

**Westman Oral History collection**

<b>Interview Date:</b>	<b>1981-1982</b>
<b>Narrator (interviewee):</b>	<b>Unknown- Name was not mentioned</b>
<b>Interviewer:</b>	<b>James Cowan</b>
<b>Location:</b>	<b>Brandon, Manitoba</b>
<b>Transcriber:</b>	<b>Tanner Garnham</b>
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<b>Length of Recording</b>	<b>00:17:04</b>

[0:00:00]

**[false start]: Narrator:** We're here. [laughs] He hasn't got a shave yet today. [unclear] He's ... got a um dressed before dinner, but he uh didn't get around the shaving. We kind of slipped up on the shaving.

**Mr. Cowan:** me? [groans][laughs] [unclear] **Narrator:** [unclear] He's just made down stairs.....

[unclear][silence]

[0:00:37]

**Start - Narrator Question:** What year were you born? **Mr. Cowan Answer:** [Groans]1884. **Narrator: Q**

And your name of your mother and father? **Mr. Cowan A:** Jim[?] Cowan my father's name. Mary[?]

Cowan my mother's name. **Narrator Q:** Right. And how many brothers and sisters did you have? **Mr.**

**Cowan A:** I had [coughs] Four brothers and three sisters.

[0:01:08]

**Narrator Q:** Four sisters I think was it? [unclear background] Four sisters. **Mr. Cowan A:** Four sisters that's right. **Unknown speaking in background:** and five... Four brothers. **Mr. Cowan:** Four brothers

**Narrator Q:** Four brothers, Okay. And your mother and father came from where? **Mr. Cowan A:**

Scotland. **Narrator:** Right. **Unknown speaker in background Q:** What part? **Narrator Q:** Which part of

Scotland? **Mr. Cowan A:** The first year. **Narrator Q:** Right. [talking in background] Okay. And uhhh, they

came to the... What area did they come to when they came from Scotland? **Mr. Cowan A:** Brandon.

[0:01:37]

**Narrator Q:** To Brandon? **Mr. Cowan A :** Brandon. **Narrator Q:** And from Brandon's... Where did they go? **Mr. Cowan A:** We come to... To... To come to Le Clarie[?]. Little place named Le Claire[?] **Narrator Q:** Right. And that was not too far from where? **Mr. Cowan A:** Not far from McCrery[?]. **Narrator Q:** Right. Okay. All right. And... Were you the oldest one in the family, Jim? Or the youngest?

[0:02:04]

**Mr. Cowan A:** Secon.... [groans] Third youngest. **Narrator Q:** Third youngest. Okay. And which municipality were you born in? Archie[?] **Narrator Q:** Okay. And...And what were you? What was important about that? You were the first what? **Mr. Cowan A:** I was [groans] supposed to be the first boy born in that municipality. **Narrator Q:** Right. Okay. Uhhh...And you attended school? Where did you go to school? **Mr. Cowan A:** Le Claire.

[0:02:31]

**Narrator Q:** Mm-hmm. And where else? **Mr. Cowan A:** Cherry roll [?]. **Narrator Q:** Right. And you remember any of the... Any of the nots [?] since she did in those days? And you remember any of the mischief you've got into when you were at school? **Mr. Cowan Q:** Mischief? **Narrator Q:** Mm-hmm. When you [unclear sound] **Mr. Cowan A:** [Unclear] [groans] lots of the mischief. Standing in the corner and facing the wall. **Unknown speaker in background Q:** What did you do wrong? **Narrator Q:** What was some of the tricks you played on the teacher? **Mr. Cowan A:** [laughs] You used to go away and hide in the bluff[?]. **Narrator:** Oh, Jim. [laughter][Unclear background conversation].

