

# LUMBERING, HOUSE PARTIES AND FIDDLE MUSIC: AN OVERVIEW OF THE ORAL HISTORIES IN THE IAN TAIT COLLECTION (P163)

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Jody Robinson

*Archivist, Eastern Townships Research Centre*

This past Christmas, like every Christmas, my mother's extended family had a large get-together where, as always, a lot of talking, reminiscing, and eating went on. This particular celebration consists of the large extended families of my grandfather and his two brothers. As we gather around the table, it usually does not take much prompting for one of them to launch into stories of their younger years. Over the years, I have come to appreciate the stories told by my grandfather's generation. However, they always leave me wondering how many more stories and family anecdotes are lying in wait until something or someone prompts them to the surface. Comparatively, the lives and stories of my grandparents cover a time that could be considered relatively recent by history's standard. Nonetheless, I found myself fascinated by their anecdotes of life experiences that are so unlike my own. In preparing this article for the Archives Section of *JETS*, I have found myself similarly engrossed in the narratives found in the archives of the ETRC. The oral histories cover a range of topics, from a range of people and time periods.

Although oral histories are fascinating as simple anecdotes of the past, they can also be used as sources in historical analysis. According to Donald A. Ritchie, author of *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, oral history "accounts can actually be informative, offering their analysis in a vivid and colourful manner and enlivening a narrative, often with a touch of humour." "Although anecdotal information has a personal flavour, the collected stories from a group reinforce each other and show common threads in the lives of the group's members."<sup>1</sup> Even within the few transcript excerpts that appear below, it is possible to see common experiences surface through the speakers' narratives.

The ETRC Archives has over 600 oral histories in its archival holdings; some recorded on video cassette and the majority on audio cassette tapes. For the most part, the oral histories are part of a few fonds and collections: the Tom Martin fonds (P059), the Eastern Townships Heritage Foundation fonds (P020), the University Women's Club- Sherbrooke and District fonds (P023) and the Ian Tait Collection (P163). However, in the Ian Tait Collection alone, there are approximately 450 tapes. Comprised almost solely of recorded oral histories, the Ian Tait Collection works well to briefly introduce the wealth of information that is provided through this unique type of source. The Ian Tait Collection is a recent acquisition to the ETRC archives, received in September 2006. The son of Thomas Tait and Kathleen Eadie, Ian Tait was born in Granby in 1947. After graduating from high school, he traveled extensively, particularly in parts of Europe. Upon returning to the Eastern Townships, he pursued undergraduate studies at Bishop's University, obtaining a B.A. in English in 1976 and went on to receive a M.A. in Comparative Literature from the Université de Sherbrooke. A prominent member of the local academic community, Ian Tait was well-respected among both the students and professors at Champlain Regional College in Lennoxville, where he taught a number of courses in English and Humanities for over two decades. Additionally, he was very involved in the English-as-a-Second-Language programs offered in the area. Ian Tait was also a regular contributor to CBC radio for various topics, including Eastern Townships history. Among his wide-ranging interests were First Nations peoples and Eastern Townships folklore. He passed away April 21, 2005, at the age of 57, in Sherbrooke, Québec.

A portion of the oral histories in the Tait Collection were those conducted by Tait for his own research projects as he sought to shed light on and to preserve the history and folklore of the Eastern Townships, in particular the Gaelic communities. The majority of the rest of the collection consists of oral histories conducted by Champlain students as part of their course work with Ian Tait. Unfortunately, these invaluable sources are recorded in a format that significantly limits their lifespan and puts them at a high risk for information loss. Most specialists estimate the lifespan of magnetic tape, including video cassettes and audio cassettes, to be approximately 30 years. Even now, we have numerous items that have already reached the 30-year mark. For this reason, it is increasingly important to embark on a project to transfer these recordings to new media. In the coming year, the ETRC Archives Department

will be pursuing the digitization of a portion of our audio-visual collection in order to insure that it will be preserved for the future. As the final objective of this project, the ETRC hopes to make a selection of the oral interviews available through the ETRC website. In an effort to illuminate these wonderful sources, sections of few interviews are presented below. Enjoy!

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**S**am Hopper was born on February 15, 1899 in Wilson's Mills. In 1921, he moved to Huntingville where he and his brother bought a farm; they also worked at the Veneer factory in Waterville. In the 1940s, he and his wife, Evelyn, moved to Waterville where he ran a sawmill. As a child, Sam Hopper learned to play the violin and began to play at parties at age 12. In 1945, he began to participate in amateur shows with Norman Masters. Soon after, they formed a band along with Sam Hopper's wife, Albert Nutbrown and Stuart Deacon. For about 30 years, the group played at weddings and dances in the Eastern Townships and was on the radio for 25 years. Sam Hopper died on March 29, 1980. Mr. Hopper was interviewed by Ian Tait in 1979, at his home in Waterville.

S.H.<sup>2</sup>I was born in Wilson's Mills on February 15, 1899. Father had three farms there, south up the Palmer River and we had a mile and three-quarters to walk to school. I remember well the cold mornings, in fact my left ear was froze so much that now it is just like a piece of leather. There is no give to it. I pretty near lost it at that time. But anyway, I didn't get too much schooling because father had a big farm and there was so much work to do that I was kept home an awful lot.

