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T976.08

INFORMANT: BERTHA KENNEDY
nee. BRENNAND

SUBJECT: autobiographical:
1921 - 1976
life as a teacher, wife
of a farmer.

PERIOD: 1921 - 1976

LENGTH OF TAPE: 1 hour, 30 mins.

INTERVIEWED BY: Joan Kirsch
May 20th, 1976

- 004 - 038 Mary Bertha Kennedy, nee Brennand, born Lancashire, England, March 11, 1909.
Family background in England: father died during the war (1915) family left England for Providence R.I. in 1921. Because of the difficulty in finding work in the States, her mother left to follow her own mother and sisters to Edmonton. Landed in Halifax, Train trip to Edmonton. *stopped over in Portland, Maine*
- 039 - 062 First impressions of Edmonton; *small & uncooth* lived in north-east area of the city, travelled two miles to St. Francis school.
- 063 - 070 Attended St. Francis Church till 1924 when St. Alphonses was built. After completing grade 8, Bertha went to St. Mary's School on 3rd St. Took her Normal School at Calgary after Grade 11.
- 071 - 087 Mother and brothers' story. *Struggle w/o widow's pension*
- TEACHING CAREER:
- 088 - 098 Teaching positions: 1st was south of Strome in St. Peter's parish, 2nd was north of Bruce. Spent a year teaching east of St. Albert in the Guilbeaut school (located where Willie Flynn is now living)
- 099 - 114 Taught at Volmer for three years (1931 - 1934) *stories of people coming through during the depression*
- 115 - 120 Finally got a city school; a one-roomed school at Dunvegan Yards. Taught the children of transient relief families. Grades 1 - 8/
- 121 - 164 Wages: \$950 first year, \$1000 second year, \$1050 third year and first year at Volmer. Affects of the dpression caused her salary to be cut in the 2nd year at Volmer to \$840 and the next year to \$750. If she had gone back for another year her salary would have been \$450.
In order to cash her cheques in the city, she had to pay 25¢ for the phone call to St. Albert to assure the School District had enough money, 10¢ for exchange and 3¢ for stamp. Secretary, Neil Ross Sn. would always get her cheque to her on time but she would often have to track down the chairman for his signature before she could cash it. *They were never certain the money was available. Ross played the market.*
- 165 - 208 Christmas concerts, especially the mishaps of her last concert at Volmer.
- 209 - 432 School conditions and experiences: *School started at 9:30 b/c of daylight*
-transportation to school
-heating of schools
-teacherage - 2 rooms, kitchen & bedroom *Extremely cold*
came to St. Albert in 1954

Children were:
 Ukrainian
 Polish
 English
 French
 Latvians
 - Populations
 were fluctuating
 constantly

emphasized

- 438 - 450 Subjects taught: Reading, Writing, arithmetic, history, geography, health, agriculture, civics. *Every school had a barn.*
- 451 - 477 Games played by the children, mostly baseball.
- 478 - 528 School children: clothing in winter and health. School nurse visited in the city only and immunized. *Children often filthy & contagious.*
- 528 - 560 Involvement of priests and parish in the country schools. Teachers were community leaders. Father Jan visited Guilbeault and Father Bidault visited the school in Volmer to hear catechism.
- 561 - 581 Married Andrew Kennedy in 1935, had met him while teaching at Guilbeault. Lived in Edmonton then moved to St. Albert. In 1940, they moved a house out of the farm and lived there *from the old mission.*
- 582 - 634 Andrew Kennedy born on the Kennedy farm in St. Albert in 1897 (farm is now the Sturgeon Golf Course). Parents, Miles and Catherine Kennedy came from Glengarry County, Ont. in 1893. They had 12 children. Metis neighbours, Gairdners.
- 635 - 681 Married at St. Alphonses, reception at Royal George Hotel. Drove a 1930 Chev' *camp* to Winnipeg for their honeymoon.
- 682 - 708 Summer jobs prior to marriage: Kennedy's Book Store on Jasper Ave. *(Different Kennedy from Husband's family)*
- 709 - 739 Social Life revolved around the parish and the family. Played the organ at St. Alphonses, was in choir. Attended parties within the parish. Went to shows with her mother, picnics and drives with her brothers on weekends.

