



## Norrie and Isobel Coutts

Length: 1 hour, 33 minutes, and 23 seconds

Interviewed by who we believe to be George Jackson

What do you remember about him? She just remembers him in a rocking chair next to the stove. He lived in the same house as she did. When Grandma died then he came to live with her and he married a second time. His first wife was Carolynne McClain\*(might be wrong last name). She has the Watson history and the name is in there. It was not a McLellan because they lived on the farm behind them. Asked if he played any instruments and who used to play in the orchestra. Who played the instruments at the square dances? He played the violin (the man that called the square dances). He was the road boss so he made them pave an inch of gravel and then pave the road.

There was a brickyard on the 4<sup>th</sup> concession. The man being asked does not remember it. He lived down on the 4<sup>th</sup> in the 1920s. The brickyard was diagonal across the 400 highway and diagonal to McLellan's where the MacArthur's had their sawmill on the other side of the river. He never got lumber from that mill. At his home farm at the Scotch Settlement there was a string hundred on the east side of it and grandpa Watson lived in a house on there. He first lived in Beeton when he came over from Ireland and then bought the string hundred there. When Isobel's Dad got married he bought the string hundred and the church on there as well. Isobel did not sing in the church choir regularly but did on occasion. She went to school at number 4 and her first teacher was Jesse Fraser. Then there was a Farris that lived next to Jesse and taught after Jesse. Jesse lived down the road from the school. Peter and Will Farris were brothers and lived near there as well. Across the road from Isobel was Henry McKay and before that was his father believed to be Alec McKay. Alec McKay bought the farm in 1893. Isobel does not remember who had the farm before him. George says there was a McKay here before then in 1847 there was a Dollie Grant McKay who lived in a little house across from the church. The Elliott's lived there in Isobel's life and their names were Hughie and Hannah McKay and they were brother and sister. The Elliott's still live there. The original house was lost by Aldora and Jim Nearhead lives around the corner and his son bought the house. The shed for the horses near the house. It could house the buggies as well as the horses. Isobel was living in Cookstown when the 400 highway went through she was in Bethesda. It was 1946 when they were buying their land. It went through their farm at Cookstown.

Charles Davidson had a farm to the East when Isobel was there. Charles had ten children. Some of Charles kid's names were Earland, Alto, Alvil, Edland, Margery, possibly Earnest, Tom, Ivan and Leroy. They moved to Toronto. Alto married someone down in the Hallows. They kept the farm until 1932 when they sold it and moved to Toronto because they had a tough time with the depression. Isobel went to school with three of them. The school that's there now is the one that she went to but it is fixed up a little more now, the brick schoolhouse is the one Isobel went to. Mrs. McKay was a Brown before marriage and can't remember her first name. George lived across from

Henry McKay and the family was all grown up and gone and George always called her Mrs. McKay and he never knew her first name. It was the way it was back then that you always called women by their last name. Norman McKay was Henry's son and was the oldest boy. Jim McKay lived in Aurora or Newmarket. Isobel was thinking of the Farris in Newmarket when asked about Mary McKay. Jim Farris mother was a McKay. Dalton Farris was the son of his father Dalton Farris. The McKay's and Farris families married one another and became intertwined. In front door of house at Scotch Settlement living room was on left and dining room behind it through archway.

There were windows on the south side in the dining room. There was a fireplace in the living room. The people that live there now they are fixing the house back into its original state. The fireplace was covered but the people restoring it want to find the fireplace and Isobel tells that it's on the flat by the archway and shows them on a drawing. In the front door on the other side of the stairs was the parlor and behind it was a bedroom and then the kitchen was behind that, all across. Upstairs there were four bedrooms. The northeast room was Isobel's. Up the steps there was a bedroom right at the top and one across from it, then there were two bedrooms on the west and there were two on the east. There were no bathrooms in the house. The stove pipe only went through the bedroom at the top of the stairs. Isobel did not have the room to herself. The one at the top of the stairs was Carols and the one next to it was Charlie's, the northeast one was where Mary and Jean slept. Number 3 and 4 schools would go together and every year have big Christmas concert at the Auld Kirk. The things that Isobel remembers in school is that they had to clean up the yards around the school yard on Arbour day it was kind of a holiday but after cleaning up they had to go back to school but sometimes would go to the bush/top of Holland marsh/the banks was what they called it. Isobel remembers that they had to walk to school and in winter if it was bad her dad would hook up the team and take them to school. There was no hot lunch at school kids would have to bring their own. There would be 30-35 kids at school. Isobel can't remember if people came from the Marsh but that people did come from all around and names the McLellan's, Sutherlands, McKay's and that there were McDonalds around then.

