

2003.02.160

T976.05

INFORMANT: EUGENE PERRON

SUBJECT: autobiographical, life as a businessman in St. Albert.

PERIOD: 1911 - 1950

LENGTH OF TAPE: 1 hour, 10 min.

INTERVIEWED BY: Arlene Borsgtede  
Apr 28, 1976.

Father - Generous but stern

Mother from Wisconsin very shy but clean Irish & spoke German

- 005 - 010 Eugene Perron, born St. Albert, 1911
- 111 - 085 Father, Fleuri Perron, came from Quebec to St. Albert in 1883. Had farmland around the district (Eng Lake) His various business ventures in St. Albert included a store, the Royal Hotel, Butcher Shop, another grocery store, Paddle Wheeler on the Sturgeon River, Brick Facotry, plus farm land. Store at Perron & Mission, burned down 1919. Six children in the family, Alex, Ella, Anna, Leo, Hector and Eugene; home on Mission Drive built by Fleuri before 1911. Personal memories of father and mother. Father went to California, Mother wouldn't leave so he came back & opened stores
- 086 - 096 Schooling in St. Albert; teachers (sisters)
- 097 - 110 Childhood in St. Albert, - winter sports
- 111 - 125 Continued schooling at Jesuit College in Edmonton (Gr. 9 - 12). Completed schooling in 1930, planned to enter banking profession. Father had cancer so he returned to St. Albert to help in the store. Father died in 1930; store sold to pay funeral expenses, to St. Albert Stores (Boudreau & Labelle) Ltd.
- 137 - 152 Mr. Béland managed the store, asked Eugene to stay on and work. Eugene bought the store in the Legault Block from Béland in 1936. Mr. Net (Parmer?) from Vancouver managed the Fleuri and Béland
- 153 - 169 Worked from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm for \$50 per month. He and his sister, Anna, who worked in the bank, supported the family on \$110 per month. want to make 600/mth in Edmonton in St Albert
- 170 - 189 Entertainment during the depression: hockey games, house parties (talents of Henry Leonard as hockey player) AKA Kaiser
- 190 - 200 Eugene's store: groceries but gradually added hardware, paint, etc. and became a general store. The business climate in St. Albert during the depression was touch and go for the first few years.
- 201 212 Town's program for relief during the depression: Ed Hogan, counsellor organized wood pile where men would cut wood for coupons for groceries. Mike Hogan, mayor, and Pete MacKay, counsellor and hotel keeper, arranged that anyone collecting relief would not be served in the bar. Ed was against free relief & made them work the woodpile for it
- 213 - 239 Michael Hogan: personal reflections of, his value to the town, racial and religious stability that he encouraged. Approached for prov. gov. but preferred St. Albert
- 240-252 Married Evelyn Hogan in 1941; first home was in the suite over the Bank of Montreal Building.

called St. Albert 'Little Switzerland' because of its diversity

- 253 - 273 At the outbreak of WW II, enlistments from St. Albert were high, Highest per capita in Canada. *→ there was no other work*  
Eugene enlisted in the Air Force in 1942, stationed in various locations throughout Canada *ducts perforated eardrum*  
[*East - Toronto - Trenton - Ed - Yorkton - Edmonton*]
- 274 - 283 Evelyn ran the store while he was away.
- 284 - 299 Collection of extra ration coupons from farmers to supply the town people with goods that were in short supply. *Exploited*
- 300 - 342 Return to St. Albert in 1945 to the Legault Block but had bought the lot on the corner of Perron and St. Anne St. before the war. Bought a building from Jasper Place in 1950 and moved it on to that lot. The building has been enlarged and renovated but original building still stands. *50¢/month for the lot, saweway didn't want the competition but Perron outbid*
- 343 - 358 Change in the town during the war years: town had prospered then, but friendliness still remained. *Not much change.*
- 359 - 369 Participation in community affairs: Church board for 12 years, School Board for 12 years, Town Planning Board for 5 years, Community Hall for 7 or 8 years.
- 370 - 407 Building of the Community Hall, leaders in the project were Michael Hogan and Dr. Poirier. Constructed in 1939, primarily by volunteer labour, ("Chick" Harnois) received a small salary as head carpenter. Built on the location of the old Pool Hall. *Dr. Poirier was very charismatic. Town donated the land.*
- 408 - 474 Interest in politics started with the election of 1935. Worked for the Social Credit party. While attending rally in Legal, had a accident that put him in the hospital. Worked for Mr. Maynard and Keith Everitt. *St. Albert was always Liberal, rallies were chaotic.*
- 475 - 499 Political rallies of the 30's. *Fell from stage into basement fell into coma until next morning*
- 500 - 523 Influence of the Catholic Church in St. Albert; cooperation with the towns people. *known to have raised money for church*
- 524 - 557 Parish activities: annual picnic, dramatic club, that put on plays in the church basement, directed by Mr. Sylvestre and Mr. Lepin. St. Patrick's Day play always well attended.
- 558 - 597 Father LaRose and the completion of the present church. Angus Kennedy and Mike Cassidy on the church board.
- 598 - 663 Father Jan and the Mission Hill Park and the Statue of Father Lacombe. *→ 2 roads forming a heart towards church, but left side was never completed*
- 664 - 694 Father Tardif, the most respected and feared man in St. Albert. *Opinionated*