[0:03:06]

**Narrator Q:** You kinda...played hooky? **Mr. Cowan Q:** Pardon? **Narrator Q:** You played hooky? **Mr.**

**Cowan A:** [groans] Sometimes. [laughs/chuckles] **Narrator Q:** Okay. And... and tell us about when you used to play hockey? **Mr. Cowan A:** oh, You always used to play in the sloughs[?]. **Narrator Q:** Mm-hmm ...And what did you use for a puck in a stick? **Mr. Cowan A:** Oh, it's an old one. A willow. **Narrator Q:** A willow. And what you used for a puck? **Mr. Cowan A:** [laughs] Sometimes. [laughs] I was in the orchard when you were... [laughs] **Narrator;** [laughs] Okay. [laughs]

[0:03:49]

**Narrator Q:** [laughs] Well, it was a [laughs] long winter. You had to do something, Jim. [laughs] uhm And what else did you do for fun? **Mr. Cowan A:** Oh, mister. Play hide-in-go seek. [laughs] **Narrator Q:** Yeah, hide-in-go seek. Uh huh, Okay. And... Uh huh, huh what about your church services? What did you do for church services? In those days. **Mr. Cowan A:** Well, we used to do church. **Narrator:** Uh-huh **Mr. Cowan A:** Presbyterian church. **Narrator Q:** Yes. And You had prayer meetings? **Mr. Cowan A:** Yeah, prayer meetings. [groans] And they went to month.

[0:04:24]

And you're hoping for home. **Narrator Q:** In your home. Okay. All right. Ummmmm... uh Your father, Farmed Jim? **Mr. Cowan A:** Yes, Farming. Mason[?] by trade. **Narrator Q:** Mason[?] by trade? Okay. But did he...uh... have a home stand? **Mr. Cowan A:** Oh, yeah. He had two home stands. **Narrator Q:** Two home stands? Uh... What's your area? What's your... **Mr. Cowan**[unclear]...

[0:04:49]

**Narrator Q:** Okay. All right. And when you started farming, where did you first... home stand? **Mr.**

**Cowan A:** Right...farm...[groans] with my dad. Two... Two miles. **Narrator Q:** And that was... What's your area from Macauley[?]? What's... Which direction from Macauley[?]? **Mr. Cowan A:** South... Southeast.

[0:05:12]

**Narrator Q:** Okay. And you had... How much land, Jim? **Mr. Cowan A:** 160 acres. **Narrator Q:** Right. And what did you put... What did you build on that land? What did you put? **Mr. Cowan A:** Oh, [unclear] stable **Narrator Q:** The fog[?] [unclear] stable Okay. And that... Was that for your house or was that for your animal? **Mr. Cowan A:** For the horses. For the horses.

[0:05:35]

**Mr. Cowan:** Yeah. I'm doing a little... Ship[?] lap. A shack for living. Batching[?]. **Narrator Q:** Batching[?]. All right. And what did you use to break the land? **Mr. Cowan A:** Uh...Long handle walk plow. **Narrator Q:** Right. Okay. Yeah. And it was drawn... And what did you use for it to pull it? **Mr. Cowan A:** Horse... [stumbles] I remember you used oxen[?] [unclear] on my farm.

[0:06:02]

**Narrator:** No. **Mr. Cowan A:** On my dad's farm. On my dad's farm, we used oxen. **Narrator Q:** On your dad's farm? Yes. **Narrator Q:** Okay...[stumbles]...uh you uh...You used to oxen on your dad's farm? **Mr. Cowan Q:** pardon? **Narrator Q:** You used oxen on your dad's. **Mr. Cowan A;** Yeah. I used a plow with an

oxen on my dad's farm. **Narrator Q:** Right. Okay. And... did you ever own a tractor, Jim? **Mr. Cowan Q:**  
eh?

[0:06:23]

**Narrator Q:** Did you ever own a tractor? **Mr. Cowan A:** No! No. **Narrator A:** Okay. **Mr. Cowan A:** No.

**Narrator Q:** And... uhh...Jim. Well, wondering about your entertainment. Now, what did you do with the  
school's entertainment? **Mr. Cowan A:** oh we... **Narrator Q:** Old time dances? **Mr. Cowan A:** No,  
[unclear]and box socials. **Narrator Q:** Box socials. Um-hmm and you had those in the wintertime?