I.T. What kind of work did you do?

S.H. What we was doing choring and haying. It seems incredible now but I started to mow by hand when I was eight years old, because we had it in our mind, if we were going to keep it [the farm], that we had to work – we knew that. Father and mother gave us great encouragement. My father's people came from Northern Ireland, Monahan Ireland.

I.T. What year did they come over?

S.H. It was, I'd have to look it up, but I think it was somewhere around 1830. Very, very early, because a lot of the ones that came over on that boat died. They took typhoid fever. In fact

my great-grandfather, he came over here with three of his brothers and shortly after they settled in East Broughton, that's where they came up from Québec, and settled where it was all rocks and two of the brothers took sick and died with typhoid fever shortly after they arrived in East Broughton. He kept them in a shed until the spring and got an ox-cart, put the two bodies on and took them to Québec and they are buried in a cemetery just on the other side of the Québec Bridge.

I.T. Where did your mother's people come from?

S.H. Mother's people came from Edinburgh, Scotland. In fact, some of her uncles were very high up in education.

I.T. Did she come over directly from Scotland?

S.H. No, it was her grandparents that came over.

I.T. Do you have any idea when they arrived in Canada?

S.H. No, I have not, but it would be somewhere around the same time as different immigrants came.

I.T. So, that would go back maybe in the 1830s.

S.H. Yes, about the 1830s. I have the whole history here and I have the Bibles that came from Ireland and everything that is a way back there – if I took time I could hunt it up. It was back in them years.

I.T. How many were there in your family?

S.H. There were seven of us kids. I heard mother saying when she moved onto the farm that it was all woods. Father cut the first trees and at night you could hear the bears calling; she used to be scared. Then later on he put up a barn and a house. Later on he put up another house – the first was log – he put up a modern house and also a modern barn. In fact, when we sold there in 1921, we had pretty near a village of buildings. The barn was 140 feet long, two stories, two driveways in it, and a stable the full length of that and we were handling, at that time, about 80 head. Father had started and cut the first tree that was cut on the land, and, at that time, we had cleared and broke up about 125 acres. We cleared about 180 altogether on the farm.

I.T. That is hard work.

S.H. Well, I guess it was but father was a small little man and an awful worker. Then the oldest of the family was three girls and the four last ones was boys. I was interested, and so was my

brother, in music very much.

I.T. Where did you get that interest?

S.H. That came natural because I have the history here that, back in Scotland, some of the great-relations there was very musical. I have the history of that, so it was born, I guess, in me and I had my uncles on my mother's side was very, very musical. I had one old uncle there, he was very anxious for me to learn to play the fiddle and through him that I got quite good tunes that I used to whistle. At that time, we had no radios or television or anything like that so what we could pick up if we went to a wedding or went to a dance, I could come home with two new tunes.

I.T. So, you learned a tune by whistling?

S.H. Yes, oh yes. And also, the fiddle was the music that I liked. As I said, there in another interview, when I would hear a good player on the fiddle there, that you had to dance whether you could dance or not, it pretty near made you dance. So when –

I.T. When did you get your first fiddle?

S.H. The first fiddle, I was eleven years old and my brother was thirteen. And we sent to Eaton's for a \$5 fiddle complete with instructions and everything. When it came we, of course, went to tune it up and tightened the high strings too much, and down went the bridge and broke in two. So we had to glue it, we had to leave it for twenty-four hours for to get the bridge glued



and we couldn't get any noise out of the fiddle with the bow. We'd rub it across with the rosin that was with it, but it wouldn't catch the strings at all. So, I walked out three miles to a fellow that played the fiddle, Dave McHarg, and asked him what was the trouble. He just took his fingernail and scratched the rosin, run the bow over it a few times, and that was all that was needed. We got set up but the question was my brother, he wanted to learn and I wanted to learn, and it was who could get the chores done first and get the fiddle. Whoever could, would keep it a good two hours or more. Many's the time the last fellow, which was usually me because my older brother was stronger and bigger, and many's the time that father would holler out from their bedroom and say, 'Put that thing away and come to bed'. And it was no wonder, when I look back there now, it's a wonder that he'd let us in the house. But this uncle that I had, he encouraged me very much, he said I was doing well, "You're doing well." The first dance that I played for was almost a year after we got the fiddle.

I.T. When you were twelve years old?