## SIDE II

- 1.12 003 - 019 Discussion of Alan Blair: came to St. Albert in 1937 from Ontario as a school teacher. Served on the Church Board, Town Council, Secretary for Community League, Town Secretary. *then opened his own business*  
*too modest, not enough recognition*
- 020 - 035 "The Blue Room" in Perron's store, where discussions of local issues, politics, etc. went on. Election results always available though the store very quickly.  
*(town and provincial)*

- 036 - 065 Skating Rink located behind Perron's store on St. Anne St. Land obtained by the Town from the Federal Government through the efforts of Mrs. Nora Donlevy, secretary of the Town. Mr. Laderoute gave lumber for the rink on credit.
- 066 - 071 Personal reflections of Mrs. Donlevy *small woman, but a lady*
- 072 - 085 Organized hockey teams in St. Albert had great fan support, *700-800 people* played in a league with Legal, Westlock, Morinville etc. and later in the city. Team was first sponsored by Gillespie Flour Mill, later by the Bruin Inn, became the St. Albert Bruins.
- 086 - 112 Town of St. Albert built the Flour Mill but did not hire a good miller and so business did not do well. Sold to Mr. Gillespie who hired Mr. Johnson as a miller and ran it as a very profitable business. Mill provided employment to the town until it burned down in 1939 (NB. Mill burned in 1938). Located below Mission Ave. just this side of railway bridge.
- 113 - 140 "Midnight John" and "Bicycle Mike", *from Poland, Mr Hogan sold bikes were not coming the land & they prospered*
- 141 - 147 Neil Ross convinced by Mayor Hogan to buy one whole block of land in "Braeside". *Sold when population grew & made a huge profit.*
- 148 - 162 Supplies for the store brought from Edmonton. Neil Ross, Sr. had a dairy farm, delivered milk to the city in the morning brought groceries back in the afternoon.
- 163 - 179 First car in St. Albert owned by the baker, Mr Armstrong, a buick. Fleuri bought a car back from the States with him; a big car that he sold to the Grey Nuns. Gene's first car was a panel truck. *Panel truck, Buick*
- 180 - 197 Trips to Edmonton for shopping were few. St. Albert was a commercial centre which drew from Namao, Morinville, Legal, Villeneuve, etc. *Farmers*
- 198 - 219 The Dawson Block was the centre of the business community during the 20's. Stores included a Chinese Restaurant, Barber Shop, Lambert's Store, Veness' Hardware, Mrs. Guyton's Lady's Wear. *General (very large)* The Dawson Block burned down in 1928 and the town started its decline. There was no money to rebuild.
- 220 - 231 Retirement in 1973 *2 boys 1 girl*
- 232 - 253 Family of six children; Raymond, Elaine, Janet, David, Paul, Fleuri. *1 boy 1 girl* and 5 grandchildren.
- 254 - 274 Flu epidemic (1918-19); mother prepared soup every morning for the boys to deliver to those who were sick. St. Albert suffered many deaths as a result of the epidemic. *Hector & Gene*
- 275 - 279 Conclusion.