[0:06:56]

**Mr. Cowan A:** Oh yeah, had them in wintertime. **Narrator Q:** mh-hmm And...uh.. And the wintertime,  
you also did your curl? **Mr. Cowan A:** Oh, yeah...[unclear]. **Narrator Q:** Say that you curl. **Mr. Cowan A:**  
Yeah. **Narrator Q:** And what did you use for curling rocks, Jim? **Mr. Cowan A:** [groans]wooden block.

**Narrator:** wooden blocks. Okay. And... uhh...Well, ah, what did you...um... Did you did you often, when it  
comes to building roads and stuff, did you help with your horses, Jim? **Mr. Cowan:** Eh? **Narrator:** When  
it came to building roads, did you help with your horses?

[0:07:33]

**Mr. Cowan:** Oh, we had a team of horses. Or [groans] [stumbles] a scraper! **Narrator:** And a scraper.  
Mm-hmm. And you called it Saskatchewan... **Mr. Cowan A:** Slush scraper. **Narrator Q:** Slush scraper. And  
it was for the Saskatchewan. What did you call it again? [unclear] Saskatchewan. Yeah. It was for the  
Saskatchewan. Wanted to get him to say it himself. For the Saskatchewan. What was it you? Who did  
you work for?

[0:07:57]

**Mr. Cowan A:** Oh uh...I... I'm a railroad[groans] [unclear] **Narrator Q:** Oh, I see. What did you do on the railroad? **Mr. Cowan A :** Queen[?] scraper. Burling[?] dumps. [both talking same time] **Mr. Cowan A:** I'm looking the dump on the railroad. **Narrator Q:** And where about was that? **Mr. Cowan A:** Oh, right from... From Cacellan[?][unclear]. Capellabullas[?][unclear] **Narrator Q:** You helped build the railroad. **Mr. Cowan A:** Yes. **Narrator Q:** Mm-hmm. And did you make much money at it? **Mr. Cowan A:** No, that's where I started up.

[0:08:25]

**Mr. Cowan A:** Made a little money. You know, you started up the buy something for the farm. **Narrator Q:** To buy for the homestead. **Mr. Cowan:** Mm-hmm. **Narrator Q:** Okay. You know what? You think of anything you just...[unclear]... A day or hour, Jim? Can you remember it all? **Mr. Cowan A:** I remember one month...[unclear]... So much an hour. **Narrator Q:** And you can remember how much an hour? **Mr. Cowan A:** I don't remember really. **Narrator Q:** Can you remember it all? [unknown speaking]

[0:08:55]

**Narrator:** No, what he said... **Mr. Cowan A:** I thought I was a millionaire! **Narrator Q:** Did you? You made quite a bit of money. **Mr. Cowan A:** Yeah, **Narrator Q:** Did you work more than one year? **Mr. Cowan A:** No, just one summer. **Narrator Q:** One summer? **Mr. Cowan A:** On the railroad. **Narrator Q:** How about building roads? Do you remember where you helped build any roads in the Maconely[?] area? **Unknow speaker Q:** In the Archie[?] municipality. **Narrator Q:** In the Archie municipality? **Mr. Cowan A:** yeah, in the Archie[?] municipality...[unclear]...

[0:09:21]

**Mr. Cowan A:** There are lots of roads in there. It's just kept from labor. **Narrator Q:** Mm-hmm. And what did you use with that? The horses? **Mr. Cowan A:** The horses. The team of horses with a scraper.

**Narrator Q:** Mm-hmm. And put in long hours, Jim? **Mr. Cowan A:** Eight hours. **Narrator Q:** Eight hours... The horses were pretty tired. **Mr. Cowan A:** oh yeah. **Narrator Q:** Mm-hmm. You must have had to have good horses.

