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INFORMANT: MRS. NELLIE COURTEPATTE
nee: CUNNINGHAM

SUBJECT: autobiographical:

PERIOD: 1900 - 1948

INTERVIEWED BY: Arlene Borgstede
August 10, 1977

LENGTH OF TAPE: 1 hour, 10 minutes

- 008 - 013 Nellie Elisa Coutepatte, nee Cunningham, born 24th June 1900, in St. Albert.
- 014 - 027 Grandfather, John Cunningham, homesteaded four miles west of St. Albert. Married Rosalie L'Hirondelle; had about 9 or 10 children.
- 028 - 066 Father, Alfred Cunningham and Henry were the youngest and twins. Alfred was born January 1st (1870), on the Cunningham homestead. Did not attend school due to poor eyesight; stayed on the farm with his brother Henry.
Most of the brothers farmed except Edward who became a priest, on farms adjacent to the family homestead. Later sold their farms. Sam was the oldest, Albert, Johnny, Jim, Edward, Daniel, Henry, Alfred, and Nancy who married Georges Gagnon. Another girl died young.
- 067 - 083 Alfred married Emelia Rowland, daughter of John Rowland and Sophie Chatelain. John Rowland freighted, had a small farm near the mission.
- 084 - 103 They had 15 children, 2 died as babies. Nellie was the fourth in the family. Babies were delivered by grandmother (Sophie Rowland) who assisted at many births in the area.
- 104 - 139 Alfred continued to farm til his death in 1936. Nellie's life on the farm (good, decent, quiet life). The girls' chores included milking cows, feeding chickens. Type of farm was mixed. Mother had hired help when the children were young, mostly relatives. They attended a few parties on other farms, played in the river.
- 140 - 159 Lived in a log house, covered by lumber inside and out built by her father; all on one floor, no basement, heated by wood and later coal.
- 160 - 168 Most of the family came into St. Albert in the winter so that the children could attend school.
- 169 - 227 Nellie started school in 1906 at 6 years, at the convent. Teachers were all sisters: Sister _____, Sister Supernault, Sister Savard. Classes were taught in English and French. Subjects included Catechism, geography, history, arithmetic, language, spelling etc. Christmas concerts: usually concerts or plays were done at the end of the years when awards were given out. No field days that she remembers.

- 228 - 243 Moved to the "brick" school in about grade two or three; liked this school better. The Sisters still taught at the "brick" school, also a lady and a man.
- 244 - 265 Spoke English at home when the children started school; parents spoke French and Cree.
- @66 - 284 Grandmother, Sophie (Chatelain) Rowland had French father and Indian mother. Native traditions were not passed down but beading and silk thread embroidery was done.
- 285 - 293 Father's mother, Rosalie L'Hirondelle, also had native blood.
- 294 - 314 Does not recall the use of Native medicines or home remedies.
- 315 - 396 Christmas as a child: whole family would gather at grandmother Rowland's. Attended Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. New Years was the big celebration, Christmas was kept as a religious day. Children received small gifts from Santa Claus, hung up stockings. Did not celebrate New Years Eve, attended Mass in the morning, big party. New Years night with violin music.
- 397 - 428 Other holidays throughout the year: Jean Baptiste was celebrated in St. Albert with foot races, ball games; served soft drinks, ice cream, etc. Held of church grounds, below the mission to the east and also the mission park area.
- 429 - 516 **Pilgrimages at Lac Ste. Anne:** Mother always attended, went the year Nellie was born (1900), and took her, (she was 1 month old). Smallpox was prevalent, mother caught it and had to be brought home. She was very sick, Nellie had one scab on her nose. The trip to Lac. Ste. Anne was made by democrat, took tents and camped there for a week.
- 517 - 541 Their St. Albert home was across the street from the railway station site (west). Mother came in in the winter, left early in spring to return to the farm.
- 542 - 582 Had a garden on the farm; preserved meat by freezing in the winter or in the ice house in the summer. Father did some hunting (ducks) mostly for enjoyment. Used highbush cranberries and wild raspberries.
- 583 - 613 Neighbours: Uncle Henry (father's twin brother) married mother's sister (Mary Rowland) and lived on the same farm. They had four girls and two boys.
- 614 - 689 Father was tall, big boned; recalls him as "wonderful"; never struck children, very quiet, religious man. Mother had a bit of a temper. Father died in 1936 and 67 years, mother died 1971 at 97 years. She stayed on the farm for some years after her sons took it over, then moved to St. Albert.
- 690 - 718 Nellie continued in school til grade 8, then stayed at home and helped her mother. None of the children went on to further their education.

