

Westman Oral History collection

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Narrator (interviewee): Beatrice Carr
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The date is January 29, [audio warps] 1982. The following is an interview with Mrs. Beatrice Carr, well-known brand and as Bea Carr, at her home to 2, er, 239 Russell Street in Brandon, Manitoba. She has lived in this area all her life. She will speak about her maternal and paternal grandparents, and her mother and Aunt. Her maternal grandparents, Mr. Mrs. Power, came to Brandon in 1881 and in 1883 settled northwest of Brandon in what later became the Power Vale [?] School District. [microphone pangs] Her paternal grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. William Johnson, came to the Brandon Hills area in 1878. Stories about these early settlers will be related in this tape. Her mother, and her aunt, who became Brandon's first aldermen, I mean woman aldermen, will also be discussed on this tape. The interview will be conducted by Mrs. Marjorie Lang for Westman Oral History Association Project Voices of Yesteryear.

Question: [muffled voice] ... where your maternal grandfather was born?

Answer: Um, Grandpa Power, Henry Lawrence Power, was born in Memphis, Tennessee, USA in 1858.

Question: Why were his parents in Tennessee?

Answer: Um, well, um, Michael Power, his father was a commissioned officer in the British Army and was one of Queen Victoria's own guards. He always [emphasizes 'always'] accompanied the Queen on her trips to Scotland where he met his wife.

Q: Where were they married and when?

A: Well they were married in 1845 in Scotland and they came to America on the ship Britannia in 1855.

Um, Michael Power was retired from the Army in 1853 on pension. [muffled speaking] ... in 1865 cutting off all tensions on less living on three serials [?].

Q: So he certainly had a problem. He wasn't living on British soil down there.

A: They certainly did have a problem. They left Memphis, Tennessee in the spring of 1866, making their way up the m- Mississippi and the Red Rivers arriving in Fort Gary in 1867.

00:02:51

Q: So this is for the Brandon Centennial, and Brandon Area Centennial. Uh, did any of this family come to live in Brandon? Because this is what we're basically interested in.

A: Oh yes, Henry Lawrence, my grandfather, made his first trip to Brandon in 1880, ran a little more than a 10-pound, accompanying a load of cattle up the Assiniboine River. He liked what he saw and thought it a wonderful place to start his life. Um, should I...

Q: Did he marry or did he have a wife when he came back?

A: Oh no, no. Um, actually ah, he went back to Winnipeg, and he was there for 1881 coming back to Brandon, where he married Elizabeth Reynolds in 1883.

Q: And did they continue in business in town and what did they do?

A: Well, um, after working at various businesses, he uh then moved to farm in the [unclear] district.

Q: Where is the [unclear] district?

A: Well, it's about nine miles ah northwest of Brandon.

Q: Did they have any family uh when they lived out there?

A: Yes, uh, he had um, eight daughters, uh, raised on this farm and they went to school at um, Power Vale [?] and this school was named after him.

Q: Why was it named after him?

A: Because it was built on his property. He had been named to land to the school board so they could have a school so he could have his children educated.

Q: And they put power and put Vale on the end?

A: Right.

Q: Now you said there were some regulations about getting a grant to build a school, ah, something to do with a number of children.

A: Yes, they had to have ah, certain numbers of children. I believe it was either um, seven or eight children had to be ah, of school age before they could receive this government grant.

Q: And you were saying that your mother wasn't six years old...

A: No. Mother was past nine when she started school. Ah, but there was four or five other sisters that went along. And [hum in background] I think the youngest one was under six but they took her into the makeup the ah number that was required of them.

Q: So the largest family lived near it too?

A: Right. [hum in background] Right.

00:05:03

Q: I understand that unfortunately his wife died in the early 1900s as a fairly young woman. After a lengthy illness, how did he possibly manage after that?

A: Well, he carried on hi-his farm with his distance of some of his daughters. Ah, but he retired from the farm in 1920.

Q: Well, wha-what did he have to do in town? Did he have any um good hobbies that would make him retirement [unclear]?

A: Well, he was um, always interested in inventing certain things and he could invent a car door which is the car door that they use on grain cars on the railroad, ah which would render grain leaking impossible.

And this door was patented in Canada and the US and the state still used this type of door on their grain cars.

Q: Why didn't the Canadian CPR and CNR jump in and get this wonderful invention?

A: Well, um, Grandpa was a very um, strong-willed person and ah, I still think he received the right in place. He could have an offer from CNR and he didn't take the royalties were high enough and he didn't think they were paying him enough which we ah, later learned that it was a goodly sum but he just reneged [?] on the deal and uh, finally they just let it go and they didn't bother anymore but this is why the state takes it up and they're still using it.