S.H. Yes. And it was out at a neighbour's about two miles away – Willie Sutor's. There was no piano or organ or anything, I had to play alone. They said they had a good dance and they told me that I did awful well, and that helped out a whole lot. But then after that, when I commenced to play some there, I was asked to go and help out at other dances. On the other side of Palmer River from where we lived, the most of them were Irish. It just makes me sick when I hear about the Irish fighting there – the Catholics and Protestants. With the way them Irish folks used me; I'd be probably the only Protestant there and they couldn't do enough for you. Many's the night that they would come after we were in bed and come to the door, want me and ask if I could come and help out to play at one of the farm houses there that were having a dance. And I would always get up and go and help them out. I remember, my mother died fairly young, at sixty, and just shortly after she died, they came there one night and wanted me to go and I didn't feel like going, and father said, 'Yes, you go ahead. Your mother, if she were living, would want you to go.' So I went. Well, then, years after that, after we came up there and I started up the orchestra, I was asked, was hired, to go down to a big

hotel below Leeds Village – they could accommodate three weddings at one time – and we went down, we promised to go down for five Friday nights. And we went down there and the place was crowded with young people from Leeds, St. Sylvester, near our old place. And when it came intermissions time, I got no intermission because these young people came [up]; they had promised their father and their mother that they'd come up and tell me who their father and mother was. And anyway, I signed autographs there and one thing and another – it was time to go ahead and the other boys went ahead and I was still signing autographs. That was the pay that I got for when I was a kid going and helping out, you see. Then another thing that helped us here after we formed the orchestra –

I.T. Now, just before we get jumping ahead too much there, when did you move away from Leeds?

S.H. 1921. Mother died in 1919 and home never was the same after that. And in 1921 we moved up and bought a farm. Another brother of mine, Earl Hopper there and we bought the farm together.

I.T. And where was that?

S.H. That was in Huntingville. I was very near going to the States. I had an uncle in Worcester [Massachusetts] that was a carpenter and had no family. He always said, "Sam, if ever you get tired of the farm, come out, I wish you would come live in with me, I'd like to have you." And, anyway, after we sold the farm, I decided that I would go out there. So I went and wrote a letter – was writing a letter – when father come in and he said, "Who are you writing to?" And I said, "I'm writing to Uncle John Woodington in Worcester, I'm telling him that I'll be out next Friday." So he went over and sat down and started to cry, and he told me, "I always wanted for to live with you, Sam," and he said, "I can't go down to Worcester." I thought over a while and I went and got up, took the letter, tore it up and put it in the stove and we decided to come up here. My brother Earl and I worked in Waterville, here in a factory there at the time.

I.T. In what kind of factory?

S.H. Veneer factory there at that time, and we were out looking every weekend, Sundays, at farms. So anyway, on July 6<sup>th</sup> that summer we bought the farm in Huntingville.

[Interview continues]

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William Lavallee and Mary Lavallee (née Smith) were interviewed by Ian Tait October 25, 1979 in Sherbrooke. Both William and Mary Lavallee were born in Valcartier, Québec; William was born on April 2, 1896 and Mary was born on January 1, 1899. Mr. Lavallee died in 1983 and Mrs. Lavallee died in 1996. Both are buried in Sherbrooke.

[Interview begins with preliminary questions]

I.T.<sup>3</sup> Ok, now I understand, Mr. Lavallee, that you're a singer – as a matter of fact, you're quite well known for it.

W.L. Well, I never was recommended in this area as a singer, but I have sung some, to keep my kids quiet and things like that. But I also have sung a little bit at some parties that we had around the country.

I.T. I guess, in the old days, by way of entertainment, house parties were important things?

W.L. House parties were our only pleasure.

I.T. What was a house party?

W.L. A house party was taking all the furniture, very rarely were there any rugs on the floor, so all you had to do was take what furniture was in that room, to sit on and tables and get a fellow with a violin. I used to play a violin myself and go dancing.

I.T. What kind of dancing did they do?

W.L. Square dancing. For years and years, now they do all kinds of dancing.

I.T. But in those days ... [Trails off]

W.L. Same as they do anywhere, they most all go to towns now to dance.

I.T. But in those days it was mostly square dances?

W.L. It was all done in your living room – they all had large living rooms and nobody refused – they seemed to take it just fine. “We’ll have it at my house tonight and yours in a few nights.” Dances were regular and we really enjoyed it – people today wouldn’t think much of it.

I.T. It was one of the few times that, I guess, people got to visit?

W.L. That’s right. They were busy, but they took everything out that was in it. They went to the party just before dark and they came home in daylight.

I.T. Daylight?

W.L. That true.

I.T. So they used to party awful hard, did they?

W.L. Get that old violin from dark to daylight, many, many nights.

M.L. They’d have lunch at midnight.

I.T. What do you mean by lunch – what kind of ...?

M.L. Oh, they’d have cold meat and bread and sometimes a real meal – pie and cake.

I.T. Now, they used to sing at these parties, also did they?

W.L. They used to get one bedroom for the older ones – the younger ones that danced never went into that room at all; they could go to the door. That was for the old boys and there was the odd glass sitting around if you get what I mean!

I.T. I get exactly what you mean. [Laughs]

M.L. And there was never any liquor in the dance room.

I.T. Really?

W.L. No.

I.T. I see, this was just where the men were singing?

M.L. The room for the older men and they would sing there and they would treat one another, but the liquor wouldn’t be brought in the dance room where the younger were.

W.L. It was all the old white whiskey. You’d have to reduce it by two, ’bout as much water as there was High Wines to make a good stiff drink.

I.T. Pretty strong stuff then?

W.L. Oh yes.

I.T. Ok, can you remember any of the songs from those days at all? Would you sing me a few?

