

**Westman Oral History Collection**

**Interview Date: 1981-11-3**

**Narrator: John McDonald**

**Interviewer: Gordon Shanks**

**Location: Unknown/ Not indicated**

**Transcriber: Desiree Glover**

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Question: This is uh Gordan Shanks of Rivers interviewing for voices of Yesteryear Western Oral Association. Today is November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1981, the following is an interview with John McDonald a retired farmer from Basswood now living in Legion Gardens in Rapid City.

Q: Mr. McDonald uh what could you-can you tell us of your grandparents?

Answer: Well, my grandparents on my father's side came from, they were born in Glasco Scotland and came to Ontario when my father was six months old.

Q: Uh what was the date, Mr. McDonald?

A: Around 1850, and uh they settled in uh around uh Alvinston Ontario. And uh my mother's fam- father and mother came from Scotland and uh and they were uh they settled around Alvinston Ontario, around uh Gl-Glangco on [unclear], and Uh.

Q: Mr. McDonald uh, what did your grandparents do for a living?

A: Well, my grandfather was a [unclear] cutter by trade and he-he worked at that until he passed away and the cause of his death was from the dust of the marble cutting. And then after my father settled out here, my grandmother and the rest of the family moved out here. And uh my grandmother and uh my two aunts lived out here for about two years.

Q: Did they take up farming?

A: No, but they uh the two girls and uh my grandmother passed away with desideria, was in a couple of hours from [unclear] and uh my G-Grandmother didn't live too long after that, about a year I think so. And the rest of the family got scatted around uh this part of the country so uh. And uh my mother's people, cause they were farmers in Ontario and she come out here in the early 18 hundreds to work in the restaurants in Winnipeg and that's where my father met my mother and uh they were married.

[items moving around]

Q: When were they married, Mr. McDonald? Can you remember?

[items moving around]

00:14:31

Q: When did your father come out from Ontario?

A: Well, he came out here to stay in 18 about 1874 and took up a homestead, and uh he uh broke up some land on the homestead, and built a little shack on the homestead, and he went to the bush to work in the winter time in the Riding Mountain National uh up where the Riding N-National Park is now and uh he cooked there for over 100 men in the winter time and he uh baked 100 pounds of flour every day of the week and uh bread besides all the other baking he done. And uh the second winter he was a-away out there working, he got word that somebody was going to jump his claim and take over his homestead, so he came back here and uh he cut a hole in the haystack, and he lived for two months in that till the spring. So that was quite an

experience for him. And uh of course from then on why he worked on the homestead and uh broke up more land and uh.

Q: Did I understand that he was a surveyor? Your Moth- your father?

A: He worked with a survey party. Yeah.

Q: Oh yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: When was this? Can you remember?

A: Well, that was in 1872 when he worked for the survey party, yeah.

Q: That was in Manitoba?

A: Yeah, right around this district. Yeah. He surveyed all this part of the country around here that summer from the down as far as the [unclear] line between here and Brandon so uh.

Q: Uh what was his name?

A: John Macintyre McDonald[?].

Q: Yes.

A: Well, we uh we lived from then on, on the southwest 36-14-20 and I went to school, well the whole family, o-our all went to school from there and uh we went to the Winterton school [?] and uh.

Q: Where was the Winterton school? In the Basswood area, was it?

A: Yes, it was in the Basswood area and uh it was-was closed up that was after I my- my brother was still uh going to school when uh they closed Winterton school on the [unclear] after the consolidated school was built in Basswood and then, of course, our family.

Q: What year was that Mr. McDonald?

A: That was 1916 and uh so uh then when I was married we still lived on that land and raised our family there.

Q: That was this 36-14-20?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: And uh then our family all went to school to the Basswood school. W-when Sadie was seven years old she uh she started school and went to Basswoods and then they all followed in line and uh to the Basswood school, but they all got their education in the Basswood school so, our family. Changed because when I started to work on the land, I used a walking plow and two horses.

Q: Horses not oxen?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: But uh my father used the oxen and uh the first binder he got took three horses and he only had two, so he used an ox and then two hoses to cut the crop and uh so uh but when I started first, I used a walking plow and uh two horses on the [unclear] all the rest of it. So, and uh we walked behind everything of course it was a lot tiring work than it is nowadays we walked behind the tires, we walked behind the plow, and we walked behind the [unclear] and uh.

00:09:25

Q: Quite a change from these days now ey.