00:06:47

Q: Ah, you're telling me the ah, CNR and the CPR are very similar ones so...

A: Yes, they're almost the same as the one he had and they must have used his idea but could make small changes so it couldn't be considered breaking the [unclear]...

Q: Right.

A: Right.

Q: What he did write it to the Complementary Board of State dinner honoring all the pioneer businessmen? I understand there was one that said all right the businessmen who had taken up business in Brandon in 1882.

A: Yes, he was one of the four men, four first businessmen in Brandon and ah, he was given an invitation and he attended the dinner. Uh, I believe there was some um, judgment and the D.A. research at the same dinner. [Speakers talking over each other: "oh" "mhmm"]

Q: You were saying that somewhere in the house that you have the menu and so on [Interviewee talking over speaker: "yes"] and we would be interested to get that.

A: Yes, I'm going to try and look it up and uh, see if we can't just get it and use it.

Q: Now, is there anything else interesting to tell us about this gentleman?

A: No, he enjoyed very good help. He was alw- he um, he was a green reporter during his time on the farm and even after his retirement and uh, he enjoyed good health and he loved to travel and he took uh, a lot of trips. And uh, he also took some of his unmarried daughters on these trips down south and out to the East and West Coast for ah, winter holidays.

Q: You were saying that because of this job he had a compliment to the [Interviewee talking over speaker: "past"] past. [Interviewee talking over speaker: "mhmm"] ... said he could use the uh, any idea how many times a year [muffled speaking]?

A: I think he used this um, countless times. He seemed to go to the traffic for quite a bit. He enjoyed very good health and um, he was a very gregarious man, uh, and he lived to a real life old age of 89 and died in 1946.

00:08:21

Q: [long silent pause] Would you tell him something about the family of this gentleman your grandfather? I believe your mother Alice was his eldest daughter, wasn't she?

A: Yes that's right, Alice was the first born and she was born in Brandon in 1886. As a young girl she was very interested in church work and took very eh-active part. Um, she was the youngest validate representing the Presbyterian [?] church to Winnipeg. She was only 16 at the time ... only means by

transportation in Winnipeg at this time was the horse-drawn street cart. Alice married the son William Johnson, another pioneer family in 1906. They raised six children all living except Lloyd. The end of who was killed in action in 1944 with the RC-AF [?]. At [unclear] Alice's active life as a mother and nurse she fulfilled her call to minister to the needs of others with confidence and kindness. Of course I'm gritting [?] all that she was as a person was her faith in God and his son Jesus Christ. She was made honorary life member of the Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church in Canada and honorary president of the sonatical [?] of Manitoba and North West Ontario.

Q: Do you want me to go back a minute to the nursing th-that she did? Was this done in her own home or in the home of the people who were ill?

A: Uh, sometimes she would go out if there was a person sick she would certainly go with [unclear] to help them and sometimes if a woman was having a baby in the country she would come in and she would stay in our house while she had the child eh, so she was honest to go home.

Q: You were saying also that she um, nursed during the ah, Spanish flu... 18...

A: 1918. Yes. Yes, mother nursed a lot of flu patients, and she nursed different illnesses all through ah, a leg up till the polio was raging. She even nursed people that had polio but she never did contact her [unclear] if she brings home to the family.

00:10:41

Q: Another daughter of this gentleman was Roda. She made a name for herself in the city of Brandon too could you tell me about Roda?

A: Yes [chair moving] Roda was a fourth daughter of HL Power and was born in 1891. She received her early education at Power Vale [?] School named after her father as he had [unclear] the land so the school could be built on it. She then came to Brandon and took her normal training after teaching in the rural area she took the position of principal in the Assiniboine School in Brandon. She married George Kenan to [unclear] River and he settled in Minnedosa. They resided there for a number of years coming to Brandon in the early 30s. Roda was very active in church work and civic affairs. She became Brandon's first women Ottoman in 1935. Being the first women trans-Pacific politics she was not too well received by her fellow councilmen. A well ahead of her time and showing strong leads towards change, Roda Kenan had a very definite idea which are accepted today as women's lib [?].

Q: That's very interesting and all the reports I hear in Read about Roda were that she was very knowledgeable in her job and she was certainly a very beautiful woman as shown in uh, Brandon of City by Parker, I believe that's the goal of the US [Interviewee talking over speaker; "yes"].

A: She was a-ah, very beautiful woman and they had one she had one son Jimmy and he is now living in Florida.

00:12:22

Q: [Pause - microphone powers on] The brilliant stories have been about your maternal ancestors being and so now were going to discuss your paternal family who I understand have been living in the Brandon area even longer than your mother's family. Is this true?