W.L. You mean that were created? Like that – at that particular time? No, these were all older, these were all being sung in my days.

I.T. Ok, I see, how would you like to sing them?

W.L. These are 100 years old.

I.T. How would you like to sing one of those?

W.L. Yes, I'll sing one of those.

M.L. Charlie Wolf.

W.L. Yes, Charlie Wolf, that's the first one I sang to you.

I.T. Ok, now would you explain the song a little bit, what's it about?

W.L. Yes, well, there was very little to do, and they always had quite big families and a big majority of young men. And those boys would start out, two to four of them together, and they'd go to different places they knew were doing lumbering concerns. And of course, this one would get their oxen, there was shipping, eh.

M.L. This is Charlie Wolf.

W.L. Yes, Charlie Wolf and my Uncle Tom, they went to Wisconsin and I had some uncles there that had been there the year before, lumbering.

I.T. When did they go out to Wisconsin – what year, do you remember of that?

W.L. '84 that these two boys went out.

M.L. 1881.

W.L. 1881. And these other fellows was out before that, they're out there and built the shacks – maybe five years, some ten years. Well, that's – there was sawmills there too – they cut their lumber.

I.T. Ok, give me the song.

W.L. You've got all the information. These boys used to go there for the winter and come home, back to Valcartier in the spring and they would go on the river drives and bring lumber down to a mill at their home in Valcartier.

I.T. Ok, so sing the song.

W.L. Alright.

M.L. You'd better say that Charlie Wolf wrote the song.



I.T. Charlie Wolf wrote the song did he?

W.L. Charlie Wolf wrote the song, yes. And I'll give you my name too. This is Bill Lavallee. I'm going to sing you a very old song composed by Charlie Wolf, a fellow who's heading for the woods for the winter and here's what the song says. [Sings song]

W.L. This old song I learned when I was quite young, it's quite old now. The name of it is Howard Keery – so it goes, it starts like this [Sings song: Howard Keery]

I.T. Ok, can you tell me a little about the river drive?

W.L. I was going to tell you about the river drive, the old river that run across the front of our farm, and every spring they had quite a large group of men to bring this lumber, probably thirty, forty miles down that river. Some parts of it were very, very rough, other parts of it were very nice and smooth. At night those fellows, quite a large tent there – they had very good cooks and could make beautiful beans because, in fact, I've sampled their beans there [Laughs]. A bunch of us young fellows used to follow them fellows for twenty miles to hear them sing and used to be the old Jacques Cartier River – was the name of the river.

I.T. They used to sing well?

W.L. They sang very well – and it was every night – we enjoyed it

very much.

I.T. Now, were they mostly French Canadian singing?

W.L. Yes, they were all French Canadian.

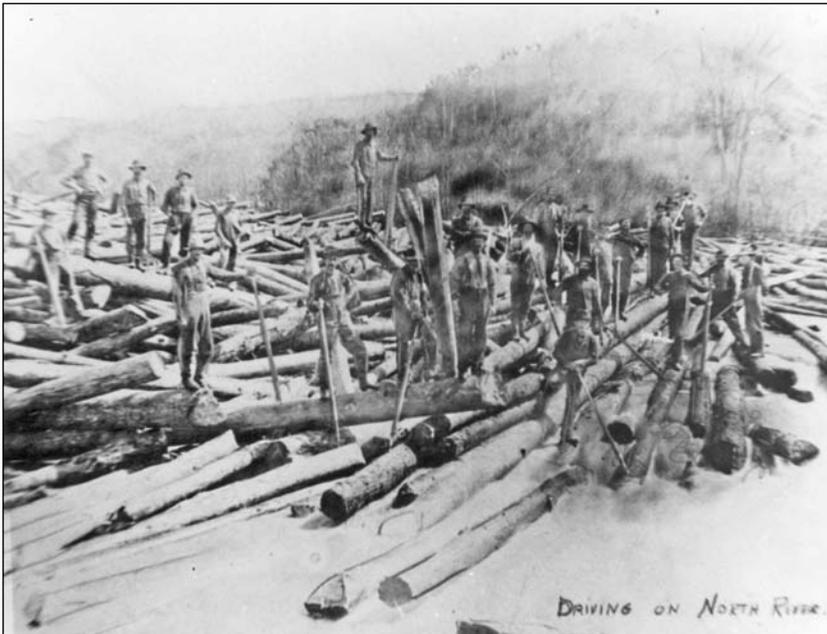
M.L. You used to go on the drive yourself.

W.L. I used to go on the river drives.

I.T. About what was that like?

W.L. You've got to be able to swim to be safe, you know. I was a boat man – last time I was on, I was on a boat, a six man boat. You had one oar, the fellow sitting beside you had another – two more with oars next to you. One man up front and one man in the rear. We used to break the jams in the rapids; there'd be a bunch of pulp wood collect and build up into a small mountain there. You'd had to come down one side of that and the water was very fast, you know, and just when you got pretty near to the bottom – you'd paddled up river all you could – your head man would head your boat in behind this. As soon as he got in behind that, there was no pressure at all – your boat would sail around in there. Well, we'd get our boat all set and we'd – a few of us would climb the side of that –

I.T. Get right up on the jam?