The draining project in the Marsh began 1925-1927 and there were people farming there in the 1930s like Emerson Farris and Green from Bradford. Most of them literally lost their shirts. George explains that even Professor Day was bankrupt when he died. Isobel remembers Emerson Farris and might not have gone to school with him but she remembers him. George says the only thing left of Emerson was his son who is a 'real outlaw'. Norrie remembers that after the Marsh was drained the Archer family farmed there. Dave and Myrtle Coutts were moved by George into their house in Bond Head. Isobel did not go to school with Walter Lloyd. She went to school with Myrtle and Edith. The Brown family that lived across the road from the Lloyds and there were three different Brown families in the area.

George Brown lived on Bradford Road and married Mary Watson. Mary Ann Watson married George Brown who was Gordie Browns grandfather. The MedCaf farm was near the high school and there was a house next to that and it was torn down. Isobel went to the Presbyterian Church and when she went to church it was always full. She cannot remember when it closed but it closed because of attendance. When she went she always sat at the front on the left-hand side. Sitting in the front Isobel had to behave or else the minister would stop and look down at her. George remembers going to church one Sunday and the minister was wondering what was going on and there was a mouse that came out and ran down the railing around the church and went behind the pope and ran around the entire service and the minister could not figure out what people were

looking at while he was speaking. Isobel remembers Donald Grey and went to church with him. Donald had a hook because he was missing a hand. They point at a map and identify the Brown and Jessop's farm. The Farris' lived where the Jessop farm was first. Mr. Sinkler was a nice man and would drive Isobel home. The Brown's lived off a side road near there. Grandpa lived down a long lane back to what they called the old house. There was no hydro there. Isobel remembers not having hydro while living in her house there either. For the bath tub they would have to heat water and pour it into the big copper tub. Isobel left for Bond Head when Charlie was married in 1930. Rural parts of West Gwillimbury did not get hydro until 1940.

Isobel remembers having to install the hydro in the house after moving there and they had a telephone. The Beeton telephone company ran most of them in the area. Isobel remembers that there were quite a few people on the line and that others would listen in on conversations. Isobel remembers that there was a beef ring ran by the Ritchie farm on the Bond Head Road but she was not a part of it. Isobel's family would just purchase beef instead of butchering it themselves. For grain threshing Isobel would work with others and trade all along the line and sometimes have 17-18 at the table and would trade back and forth, this was at Scotch Settlement. In later years in the Cookstown farm they had a silo. Isobel only remembers working in the field a small amount. Once the boys left Isobel helped more in the fields. Isobel's dad had 3 driving horses. Isobel's mom had a horse that she would ride as well. They had a buggy, a double buggy called the Gladstone and it had lights on the side for when they were out at night. The backseat could be turned backward or forward. There were not many buggies around. Large families had a democrat and it was a longer buggy and more like a half-ton truck.

Isobel taught in Stroud and Barrie as a teacher. Isobel was too strict so the kids did not like her and that made her not want to teach so she resigned. Women that taught in the one room schools would often marry a nearby farmer. Isobel says that teachers college was only a year back then...When grandpa moved to Scotch Settlement and bought string hundred and then bought the other farm where Isobel was born when he got married and then moved onto that farm. Isobel thinks that he owned that farm and gave it to Uncle Charlie when he got married. The oldest boy always got the farm. Charlie got it when he was 21. It was in grandpa's will that it would go to Charlie. Isobel was unable to remember the mail man but that Mr. Milburg was the mail man that she remembered. Isobel remembers the Eaton's catalogue but was unable to remember when the first one was. George says it was 1928. Isobel remembers ordering from the catalogue especially around Christmas. A lot of clothes were ordered out of the catalogue. For Christmas a common gift for Isobel would be clothes, a ball, and things for school. Mostly it would be a few clothes that were needed; there were not many dolls or toys but some. In the bottom of the stocking there would always be an orange. Oranges were scarce so it was a bit of a specialty. Talking about baseball they did not have many gloves but they were always used. Isobel played out in the fields.

The baseball league was not associated with the church but was just a community league. Isobel remembers swimming at a friend's cottage on lake Simcoe. Isobel's family's first car was a dodge around 1917. It was grandpa's car and they cannot remember how long it took him to learn how to drive. Isobel remembers when she learned how to drive she did not have to take any lessons learning how to drive. Isobel does not remember the Bond Head road as being a plank road. George thanks Isobel and Norrie for the interview and all the information that they shared with him.

Banner image from the Bradford West Gwillimbury Public Library Local History Collection depicting cars lining Holland Street East. ID Number 3696. <http://www.ibidnet.ca/details.php?IDnum=3696>