A: Yes, this is true. Ah, Grandpa Johnson, William Johnson, came to the Brandon area in July of 1618-79 [?]. Now, he came from Ere Croix Ontario. There was two families came. There was Grandpa and his wife

and they had six small children and then there was a late John Dorne. He was the grandfather of Dr. S.

Dorne and he had one son, the late George Dorne and they arrived at Brandon Hills.

Q: Now um, they had to come all the way from Ere Croix Ontario to Brandon Hill. Could you tell me how they travel- traveled?

A: Well, the [microphone cuts out] ...time travel by horse and wagon from St. Boniface for the railroad did not yet reached Winnipeg.

Q: How did they get from Ere Croix to St. Boniface?

A: Well, they came by train. [Speaker talking over interviewee: "oh yes, yes, yes"] They traveled southwest by the way of more modern crystal city and on to Wacapah [?] near the Turtle Mountains where they ah [unclear] camp for a few days to look around but not being satisfied with the land they started for Rapid City traveling by the guide of a compass and some directions given by a half- ah, a half-breed [?] trailer. They crossed the Souris River and the river was very high with rain and crossing was no easy task. The crossing was made by a ferry boat and th-the crossing was not made by a ferry boat but by a raft which was a dangerous undertaking. Um, these men who had experienced in their younger days at racking on the Ottawa River, set to work and made a raft. They made several trips across the river with the family, with the families belongings and wagons and of course the horses swam across. George Dorne rode a swimming horse to guide the others across. Everyone was excited until they were safely landed on shore again.

00:14:49

Q: For it's strange that they came all the way around there. Most of the people came straight from Winnipeg to Brandon and just going straight west... You know why that was?

A: Well I think they, they, had em, round directions given to them and they, they, got over towards the tourists. They were actually trying to get to Rapid City but they had ah, made a wrong turn or something. I only wish I knew what they- how they settled, how they arrived at this part [muffled background talking] of Manitoba. Because most people hadn't come that direction.

Q: Well after they got across the Souris River, ah, who do they meet?

A: Well, when they were journeying on ah, to what is now known as Brandon Hills, they came to meet the late Reverend George Roddick and he had been in Brandon Hills since May [Interviewer speaking over speaker "of the same year?"]. Of the same year. Now he advised him to go no further. He said settlers, that the land was good, they had plenty of wood and they had good water. [muffled background speaking] [tape recorder clicks off] [tape recorder clicks on] [unclear]... for their first home in the Brandon Hills. So there certainly wasn't many bundles in those days. So the Johnson's lived in their covered wagon for the first summer. Uh, later on in the summer they cut ah, logs and they built a log cabin with a sawed roof. Without any doors or windows or floor when they didn't even have a stove. Ehm, It was the second of October when the happy family moved into their new home.

Q: Besides building the house, what other jobs have they done that summer?

00:16:46

A: Well, there was- [speaker pauses] there was hay to cut. They cut it with a saw, and they also built a log stable for the uh, horses. It was too late to plant potatoes so there was none until the next summer and there were no eggs or milk. Also, no stills for the first summer. In place of the stove a sawed arch was made to boil water and they baked bread one loaf at a time in a iron pot set down on the hot coals. More than once loads of bread were fed to the horses when oats could not be fed. Flour was bought at

Grand Valley for a reasonable price. In the fall trips were made to Portage La Prairie to get their luggage which came that far by steamer on the river. The trip lasting eight or nine days.

Q: In the following of their luggage [interviewee talking over speaker "correct"] and they were in the spring [interviewee talking over speaker "right"] or-or early summer [interviewee talking over speaker "ah, early summer"]. They were not scared to straight about their homes. In the Swedish Second 1879 the family were living in a log house with a sawed roof and just three years later in 1882 you say that they ah, had a beautiful new home that is still standing.

A: Yes, it was a two-story frame house consisting of four huge bedrooms upstairs. Uh, they had two staircases, a front and back staircase, and on the ground floor they had a power which had sliding doors to the dining room. They also had a huge kitchen and pantry. I only wish I knew where they acquired all the beautiful old woodwork in the house. I'm grateful that this house has been so well preserved over the years. Its present owners, Mr. Mrs. Hargrave, takes great pleasure in caring for it and keeping it in almost its original state. This home is situated across the road from the Brandon Hills Church which is about 12 miles southeast of Brandon.

00:18:32

[audio cuts out] ...Um, William Johnson and his wife and some of the children are buried in the church cemetery. [tape recorder clicking] [microphone static]

End of interview.