718 - Married 22 January 1924.

SIDE II

- 003 - 016 As a teenager, was not allowed to attend public dances in St. Albert but did go to house parties at other farms.
- 017 - 024 Met her husband, Camille Courtepatte from Villeneuve at one of these house parties.
- 025 - 042 Flu epidemic: no one in her family got the flu. It struck late in the fall. They continued to deliver milk to homes in St. Albert.
- 043 - 057 Interurban Railway: caught the railway car at the Bank of Hochelaga (Bank of Montreal site), it crossed the highway where the motel is. They travelled to Edmonton often, went by wagon.
Edmonton Canoe Club: was in the pavillion once but it was used mostly by people from Edmonton.
- 074 - 087 The second church was used as a church hall; attended many functions there; concerts (St. Patrick's Day) etc. Burned down in 1922.
- 088 - 114 Was married in St. Albert; one of the first to be married in the new church, by father Larose. Had a very small wedding, no reception, just a luncheon at home.
First home was in Villeneuve. Husband was working on the railway and continued with them until 1958. In 1932, he was transferred to St. Albert as relieving foreman and had to travel a lot.
- 115 - 147 Lived just behind the railway station near the elevators. Had four children when they moved to St. Albert, two more born here. Lived here until 1945, then moved closer to the church on St. Vital Ave. Husband was transferred to Edmonton in 1945, family moved there in 1948.
- 148 - 162 In 1932, during the depression, her husband had one of the highest paying jobs going, \$3.49 per day. They had an acerage where they raised cows, pigs, chickens and had a garden.
- 163 - 185 Changes in St. Albert: not much change since 1924. Many men were on relief. They bought groceries at Joyal's, went to Edmonton for dry goods, hardware, etc.
- 186 - 210 All her children were born in St. Albert; she would come in and stay with her mother. Nurse Maloney and Dr. Giroux assisted at births. Her grandmother delivered her daughter, the last baby she ever delivered.
- 211 - 229 Recalls when her father had 'double' pneumonia and was treated by Dr. Tiernan. He insisted that the windows be left wide open at night.
- 230 - 255 WW I: her oldest boy enlisted in the army when he turned 18; second son joined the navy.
- 256 - 284 Water was delivered, lights were gas lamps and aladdin lamps, no telephone, battery operated radio.

- 285 - 307 Bought clothing for the children in Edmonton, did not use catalogues. All children attended school in St. Albert, all started grade one with Marie Wolneiwicz.
- 308 - 329 Entertainment: church activities included card games (parties) in her home for the church and card parties in the church.
- 330 - 342 She had to look after the children on her own when her husband travelled. Had them build a baseball diamond on their property, kids all played there.
- 343 - 352 There were some business, Bagley's Hall, blacksmith shop, and drug store up near their part of the town.
- 353 - 385 Children: Viola, Clayton, Lyle, Ken, Clarence, Larry. Two are still living in Edmonton; others in Victoria, Prince George, and Toronto. Viola was in a car accident 22 years ago, has been hospitalized since then. Nellie brought up her son who was three months old at the time.
- 386 - 414 Sam Cunningham opened the road to Edmonton from St. Albert and was a councillor on the North West council. He was also in the St. Albert Mounted Rifles. She heard stories from her grandmother Rowland, whose sister-in-law, Mrs. Sinclair and Mrs. MacDonald lived in Edmonton. During the Reil Rebellion they came out to Rowland's in St. Albert for safety.
- 415 - Came from Villeneuve to the unveiling of Father Lacombe's Statue in 1927. Recalls when Bishop Grandin's tomb was opened.