

Westman Oral History Collection

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Narrator (Interviewee): Edward Peter "EP" Boyle

Interviewer: Winnie Cheetham

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Transcriber: Simon Richard

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Winnie Cheetham: [rustling] [breathes in] This is Friday may the 15th 1981. I am going to be talking with Mr. Ep Boyle in his living room, in his lovely home, in Neepawa. Mr. Boyle is going to relate some of the events and happenings that he experienced when he started the Neepawa creamery right up to the present day. This is Winnie Cheetham interviewing. [rustling] Mr. Boyle.

Mr. Boyle: [heavy breathing] Yea...

Question: When did you uh first know of the Neepawa Creamery?

Answer: In 1913 when I passed through erm Neepawa on my way to Erickson to look at a creamery in Erickson. And I didn't like the looks of it and uh so I...I get back to Neepawa. [unclear] I was sorry I had missed out that they just built a creamery in Neepawa. [unclear] They ugh, the creamery was uhh, in Neepawa was uhh [coughs] [breathes heavily] was uhh organized by uhhh [unclear] A ummm an eastern firm. Who organized plants in uhh Neepawa and Battleford [unclear] Minnesota. And they called the Neepawa plant the Laurentian Milk Company. And the Laurentian Milk Company, well there object in

and uhhh manu [unclear] processing milk, sterile milk for it to be sold on ships. That was before refrigeration came in. but they only operated short time when refrigeration came in. and uh, put out their sterile milk. Ehh There was no sale for their sterile milk. They uh

Q: Was this sterile milk a dry milk?

A: [Breathes in] No, no. No, it was uh. It was uh a milk processed under steam pressure of 300 pound pressure. And it kept indefinitely [Winnie Cheetham: Hmmm] This [unclear] was telling me he had suh...some... some of thee uhh milk out there on the farm, you know?

Q: [mumble] indefinitely it would keep?

A: yes, yes it would keep. It was sterile uh [Winnie Cheetham: Mhmmm] they uh, they operate. They only operated to. They said the manager came up here from the east. Who wasn't very progressive [breathes heavily] and uh. They operated 13, 13 months went broke owing 46,000 dollars. [breathes heavily] ehh, they uhh. The manager they sent out here. He uh organized the stock company and thee uhhh farmers and the uhh local town people invested money in it. For instance Harry Irwin was the biggest loser in the company. He put in 4,000 dollars in it. B.F Davidson put in 1,000 dollars. I don't know how, John weems, John Crawford. I don't know how many others.

Q: and they all lost out?

A: they all lost out. They, [unclear] McFeeders company built in Neepawa uh. Built the plant, Laurentian plant at a cost of 22,500 dollars and they had it, they never got paid for it. They had to take the plant back. For the, with the, with thee equipment and everything. And, from that point on I...I bought the plant in 1916 from [unclear] Mcfeeders company [Winnie: Mhmm]... and we, the uhhh, consensus of the population of... of uhhh the district was EP Boyle would go broke same as the others.

Q: You didn't?

A: But, Ep Boyle had a... had a different idea. He, he told.. he.. he had seen [cough].. they they told him that they... that this was uhhh this was wheat country not a dairy country and I told them I've seen wheat country turn into dairy countries [Winnie: Mhmm]. So we, the first. The first couple of years I was here uhh where for the winter months thee there wasn't any business there was no ice cream sales. There where no ice cream sales [unclear] wouldn't think of handling any ice cream. And uhh, they uhh... the farmers weren't milking cows. While... while I stayed open in the winter...I... I... about uhhh[mumble] volume of 9 to 15 cans of cream in a week. I...I... was the uhh the engineer thee boiler [laughs] uhh... fireman and... and butter maker what have you. Uh, so I've gradually increased thee the business from... from nothing [mumbles] too over a million pounds in 1932 [breathes]

Q: in 16 years you had accomplished that?

A: yes

Q: You educated the public. You ran the plant?

A: yea in 19... in 1923 I... I imported two carloads of eh Ayrshire cows. And the service [unclear] have been district to the farmers. In 1923

Q: and they in turn would bring their milk and cream to you then?

A: [groans] that's right, yes. Yes... so [breathes heavily]

Q: did you... uh... immediately start shipping your produce out of Neepawa very far?

A: Well, uh yes, we shipped car load to uh London England in the 30's

Q: when did you start to call your ice cream Neepawa Velvet?

A: uh... When we started making it in 1917 [Winnie: Mhmmmm]

Q: And was that its name then?

A: no...no... no we, we used the the thee uh names of Neepawa Velvet Ice cream and premium brand butter [Winnie: Mhmm]. And, the Neepawa creamery...uh... the average score of their butter was considerably higher than the average for the [unclear] or the province.