(cuts off)

End of side I

SIDE II

- 001 - 011 Summer outings, continued.
- 012 - 038 Moved to the farm in 1940. Neil Ross moved the house on to the farm. *4 bdrms, large kitchen, dining room, living room*
- Tape cuts out.*
- 029 - 068 her life on the farm: washing clothes (gas engine machine). Electricity was installed in 1956, used coal oil lamps. Hauled water by tank from the city, stored in cistern in the basement, pumped upstairs. *No indoor plumbing*. House heated by kitchen stove. In cold weather took turns sitting up to keep the fire going.
- Tape cuts out*
- 069 - 088 The farm: 240 acres of River Lot. Mixed farming, cattle, chickens, pigs, crops of oats and barley.
- 089 - 105 River floods; had 40 or 50 acres of river flats. (1 year two crops were lost down the river.)

- 106 - 150 Health services: Continued to visit Dr. McDonnell in city, who delivered the first 6 of her 7 children. Dr. Cuts delivered the last child, all were born in the Misericordia Hospital.
Children's accidents. Immunization by Dr. Poirier in St. Albert and then in school.
(In 1948, the country schools were closed and her children attended school in St. Albert.)
- 151 - 169 Sister St. Joseph played the organ in church for many years. Bertha sang in the choir and played for practises; took over from Sister in about 1963.
- 170 - 187 Farm was pretty self-sufficient: had a garden and fruit trees. In winter they would cut ice at Pelletier Lake near the west end of 188 Ave, store it in a log ice-house covered with sawdust.
- 188 - 229 Shopped in St. Albert 2 or 3 times a week. Some prices given. Husband's wages while living in Edmonton were 35¢ per hour. (worked at Burns packing plant)
could not teach as a married woman (could not work anywhere)
- 230 - 251 Threshing time: Her brother-in-law had a threshing outfit. She would feed the crew for the three or so days that they were on their farm.
During the war, soldiers came to help with the harvests.
(tape cuts out)
- 253 - 284 Problems with water: Could not sink a well, so water had to be brought in from the city for drinking. Cattle were watered at the river when possible. In the winter, holes had to be cut in the ice for the cattle.
The river's usefulness: good fishing, children swam in it. In the winter, when the snow blew in and blocked the roads, the river was used as a road into town.
- 285 - 313 Travelling in the winter; snow would drift in much more than now. *6 ft high*
- 314 - 366 In 1955, Andrew suffered a stroke. Problems of having to run the farm with only the assistance of the children. Incident of the overselling of grain on the permit book (winter of 1956-57)
- 367 - 380 Electricity on the farm in 1956. Got a TV for Andrew, town's people had bought him a 'lazy-boy' chair.
- 381 - 411 Sold the farm and moved to St. Albert in 1957. Andrew died in 1968. Bought the house at 11 Madison Ave. from Germain Borle. Had been previously owned by Jimmy Maheux who had modernized it, brought in electricity, sewer etc. House was in St. Albert in 1910. According to brother-in-law, he had helped in the building of the house on a farm near Villeneuve, and it had been moved to St. Albert.
- 412 - 436 Began teaching again in the fall of 1954. Taught for a year and a half then took a leave of absence when her husband became ill. In 1957, went back, teaching grade 3 and continued with this grade until 1974.

Began teaching in the little white school on the hill, then moved to Father Jan school on Mission Ave, then to Albert Lacombe.

- 437 - 471 Adjusting to teaching under a principal. Took some refresher courses, had started teaching with a 2nd class certificate, took some grade 12 subjects and received her Junior E. certificate. Took workshops so that she would not leave her husband for too long.
- 472 - 510 Principals: Mr. Maloney, Mr. Deutscher, Mr. Kaminsky, Mr. Binette. Other teachers.
- 511 - 559 Community involvement: Mostly revolved around playing piano, or some musical involvement. Minstral Shows put on by the Altar Society and the Women's Institute. Played for Mr. Sirette who gave music lessons at Dr. Cuts' house once a week and for Mr. Horace McHeffey, who taught tap-dancing classes.
- 560 - 612 Music in Bertha's life and family. Sunday night sing-song.
- 613 - 630 Dances at the Community Hall; during the war the children went to the dances with their parents. After the war, drinks were served and age restrictions were imposed. Spoiled family atmosphere
- 631 - 655 Dances were put on by the Community League and the Credit Union. Andrew Kennedy served on both boards and also on the School Board after the country schools were closed. He was chairman for one year.
- 656 - 695 Bert Pierce's Orchestra from the city would play for the dances, all old-time music.
- 696 - 740 Retired from teaching in 1974, still active in parish work. Selected Citizen of the Year in 1976.
- (cuts out)
- End of Tape.