

MAY, ALICE. JANUARY 27, 2023

Westman Oral History collection

Interview Date:	1981-10-20
Narrator (interviewee):	Alice May
Interviewer:	William R. Patterson
Location:	Strathclair, Manitoba
Transcriber:	Joe Haw
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Question: [mic pops] Here with Alice, Mrs. Frank May, talking about her father and mother in the early days uh... about when he came from the ole country and settled in the Strathclair district.

Answer: I was born at the farm home east of Strathclair, southeast quarter, 33, 16, 21. My father, Charles Heal, was born in Bristol, England in 1870. He came to Canada in 1886 because of poor conditions in England and much unemployment, and he had heard some many good things about Canada, that he decided to see the country for himself. He was very impressed and made his home here, never going back to England again. His first employment was driving a mail coach in Griswold, district for Mr. Chisolm[?]. While driving the coach, he became acquainted with many farmers and became impressed with farming. He came to Strathclair later, and then became acquainted with a farmer, Mr. John

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Larsen[?], he worked for him many years, later purchasing a farm for himself. It was about 1890 when he came to Strathclair. My mother, Kristina Christalensen[?], was born in [unclear], Denmark in 1884. She came to Canada as she was eight-years-old and came with her parents and four brothers and one sister. Her father was a fisherman in Denmark, business was slacking so he decided they would like to come to Canada, they'd heard so much about the country. They first homesteaded north of Minnedosa, later moving to the Green Bluff district in the Strathclair community. [page turning] Kristina's sister Marie, met Malcolm Larsen[?] in the Green Bluff District and they were married. Malcolm was a brother to John Larsen, and through them, Charles met Kristina. They were married in 1907, lived on the farm east of Strathclair, southeast quarter, 33, 16, 21. The land was broke by horses, and were, for many years, before the tractors were used. They milked cows and sold cream and butter. Their first house was a two-story frame house, later building a new house in 1920. They talked about many hardships, as money was not very plentiful, they got very little money for their grain, cattle, and other products. They farmed during the dry years that were called the "Dirty Thirties." In about 1940, the army worms came, they did travel in armies, and destroyed everything in their path, destroying the crops that year. Charles and Kristina had one son and two daughters, all born and raised and educated in Strathclair. My sister and I, Mrs. Alice May, went to school in the country. Our mother drove us by horse and buggy in the mornings and we were to start walking home to meet her. One afternoon we weren't coming and when our mother got to us, she was very cross because two gro- gophers were standing upright on the road, and we would not go by them. This has been a big joke in the family.

Q: [page turning] Alice, uh, uh... is there any... things that your father done besides farming in this district?

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A: Yes, my father was on the council for many years. He also drove a fuh- school van for many years. The car in the summer and the team of horses and van during the winter, struggling through many bad roads. He also fired the steam engine for threshing for many years, fed the straw to keep the steam up. [page turning] All the neighbours formed the threshing gang and each getting their threshing done in turn. [indistinct noise] My father had a few accidents while farming, one was while he was harrowing with the four horses, when they became frightened, while he was in front of them fixing their harness, they ran over him with the harrows, dragging him some distance. He was very badly bruised, and from that time my brother was old enough to take over the farming. They never had hydro or telephone all the years they farmed, and their only entertainment was the battery radio. The batteries were charged by a homemade generator driven by a wind propeller. My father and mother stayed on the farm until ill health forced them to retire, coming to Strathclair [00:05:00] in 1954. Three years later, my father died, 1957, but mother lived to be 90, dying in 1974. When my mother was able, her favourite pastimes were reading, knitting, crocheting, hooking rugs, and sewing. She knit sweaters and mitts for nearly all the children in the district. She could knit one pair of man's mitts, or two pairs of children's mitts in a day. She did all the sewing for the family while we were growing up. She had to give up her sewing, knitting, and crocheting at the age of 85.

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End of interview