W.L. Yes and start rolling sticks out and they'd roll off and float away. You never knew, you were warned to watch yourself and head for the boat. So we did that, we succeeded very often, but one time we came – this boat came down, was just making the turn and the tail end of it hit a rock. That boat went over like that.

I.T. It turned right over?

W.L. Yes, six men there in the water. There was a fellow on the rear end, he had a long rope on the back of his – he was OK, he never let go, but the rest, the fellow in the front, he hung on the front. It had had a bow on it about, I would say 10 feet high, and this poor bugger hung on, never let go and he went down 10 or 12 feet and then he'd go up in the air – it never stopped rolling. I could swim, but when I got up, the bottom was turned straight up. I was good enough to get up on the top of that on my hands and knees – all I had was a white inside shirt on – it was a hot day. They always called me the frog after that. I was just sitting there like a frog. But I didn't sit there very long it would hit another rock and roll over. The other boat, there was a pair of boats, you see, they saw us coming and they knew we was in trouble. They come rushing up to the foot of the rapids and they were getting very close to us, there was one heavy fellow got round, got on my back and do you think I could get loose from that fellow. He'd of drowned me but the propeller from our boat – the great long flagpoles, he swung that pipe pole through to me and I grabbed the pipe pole and that saved my life – he held me above water, you see. Another fellow, we couldn't see him no where. There was a big Irish fellow, Ed MacAuley, all at once his arm went down and grabbed him by the hair of the head – he had lovely golden hair – it was luck for him it was long hair and he said, "By god, I got you Hurly." That was Hurly.

I.T. And he pulled him right out of the water by his hair?

W.L. I got him and put him into the other boat. That was about three o'clock in the afternoon on a Sunday so the foreman said everybody to [inaudible] no more work today.

I.T. So, they saved all your lives? That's awful lucky. That must have been dangerous.

W.L. Next morning, got up and there was two of our men that wouldn't go back – still hadn't broken the jam. I went back and the first try we made – we didn't have the same man in

front, we got Killey – he was in the front of the boat and he just walked that boat up there and we had that thing broken up in no time.

I.T. That must have been dangerous work.

W.L. It was dangerous work- you were always keyed up.

I.T. It must have been exciting – that’s for sure. Ok –

W.L. Here’s that other song. [Sings song: Old Mickey Branigan’s Pup]

I.T. Ok, Mr. Lavallee, I understand you used to work in the camp, did you?

W.L. Yes, I’ve worked a few winters in the lumber camp and I’ll tell you a little bit about it. The first thing we did – we started quite early in the fall – I would say early as the first of November and we took all our food in and everything we thought we’d need. The walking was good or we could run canoes in the rivers – had several rivers to cross. You had to probably go fifty miles – sometimes sixty miles and we got to cart all that in on our backs. They would start you off with a fifty-pound box of tea and end up with a 120-pound bag of beans. And it didn’t bother you any more than the tea did on the start. You did that first. After that you started to cut pulp wood, four-foot long, pile it up four feet high, it didn’t matter what length of a pile you had – had to be four foot high so they could measure it. You got so much a cord for ever cord you cut.

I.T. Do you remember how much you were paid?

W.L. No, I don’t. I’ve forgotten, what we’re paid then. Not too bad because we were so far back, and they fed us a lot of beans and a lot of moose meat. Get a moose there, where ever you wanted one – there was no laws of any kind. When we were short of moose meat, the boss would tell a fellow, he had a bobsled, a horse and a rifle, and he’d just go off and in about an hour he’d be back trailing a moose behind him. We had no trouble there. And then salt pork – we never were out of that and they always had a good cook – pretty rugged bunch in the spring when we were through.

I.T. How many people were in the camp, altogether?

W.L. I guess there’d be about thirty, would be a good size camp, you know.



M.L. You didn't tell them about the pump line on your head.

W.L. Well, that was in –

M.L. Yes, you didn't tell them that.

W.L. It was a pump line, ever carry a pump line?

I.T. Yes, a pump line across your forehead to equalize the weight.

W.L. That's the way we carried anything you could carry like that. And we had resting places every so far, I would say, every mile and you had to carry your load for eight miles and deliver and walk back to camp, that was your day's work. It got so we were able to get back about three o'clock or three thirty and we had the rest of the day free. The first day we were late enough getting back. They had stands built so that you could back up, with the pump line on your head, back up and let your shoulders and let your load down on this platform and rest.

I.T. Take the weight off the pump line. And when you were living in the camp, how early did you get up in morning?

W.L. Well, right around six – before we would get the yell and the cook would be up long before that.

I.T. What would you have for breakfast?

W.L. Well, beans were every meal – and brown bread. Never any-

thing fancy – but when you’re working hard, you always have enough.

I.T. What was it like, you used to sleep in a bunk house, did you?

W.L. We slept in a log cabin, all – it was good size logs and two heights of bunk, one bunk that high above the floor and the other one above it – two, three feet ...

I.T. It would be one row of bunks along the wall?