[0:09:44]

**Mr. Cowan A:** No, too many. Big horses, long days. Very small. **Narrator Q:** Small. Mm-hmm. You must have had to work pretty hard, did they? **Mr. Cowan A:** Yeah, they sure did. **Narrator Q:** Yeah. How about when you went thrashing[?]James[?], Jim? Did you have very big, thrashing[?] outfit? **Mr. Cowan A:** oh[unclear] yeah 24 men together. **Narrator Q:** And how many acres would you thrash in a day? **Mr. Cowan A:** Oh, I don't know[laughs]. Just depend on how thick the crop was. **Narrator:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm

[0:10:14]

**Narrator Q:** And what time of the day did you get started? **Mr. Cowan A:** Uh Sometimes six o'clock in the morning. **Narrator:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. **Mr. Cowan A:** Before daylight. **Narrator Q:** Yeah. And 24 men? **Mr. Cowan A:** Yeah, 24 men. All together...[unclear]. **Narrator Q:** Yeah. Would you go to quite a few farms? **Mr. Cowan A:** Oh, I like to come from... most... of them to the... the ...river. There wasn't many farmers in in them days

[0:010:36]

**Mr. Cowan A:** Just not one here. **Narrator Q:** Mm-hmm Mm-hmm. Yeah. What were the crops like? **Mr.**

**Cowan A:** [wheezes]Those... All right, I guess... We weren't really pretty good...good... Good sampling.

Way namely[?] [Unclear]. **Narrator Q:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. uh, That was, can you remember, um, can you

remember uh ,what year, around what year's those were, Jim? Was it around 1915? **Mr. Cowan A:**

That's the best year we had. **Narrator:** Mm-hmm

[0:11:08]

**Mr. Cowan A:** 1915. **Narrator:** Mm-hmm. **Mr. Cowan A:** That was the best year we had. **Narrator Q:**

Yeah. And you got married... and what year did you get married? **Mr. Cowan A:** Mm-hmm. **Narrator:**

1914, Jim. **Mr. Cowan A:** Oh, look, Martin[?] this one 1914. **Narrator Q:** Yeah. And ...who...what was

your wife's name? **Mr. Cowan A:** Carolyn[?]. **Narrator Q:** Yeah. the last name. **Mr. Cowan A:** Johnson.

[0:11:38]

**Narrator Q:** correct. Okay. And can you tell us about some of the hard times you had, Jim? You had a,

you tell us about... uh.. the time you...uh... had the barn fire. **Mr. Cowan A:** Oh, yeah. Mm-hmm.

**Narrator Q:** What were you doing when the barn went on fire? What were you doing? **Mr. Cowan A:**

No, I was a real one, another course of section. **Narrator Q:** Mm-hmm. And what were you doing? I was

putting them on the[unclear]. **Narrator Q:** okay? **Mr. Cowan A:** Spring. **Narrator Q:** Spring. And, and

what did your wife have up in the loft? **Mr. Cowan A:** She had the hundred turkey's eggs up there.

**Narrator Q:** And...uh... what did she do? **Mr. Cowan A:** She put them all in a big wash tub. And then took them down.



[0:12:26]

**Mr. Cowan A:** And she said, And she put them all in the loft. **Narrator Q:** And she managed to save the eggs, did she? **Mr. Cowan A:** No, she saved most of the turkeys. She put the turkeys, put the set hens [unclear] put the eggs under. **Narrator Q:** Good for her. Mm-hmm And did the neighbors come, Jim, and help you put...uh... up another barn? **Mr. Cowan A:** Oh, yeah, they all come and put up another barn. **Narrator:** Mm-hmm **Mr. Cowan A:** Just a shared, you know, nothing but a real barn. No. Just enough till you get done, seeding **Narrator Q:** Okay. And can you remember, did you have many bad storms when you were farming?

[0:13:02]

**Mr. Cowan A:** Oh, to see, strong storms took the roof, were clean off, our house... my dad's house. **Narrator:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. **Mr. Cowan A:** Cyclone. **Narrator Q:** Cyclone? Yeah. Did you have many crop losses that you lost your crop? **Mr. Cowan A:** Oh, some hay. You're some... Okay, and right out sometimes. **Narrator Q:** And were times pretty hard? **Mr. Cowan A:** Oh, yeah, all we did was... A few dollars for us. We kept...

