go through the rest was sandbagged solid.

INT: Really!

HS: Yeah, if it broke through at Queensborough, in just a few minutes the bags were sitting there to flop into place. We had reinforced all the way down to South Arm especially the dyke all the way around. That's when they got busy, after that, to clean the dykes off. That was a pretty risky year, that year.

INT: Yeah, and that was because of the run-off.

HS: Yeah and this year is a bigger build-up right now than there was then. If we don't get a lot of run-off and it becomes hot all of a sudden, cold and then hot all of a sudden, you've got a lot of water ... its only deeper than [ ] required for [ ] water levels. But that year, of course they wouldn't let the public get out to any of the danger areas. They used to, down here we watched them [ ] that army ramp where they had the guns during the war, [ ] we expected to see the water lapping over the dyke, but you walk out there maybe a mile, mile and a half, its all green. By the time it gets down here, the water's all spread out.

INT: Oh sure, yeah. Same, a fellow I used to know who worked downtown in a welding shop said that in 1948, one night at some of the hotels in Vancouver, the R.C.M.P. came running in the front door and said we want men to work on the dykes in Richmond. So all the men would jump up and run out the back door and the R.C.M.P. had taken a truck and put it round the back ...

HS: I've never heard that [Laughs].

INT: And they were paid a dollar or dollar and a half an hour or something like that. But they said that when they wanted men, they just went out and got them and there was no question about, oh, I've got to go home, or anything like that. They simply went out and got the men to work on the dyke.

HS: Everybody in Richmond volunteered. I think I only sandbagged one night, that's all. They got me on point duty, guiding the trucks with the sandbags, you see, [ ] they didn't have enough police around, I stood half the night with a flashlight directing traffic ... [ ] ... the sandbags.

INT: So that was a hard time then.

HS: But you'd do your days work and then you'd come back and spend maybe seven, ten, or eleven hours at night ... do your days work, then back on shift again. But it was touch and go there, I tell you, for a few days with the water coming. People were phoning up my wife, wanting to leave town, to the mainland where its safe, bring the children in. "Oh," she says, "if the dykes break, I'm going outside the dyke." Our danger is breaking up there and the water coming this way. They were patching any hole in the [ ] ... high tides were here in the big storms, the water wasn't six feet though, that ... [ ] ...

INT: Really! So they did find a hole in the ...?

HS: It was a huge hole there. If anybody looked around in the winter time when a big storm was on why, we were very very close to having a flood, never knew it.

INT: How'd it get in the dyke?

HS: The logs, pounding it during the storm at high tide, it just cut a hole almost through about two feet through the dyke.

INT: My word. So I suppose now they have somebody goes around and looks at the dyke.

HS: Oh yes, now the staff of the municipality are checking all the time, repairing them and laying, comes under the Dyking Commission too. I think there's a winter works programme on now constructing all the dykes.

INT: Yeah, particularly this year that they've got the potential of a very serious run-off. If the weather changes and so all the bad conditions happen, you know, where its cold and then suddenly its warm for ...

HS: We had the one in '48 and we had the one in '94 [1894], '94 they didn't have the dykes. My parents told me that at No.5 Road there, by the Deas freeway, they had five feet of water on the land there. Down here, you wouldn't get your feet wet, just a little layer on top of the ground, had the big run-off, no dykes.

INT: Really, so you're in the best position right here.

HS: Oh yes, for that part, yes.

INT: Of course, before people moved out here, there was no dykes on the Island so it was being flooded all the time.

HS: Well, I remember my Dad telling me in the early days when they first had the farm here. There was a natural barrier built up over the centuries with logs and rushes and that, and it kept the water out.

INT: Oh, this is the water from the ...

HS: ... All along here on the west, the dykes, you see, it gradually built up under the accumulation of driftwood and stuff, little mud, wind and so forth. It kept this part fairly dry. The first we probably had was when somebody's pigs routed a hole in it, through this rubbish heap, let the water in.

INT: Well, I think its about time, oh jeez, I've been here now two hours.

HS: Its alright ...

END OF INTERVIEW