W.L. Along the wall – they’d give you your six and a half feet for length, or if you was bigger they’d have some longer ones, you know. And they were straw – that’s what we’d lay on, put blankets over it. It was funny, at night sometimes, squirrels used to get in and climb around on the walls. They’d probably crawl right across your head some nights, you didn’t know what in the devil was wrong. But we got used to it.

I.T. What was it like at night, once your work was done, what did you do?

W.L. Play cards.

I.T. Used to play cards?

W.L. Yes, play cards and we used to do tricks on the floor.

I.T. Now, what do you mean by that?

W.L. Acrobatic tricks.

I.T. Oh really, did they ever have any –

W.L. That was none of them very spectacular.

I.T. Did they ever do any singing in the camps?

W.L. Yes, sang in the camps. But we had to go to bed early, they made you go early – they’d turn the lights out – not too late. I think it was about nine.

[Interview continues]

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**H**arria McLeod (née MacDonald) was born in Scots-Weedon, Gould on February 27, 1898 and passed away in 2002. She was the wife of Kenneth McLeod. Mrs. McLeod was interviewed by Ian Tait in Scotstown on February 15, 1980.

[Interview begins with preliminary questions]

I.T.<sup>4</sup>-Now, you were saying that you're from the Town of Weedon, they call that Scotch Weedon. There's also a poem about Scotch Weedon?

H.M.That's the Scotch Weedon Girls.

I.T. And who's that one by?

H.M.Bertha MacDonald.

I.T. And that's a cousin of your husband's?

H.M.Yes.

I.T. Could you please recite that one?

H.M.

Have you ever been to Weedon  
On t'other side the River?  
I am sure you'll be quite welcome  
If you just possess a Fliver.

The roads are always very good,  
A car or carriage through them whirls  
They are kept in this condition  
To accommodate the girls.

Any girls who ever lived there,  
Always speak of all it's joys  
The only drawback they will mention  
Is a scarcity of boys.

And if in passing through there  
You ever chance to wait  
You will find the girls, if dark or fair  
Are very up to date.

Perhaps some Sunday afternoon,  
When you're off on your vacation  
You may take a drive to Weedon  
To visit a relation.

Maude you'll be surprised to find  
Just a little might be impatient,  
I'll explain and ease your mind,  
She is waiting for the agent.

There is music on a Sunday night  
For which she always listens,  
Is had a subtle charm for her  
That "honk, honk" in the distance.

Or perhaps that it is Ebbie  
Who is driving her with Buster,  
They are likely to meet Harria  
Who is out with Ray and Custer.

Harria many other times we see  
Driving at an awful clip  
And immediately we know  
That it's Tony speeding "Gyp".

Going farther on the way  
We find Bonnie at MacLean's  
He says he'll work hard every day  
If he'll get Annie for his pains.

Christie often says she's going  
To refuse every chance  
Until Duncan softly begs her  
To be mistress of the manse

Effie very prim and staid  
Declares she won't share their fate,  
Says she sure will be an old maid  
Or get some one in the States.

Hanna is still going to school  
Studying the work of masters  
But not for long or I'm a fool  
If Howard keep selling plasters.

And yet there is another way  
I don't know which she'll take  
They say that Talbot with the "grey"  
Drives ten miles for her sake.

Mary tired of teaching  
For a home went out to look,  
After driving through the county  
She decided on the "Brook".

And to Stewart who kneeled ten times to her  
She every times said nix  
There never was another  
Could compare with thirty-six.

Margaret drives all horses  
From a work-horse to a pacer  
But she never wants to see a car  
Except a Hudson or a racer.

Quite different to the school girl,  
Who often played at hookie  
I think she'd be a red cross nurse  
If it wasn't just for Rookie.

How I'd love to nurse the soldiers,  
Be they English, French or German,  
But I'd love a million time more  
A proposal from Pat Sherman.

Failing to get this proposal  
And looking very thin and pale,  
For the summer the composer  
Is to teach in Echo Vale.

—By Bertha E. MacDonald, school year 1915–1916

I.T. Now, I take it all the people mentioned in the poem, they were actual individuals.

H.M. They were girls in Scotch Weedon.

I.T. I know in this area they used to have what they called the Gaelic bards – they used to write songs about local people and so forth. These poems in English, was this a local tradition that was kept up also?

H.M. Yes, just put a few words together that would rhyme and there were a lot of people in the community – a lot when I was

going to school – even in the school they would compose poems over every little detail.

I.T. And they were always sort of humorous?

H.M. Yes.

[Recites other poems]

I.T. You were saying about the singing?

H.M. In my young days, young people in the neighbourhood would come in the evening and we had an organ in the house, my sister would play the organ and we'd have sing-songs. Sometimes it would be hymns, sometimes it would be songs or maybe somebody would sing a Gaelic song, that was able to sing in Gaelic. That was our televisions and radios, but today they don't have to do that for entertainment.

I.T. Do you remember, when you were a girl, was there much community get-togethers?

H.M. Yes, evenings.

I.T. Could you talk to me a bit about that?