[0:13:30]

**Mr. Cowan A:** ...tin can. **Narrator Q:** Mm-hmm. Did you milk cows? **Mr. Cowan A:** Yeah, we milk cows. **Narrator Q:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. And...uh, uh, uh, you were always able to keep food on the table anyway eh? **Mr. Cowan A:** no, you're not supposed to. Not to eat [unclear]. **Narrator Q:** Good. Okay, we will take a break and how long is that? **Unknown speaker** Yeah.

[0:13:52]

**Narrator Q:** Where are you born? **Mr. Cowan Q:** hey? Where are you born? Le Clarie[?]. **Narrator Q:** uh, Were are you born in... uh... in...in the hospital? Or were you born? **Mr. Cowan A:** No, right in mom and dad house. **Narrator Q:** And wa...wa...was there a doctor there? **Mr. Cowan A:** No. Just an old woman [laughs]. **Narrator Q:** Ah...What did you... What did you have at Midwife? In attendance? Or was it a neighbor lady? **Mr. Cowan A:** A neighbor. A neighbor woman.

[0:14:20]

**Narrator Q:** And she came to help your mother. **Mr. Cowan A:** Yes, and they come out from the smoke together. No country. **Narrator:** Mm-hmm. **Mr. Cowan A** Miss Banan[?]. **Narrator Q:** And she came over and helped with the delivery? **Mr. Cowan A:** Yes, she did. She came over and stayed with Mom. A week or two? **Narrator Q:** And was there any doctor? **Mr. Cowan A:** No, I can never have the doctor. **Narrator Q:** What education that you have, Jim. **Mr. Cowan A:** Not very much. **Narrator Q:** How long did you go to school? **Mr. Cowan A:** Oh, [laughs]I just went down again. **Narrator:** Ah.

[0:14:51]

**Mr. Cowan A:** [unclear]...you grade and a class. **Narrator Q:** Okay. And why didn't you go to school, Jim? **Mr. Cowan A:** I had to work.....to get home.....work. **Narrator Q:** Uh-huh. Did you have... **Mr. Cowan A:** I was in the wintertime. **Narrator Q:** You...you went to school when? You went to school when? **Mr. Cowan Q:** eh? **Narrator Q:** When did you go to school? **Mr. Cowan A:** I went to the most class.

[0:15:23]

[Silence] **Narrator Q:** Did you have... Did you have lots of horses, Jim? **Mr. Cowan A:** Yeah, I had 22.

**Narrator:** Uh, **Mr. Cowan A:** one dog. **Narrator Q:** What did you do? Did you break the horses in yourself? **Mr. Cowan A:** Yeah, I me and my brother. **Narrator:** And... And... **Mr. Cowan A:** The [unclear].....you used to break the man, no? Break them in.....in the wintertime. You know, it was here in the spring. You brought out all the water in the spring. More to.....only.....a couple of teams in the.....in the barn.

[0:15:53]

**Narrator Q:** And what did you do? How did you break them in, Jim? How did you break your horses in?

**Mr. Cowan A:** The break them in... I kind of had it all over. And all.....[unclear] when...

[0:16:06]

**Mr. Cowan A:** ..tired.....to his own horse. He just lived around anyway. **Narrator Q:** Mm-hmm. And did you... When you first hitched them up, how did you... What did you do... how did you first hitch them up to? **Mr. Cowan A:** This is a sleigh wire[?]. It's the most of the [unclear] broke them in. in this age.

**Narrator Q:** Did you use to put on a heavy load of something to...to... to.....hold them down? **Mr. Cowan**

**A:** No, no. Just break them in. This is easy. You can get them rolled in right. **Narrator:** Mm-hmm.

[0:16:34]

**Narrator Q:** Did you ever... Did you ever have any...uh...runaways? **Mr. Cowan A:** Yeah, I've had two or three not very bad, you know? Get away, get in there and go bluffs up on them[laughs]. **Narrator Q:** Did you ride horseback quite a bit? **Mr. Cowan Q:** pardon? **Narrator Q:** Did you ride horseback quite a bit? **Mr. Cowan A:** Oh, I remember you were really.....love that, riding horseback. Yeah. [silence]

**[End of Interview].**