Q: I remember very vividly your achieving many honors at the Neepawa Creamery for your butter making throughout I suppose the prairie provinces would it be?

A: yes... yea

Q: you have several of those awards?

A: yes... yes we would have you know. They...they were awarded at the dairy conventions you know. Yes

Q: you had a much larger summer ummm payroll then you would have a winter payload then?

A: Yes, it'd practically [unclear] in the winter. Yes

Q: you mentioned that you couldn't get thee restaurants to sell ice cream in the wintertime? [Ep Boyle: right] You had to educate them to do that too then?

00:08:00

A: [laughs] well they... I suppose you can put it that way [laughs]

Q: they just hadn't thought of selling it?

A: Well, it was mostly tea and juice [laughs]

Q: yea... yea... how uhhh. What is the highest number of employees you have had at one time?

A: ohh it'd be about 18, I guess.

Q: is that right? Youre... your ahh family has been involved. I understand your brother was [Boyle: yes] work... with you in some way?

A: yes, he uhh came out to..to... to take charge of they uhh ehh ice cream plant. In ummm, in 19 ummm 1921 I think it was. And then he was with... he was with me here until I purchased thee [mumble] central creamery in Brandon then he... went over to the central creamery and operated that.

Q: Well then did you have other interests other than the central creamery in Brandon and the Neepawa Creamery? Did you any other buildings?

A: Well I operated the uhhh i... I was operating the Shell Mouth Creamery when I bought thee ummm Neepawa Creamery. So I operated those two creameries for... in 1917 and 18 and then I sold the Shell Mouth Creamery. And uhhh and then later in 1930... 30 uhhh 3...I...I purchased the Brandon Creamery. Which was the Central Creamery in Brandon, operated that for 20 years.

Q: what prompted you too work in this line. In the very beginning have you always had a desire to do this?

A: to Which?

Q: to be a butter maker and a creamery owner?

A: well I uhhh I worked [mumble] for thee uhh Hutchinson Produce Company for five years before I came out here. They had creameries uhhh in different locations in Minnesota.

Q: So that was your line?

A: yes...yes

Q: now through the years your family has worked along with you?

A: right, [Winnie: right] and uhh [mumble] when I was retired my uhhh John and Irene had taken over. Errr... they've been... they've been with us all through the years.

Q: When did you retire?

A: [laughs]

Q: or do you want to tell me?

A: [laughs] [Winnie: laughs]

Q: over the years you seen many changes. [Boyle: yes] im sure

A: yes, I have

Q: does one change stand out in your mind more than other as being the most helpful change in your creamery? The innovation of a certain type of machine or?

A: [quite] hmm, no the biggest changes has... has taken place some...some years ago when the farmers decided they were weren't going to milk cows anymore there [Winnie: Mhmm] so they... creameries where they used to be some 40 odd creameries in the province. There's probably a dozen today uhh.

Q: carrying on the same work?

A: Yes

Q: Well, [stutters] had you any goal when you started. Any objective or goal in thee ummmm in your mind as to what type of butter you would make, what type of ice cream. Was it always the best?

A: The best yes. Yes we always uhh work for quality.

Q: and I understand that uh cleanliness was a very great part in your plant?

A: Beg your pardon?

Q: cleanliness was a great part [Boyle: yes] ...played a great part in your plant?

A: Yes, we always... had a good record that way.

Q: we... we have uhhh heard from many people about Neepawa velvet ice cream when were not in Neepawa. Uhhh It is renowned, as you mentioned London England you...you... you would send milk there.

A: uhh uhh no butter

Q: Butter there was it? Uhhh are they still doing this from your creamery

A: no, the west did make in butter enough for to supply their customers. At the present time we...were shipping our butter to uhhh to Regina [Weenie: Mhmm Mhmm] because the wheat country has taken over. [Weenie: Mhmm Mhmm]

Q: We have uhhh many things happening today regarding cholesterol. Uhhh Butter apparently contains a goodly amount. Have you noticed a great change in the quantities of butter required now that margarine has come into such a popular demand?

A: thee uhhh... the butter consumption has gone down considerable.

Q: well it take would take people like my husband to keep butter going. He won't eat margarine.

A: ahhh [laughs]

Q: well mister Boyle can you think of any other exciting incidents along your way with the regard to butter making?

A: Well, I... I don't think the farmers can really make a success out of farms without mixed farming in the future.

Q: you have to have something in case the other one fails, don't you? Some part of your farming could fail. You have to have something you could fall back on?

A: [Laughs] yes.

Q: Yes, well this have been very good of you to take time to put your says, your findings, your happenings into our records for the Westman Oral History Association. We're going to value your words and were honored that you could share them with us. Thank you very much Mr. Boyle

A: Thank you.

End of interview