H.M. Visiting, exchanging news – there was no radios – and sing-songs. I had an uncle, my father's brother, he played the violin and somebody would chord on the organ and a bunch of us would get together out in the kitchen and push the table to one side and start dancing.

I.T. What kind of dancing would you do?

H.M. Oh, well, waltz and later, when I was older we used to go to the town hall and dance. The Foxtrot and the One-step and the modern dances.

I.T. Did people do much step-dancing?

H.M. Oh yes, – square dances and quadrilles – they were a lot of fun.

I.T. Where did they used to hold those?

H.M. In the town hall, in Gould.

I.T. Who would that be sponsored by?

H.M. Some of the young people of the town that wanted to have a get-together, a dance, they'd advertise a dance to be held in the Gould town hall on Friday night and they'd have an orchestra, sometimes from Sherbrooke, sometimes from Cookshire – Planche's orchestra used to come out from Cookshire. Sometimes just local- violins and piano and perhaps a guitar or something like that.

[Interview continues]

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Curtis Ross was interviewed by Ian Tait in Bulwer, January 8, 1980. Curtis Ross was born May 25, 1903 and grew up in Bury. He was a blacksmith and a farmer. Mr. Ross passed away in 1986.

[Interview begins with discussion of local folklore and remedies]

I.T.<sup>5</sup> Talk to me about the dances a bit – where were they held?

C.R. They were held in the Odd Fellows Hall in Bury, right next to the blacksmith shop where I worked for 10 years, for four different bosses.

I.T. Do you remember what kind of dancing they used to do?

C.R. Well, they had all mixed dances; square dances, round dances, waltzes, gallows. Five steps, one steps, jersey, military chartiz, you name it and they most always had it.

I.T. What kind of orchestra did they have to play?

C.R. Violin and piano and maybe a banjo.

I.T. Would they be local people?

C.R. Yes, and then we used to go over to Brookbury – they had a community hall there and they used to have a dance there. In the winter time we'd go in just our jackets – heavy clothes that we'd wear in the woods in the winter time, lumberman felts and makinaw pants – have a great time. Mark James from Bury, Angus Hodge from Bury and I think Tommy Rollins from Bury, too, played the banjo.

I.T. Now that's something nobody's mentioned to me yet – there weren't very many banjo players, were there?

C.R. There was another fellow by the name of Burny Ross that played the banjo too.

I.T. Can you remember what kind of banjo was it? Did it have five strings or four strings?

C.R. I wouldn't say – I don't know. Never paid any attention to it – I was happy to have the music and I forget.

- I.T. Tell me something else; was the harmonica ever much of an instrument?
- C.R. Not too much.
- I.T. The basis of the whole thing would be the fiddle music?
- C.R. Yes, but we used to have some wonderful times over there at the Brookbury Community Hall.
- C.R. Violin – Mark James played the violin and Angus Hodge played the piano and Rollins played the banjo and then Ronny Poor – once in a while – he’d play the bones as they called it.
- I.T. What’s that?
- C.R. Ribs out of a cow, or something – had two of them, holding them in his fingers, like that.
- I.T. Sort of like they used spoons?
- C.R. Same thing as a spoon, except these was bones.
- I.T. Now, other social gatherings, did the church ever put on any kind of get-togethers?
- C.R. Oh yes, we used to put on plays. I’ve been in several plays – put them on in Bury and then you’d go to Cookshire or Corner –
- I.T. Oh, you’d travel around with these?
- C.R. Afterwards, yeah. We used to have a great time.
- I.T. Really? What kind of plays would they have? I’ve never heard of anything about this before.
- C.R. Well, I don’t know – but one I was in was the “Uncle’s Niece” and –
- I.T. What were they, mostly comedies?
- C.R. Yes, they were royalty plays. We had to pay royalties for them and then we had to hire our makeup and our masks, or whatever it might be. And then, one night at the hall, I guess I’d been out the night before and we had practice and I was a bit sleepy and I went and laid down behind the old box stove and fell asleep and they went out and left me there. And some of them got outside and said “Where’s Ross?” “I don’t know, must be inside, somewhere.” Lucky for me, they come back in and woke me up and took me out.

[Section of interview omitted for this article]

- I.T. Tell me a little about this snowshoe club?
- C.R. Well, we used to meet once a week. I think it was once a week and we'd go for a tramp and come back and have a big, huge supper of some kind of supper and a dance after, for an hour and a half – two hours snow shoe tramp. There was always some that would stay behind and get the meal ready for us.
- I.T. How many people were involved in that?
- C.R. Fifty, seventy-five maybe – had quite a good club there. That was held in the Oddfellows Hall, right next to the blacksmith shop.
- I.T. Were the Orangemen ever very strong?
- C.R. I'm an Orangman now – you're talking to one!
- I.T. Well, tell me about the Orangemen.
- C.R. I don't know as I could tell you much about them – but we're getting weaker every day – same as every lodge. We had quite a big lodge here; one time we had twenty-seven to thirty members. But now we've got down to five or six – we amalgamated with Sawyerville. And now we just have enough for a quorum to meet.
- I.T. Now, tell me exactly what is the Orangemen. I don't know anything about it. Sam told me a bit about. They used to have –
- C.R. Waterville used to have a lodge –
- I.T. He was telling me down around Leeds – they used to have an Orange Day celebration.
- C.R. They do. They still have that around the 12<sup>th</sup> of July, every year.
- I.T. Now, explain that to me. What is an Orange Day celebration?
- C.R. Well, it's been a tradition for years – five or six different lodges down there they have the bands and everything – just the drums and the pipes. They all meet down there – most generally at Kinnears Mills and then they march up to the grove – the Orange Grove there. Gertrude Scot, she owned this piece of land, nice sugar bush on there, and that's where they used to meet.