A: Yup, and when it came to harvest time, why of course the crop was all cut with the binder and had to be [unclear], and it's all stacked and uh then some big outfit came around flashing outfit and uh then [unclear] later on and all so it was a, it's quite a change- a change from what happens nowadays. We did have a bad windstorm, that was uh in the later years in about 1920 I think, 25 somewhere around there. Our flashing separator was sitting in the yard and uh it blew it over on its side and the neighbours... took the roof off our barn too and uh next morning there was uh [unclear] out on the field, hanging on the telephone wires and uh the neighbour's bins was uh all uh he had the steal, two steal bins and they were all twisted up in a knot and were never were any more good. That was the uh worst storm I think but uh outside of the hailstorm in 22 so it was 1922. I was farming and, uh we lost a crop in June of that year with a hailstorm. That was the worst hailstorm we ever had in that part of the country so.

Q: You were completely hailed out.

A: Completely hailed out. You wouldn't know we ever had a crop after that hailstorm so. And uh but the crop all came on again and uh and we [unclear] well and uh there was some barley were as good as they ever were, but the wheat wasn't good so. But uh it was uh quite uh blow that time so [unclear] quite a bit so. And uh but uh them were the worst storms I can remember we had, but never-never to do any damage because we-we always uh you-you know my father, he knows, was prepared for it in the fall. He would plow farmyards and burn backfires he calls it to protect the seed and the buildings [unclear]. We never had any real disasters from fires but there was lots of firefighters at them times because it was all open fire ey and when they got going they just went right across the country.

[background sounds]

Q: Did you ever uh you've done your buying a bit at flee stores?

A: Yes, I got the [unclear] crop the year it was stopped. And I think that was in 1914 if I remember right. And uh I I've been a CO-OP member ever since.

Q: They used to ship stock through there too, didn't they?

A: Yes, uh they shipped stock and uh one evening I had a big pig to take to over to be shipped. The train would be going out in the morning. So, I was going to load it in the wagon and take it to Ballang[?], and I had a man working for me and he had a ford car, and uh he says "Oh no you're not gonna take that pig to Ballang[?] in a wagon tonight. I'm gonna put it in the car and we'll take it over in the ford car." So we had quite a struggle getting this pig, weighed over 400 pounds. So we had quite a struggle getting the pig into the back of the car, seat of the car and we got it pretty well tied down .So we thought it would but finally before we got to Ballang[?] the pig got its head up between this Tommy Watson[?] and myself and when we drove into Ballang[?] past the store there was a big crowd there it was [unclear] night and uh everybody had a great old laugh. They never seen the lights of that I don't think before this pig sitting up between us [laughs]. So, uh we had we had quite a bit of fun having a laugh.

00:04:35

[background sounds]

Q: Where did you take your first grain when you started farming Mr. MacDonald?

A: Well, my father before I start- was old enough he I know one year he could get a better price at Petabeast[?] and he'd do it to Petabeast[?] and uh we take raw grain the Rapid City and then

finally we started [unclear] grain to Basswood. The first load of grain I went into Basswood with my father and they-the elevator was just a wire house they called it. You we had to check, keep the grain in bags and uh unload them onto the scales and then dump them into a big hopper and uh they were from there then it was elevated up and out into the cars on the river tank. That was the first, that was the first load of grain I took to Basswood.

Q: That would be about what year?

A: Oh, that would be I was I would be about 15 I guess that year. That would be

Q: About 20

A: 19. That would be around 1907 I that I helped take the first load of grain to Basswood.

Q: Tell us Mr. MacDonald uh the year you were married and uh what was your wife's name?

A: I was married in 19 seven... Fifth of December 1917 and my wife's name was Margaret Greer[?] and uh we were married in our home [unclear] district. And uh Sadie was our first child she was born in uh December uh September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1918, and then Bob or Robert James was the next boy, was the first son we had, and he was born in 1920 on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August and uh we lost a boy John [unclear] MacDonald in uh 19 about 1917.

Q: 25 I thought.

A: 25 yes 1925 uh and then Roy Theatre[?] MacDonald was our last child and uh he was born 19<sup>th</sup> of February.

Q: And they're all married were they Mr. Macdonald?

A: Yes, they all, of course, Sa-Sadie and Joe Petamean[?] were married uh they was the first ones married and then Bob married Edna Thompson of [unclear] district in uh 19... and then Roy he married Donna Mcnaba [unclear] district and uh so they're all settled there and uh

Q: Is there any of them on your old home farm?

A: Yes, uh Bob works the old homestead and uh Roy well no it's my grandson has the old [unclear] so it uh the land's all in the [unclear] family yet so.

Q: It will be there for over 100 now, is it?

A: Yes, it's quite a bit over 100 years since that land was taken up by my father.

**End of interview**