[Section of interview omitted for this article]

- I.T. So, the blacksmith shop was like a meeting place?
- C.R. A gathering place on a wet day, or anything like that. Tell their yarns.
- I.T. That must have been nice.
- C.R. Dr. Gendreau from Sherbrooke, he used to come out through here, years ago, when he was younger man. He used to most always stop in the shop and he'd say "Ross, you're the luckiest man I know. I always wanted to be a blacksmith or a fireman and I'm neither one but, you've got your place here, you've got a few cattle, few pigs, few hens and some horses and a blacksmith shop." He said, "You're lucky, do you realize it?" "Well," I said, "I'm happy."
- I.T. Few people can say that.

[Interview continues]

## NOTES

1. Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. pp. 121-2.
2. Sam Hopper interviewed by Ian Tait, 1979, Waterville, Québec (tape P163/001.11/002A, in P163 Ian Tait Collection, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
3. William Lavalée and Mary (Smith) Lavalée interviewed by Ian Tait, October 25, 1979, Sherbrooke, Québec (tape P163/001.12/004 in P163 Ian Tait Collection, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
4. Harria (MacDonald) McLeod interviewed by Ian Tait, February 15, 1980, Scotstown, Québec (tape P163/001.02/001 in P163 Ian Tait Collection, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).
5. Curtis Ross interviewed by Ian Tait, January 8, 1980, Bulwer, Québec (tape P163/001.07/001 in P163 Ian Tait Collection, Eastern Townships Research Centre, Sherbrooke, Québec).

## **BIOBIBLIOGRAPHIES / NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS**

**DR. DIANE SAINT-LAURENT** is a Professor in physical Geography of the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, Québec. She does research on fluvial geomorphology, especially flood risks, bank erosion and environmental problems (soils and sediments contamination). She can be reached at [diane\\_saint-laurent@uqtr.ca](mailto:diane_saint-laurent@uqtr.ca).

**EVE LERNER** had a variety of occupations since moving to the Fitch Bay area in 1987, including those of farm labourer and educator. A graduate of Concordia University, she has worked in the area of Jewish working class culture in Montreal between the two World Wars. Her thesis was entitled *Making and Breaking Bread in Jewish Montreal: 1920–1940*. One of her current interests is the oral history of francophones in the Stanstead region.

**ELIZABETH JEWETT** grew up in Vale Perkins on the shores of Lake Memphremagog in the Eastern Townships. She completed her Master's degree at McGill University in 2006 and is currently, as a PhD candidate, at the University of Toronto researching the environmental history of golf in northeastern North America.



## ERRATUM *JETS* 28

In the Spring 2006 edition of *JETS*, Volume 28, the Archives Department section included an article titled "Received Correspondence of the Stone and Hunting Families, Hunting Family fonds P160." When the article was written, the ETRC Archivist, Sophie Morel, pieced together the complicated Hunting and Stone family genealogies from the information contained in the fonds as well as some published resources available. Nonetheless, the accessible information was still limited. Since publication, a reader, who has done extensive research on the Stone family genealogy, has brought a number of mistakes to our attention. In an attempt to correct the mistakes, the following is a revised version of the Hunting and Stone family genealogies.

The article included transcriptions of two letters from Leonard Stone Jr. to Lyman E. Hunting, and two letters from Emeline Stone Gates to her cousin Clarissa Henrietta Wright. Lyman E. Hunting was one of William and Mary Polly (Stone) Hunting's nine children. Leonard Stone Jr. and Mary Polly Stone were siblings and children of Leonard Stone Sr. and Catherine Wyman Stone, which makes Leonard Stone Jr. the uncle of Lyman E. Hunting.

Leonard Stone Sr. and Benjamin Stone were brothers. Benjamin Stone married Prudence Farnsworth; they had a total of nine children, including Benjamin, Phineas, Philip, Edmund and Prudence. These five siblings were all early settlers of the Township of Ascot. Clarissa Henrietta Wright was the daughter of Prudence Stone and Jason Wright while Emeline Stone Gates was the daughter of Phineas Stone and Salome Spafford. After Phineas' death in Lennoxville in 1846, his wife and children moved to Shullsburg, Wisconsin. This made Emeline Stone Gates (who lived in the United States), Clarissa Henrietta Wright, and Lyman E. Hunting cousins.

Much appreciation is extended to this researcher for informing the Eastern Townships Research Centre of the errors and graciously offering her assistance and research in order to correct the inaccuracies.