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T976.16

INFORMANT: CLARA DOLHAGARY  
nee: GAGNON

SUBJECT: autobiographical;  
teaching career

PERIOD: 1895 - 1963

LENGTH OF TAPE: 2 hrs, 35 mins

INTERVIEWED BY: Arlene Borgstede  
November 4th, 1976  
November 11th, 1976

- 005 - 012 Marie Clara des Angeles Gagnon Dolhagary, born on her father's farm at the site of the seminary (should be the N.A.R. site.) April 6th, 1895.
- 013 - 035 Father was Georges Gagnon; born in Quebec in 1885<sup>33[?] ]</sup>, came to Western Canada in 1873 with the Lamoureux Brothers, E. Juneau, and Leon Harnois. Took land at the site of the seminary (N.A.R.) Leon Harnois was to the north.
- 036 - 092 Held shares in the St. Albert Grist Mill, farmed, mother had brought a dowry of horses. Mother was Nancy Cunningham (originally spelled O'Cunningham). Her father was from Green Acres, Ireland. Parents were married in 1875 in the chapel (?) Fourteen children: Mary, Georges, Laurence, Hermine, Samuel, Napoleon, Anna, Laura Marie, Mathilde, Hector, Hermidas, Clara, Pierre, Alice.
- 093 - 104 First home was a large two-story house with large stained glass window, no basement. *They cut the timber themselves.*
- 105 - 129 When Clara was 6 years old, her father sold this farm and moved to a quarter section one mile west. Speculation as to why this farm was sold. Kelly family holdings: Joe, John, Patrick, Luke. *Each had 1/2 section*
- 130 - 167 Second farm was cleared with the help of the boys; went down the river to cut logs which were cut in St. Albert to build a smaller house. Other buildings included a grainery, hen house and large barn.
- 168 - 209 - Life as a child: was a frail child, had a large garden, picked wild berries. Sometimes hunted birds at a large slough between their farm and Harnois! Farm was located at the site of the Inland Cement Plant in the city. Had sheep, sisters spun wool and dyed it for rugs. Had milk cows, horses and pigs.
- 210 - 226 Started attending the pilgrimages at Lac Ste. Anne at 10 yrs, attributes better health to Ste. Anne.
- 227 - 281 Mother's grandmother was Indian, mother spoke Cree. Family did not have much to do with the Cunningham family, met only through the pilgrimages. French was spoken at home, English at school.

Land No 88

- 282 - 295 Other families: Harnois, Juneau, Cassidy's were east, Donahue's, later Joe Kelly bought the Juneau farm. Kids got together often at the Gagnon home, adult men visited from Edmonton.
- 296 - 317 Family attended church in St. Albert; father would go to the hotel run by Mr. Asselin to play cards. *These were the only times they went to St Albert.*
- 318 - 355 Mother delivered her own babies, was a midwife; had to wash clothes at the lake with a stick. *Older children helped.* Home remedies included wild peppermint tea, turkey weed, roots, and spring doses of sulphur and molasses.
- 356 - 383 Clara started school at 5 years, could not attend regularly because of her health. Had a large white dog that was trained to pull a sleigh that took her to school. Other children walked to St. Leon's School.
- 384 - 406 St. Leon's was a large school built on a foundation, first building burned down and left the foundation. About 20 children attended. One of the earliest teachers was Miss Victoria LePage. Meetings were held in the school that often ended with food, drink and fiddle music. *Christmas concerts.* Other teachers: Miss Annie Flynn and Michael Hogan.
- 407 - 598 *from Chatham, ON* Christmas: Had a Christmas tree, made paper decorations, got oranges and apples. Whole family could not attend Mass, mother stayed home to make the Christmas puddings. Christmas breakfast was eaten together. New Years was celebrated more; it would start the visiting that would last til March. Family had an organ, all the girls played. Father would bless the family members New Years Day, all would have a little drink, then have breakfast with a special dumpling.
- 599 - 645 Attended St. Leon's til she was 15 years old, then took high school grades <sup>at 9+10</sup> at Victoria Composite in Edmonton.
- 646 - 667 Entertainment during her high schooldays included roller skating, ice skating,
- 668 - Father died 18 December 1912 when Clara was just going on 16 yrs. Brothers took over the farm until the War when three brothers enlisted. Sam then took over the farm and looked after his mother til her death in 1918 during the Spanish Flu epidemic. Alice took a business course and worked at the Agricultural school in Olds.

SIDE II

- 002 - 032 A cousin whose father had died and left five small children had come to live with them and had got her schooling with them. Sam stayed on the farm til some time after his marriage.
- 033 - 067 Personal recollection of Georges Gagnon: clean cut, tall (6 ft.) blue eyes, fair skin, friendly, jolly and well-liked. Left disciplining to their mother. *Norwegian descent. Not strict.* Mother: very devoted to her garden and her chickens and ducks. Very quiet, reserved, shy. *V. religious.*

BC noise



- 068 - 086 While attending school in Edmonton, Clara stayed with a sister who lived near Westmount for about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  yrs, then boarded with a French-Canadian family for a year and would come home on weekends.
- 087 - 111 Started teaching immediately following graduation, spent one week at Looma, then taught at O'Donnell School. Taught til October, then attended Normal school in Calgary.
- 112 - 139 Began teaching at St. Leon's, for about six years prior to her marriage, living on the farm. Had about 30 - 40 students up to Grade 8. Teaching was done in English, Catechism was taught in French. *(Taught one year at Summitland) gr. 10 for 5 yrs*  
*Paid students to mind the furnace. Principal for a time.*
- 140 - 198 Teaching Career: Inspector's visits, school boards.  
Salary: started with \$840 maximum was just over \$4000. Sam was secretary-treasurer of the school board and had problems collecting taxes to pay her salary.
- 199 - 216 Christmas concerts. *Made dresses of paper.*
- 217 - 228 WW I: three brothers enlisted, Laurence couldn't pass the physical. Shortly after the boys left, Laurence was hit by a crane in the brickyard where he worked. Died three weeks later.
- 229 - 234 Had a large garden; Sam would sell produce at the Farmer's Market in Edmonton.
- 235 - 271 Married 20th January 1920, to John Baptiste Dolhagary from France, in the chapel in Bishop Grandin's residence. Had a small wedding, immediate family and close friends with the reception held at home. Married by Father LeMarchand.  
*Soon after Mother's death*
- 272 - 291 Met her husband at a skating party through her brother Laurence, at age 15.
- 292 - 334 Moved to a farm on the present seminary site which they rented from two Frenchmen; Count de Bernis and Mr. Durand. House was built with hot and cold running water that did not survive the first winter. Land had previously belonged to Luke Kelly.  
*- calls him on the tape.*
- 335 - 401 Paid \$200 per yr. rent, could make any improvements they wished. Had a half section of land.
- 402 - 418 Had one son born 15th February 1921, Samuel Aristides Mathieu.
- 419 - 441 Returned to teaching right after the birth of her baby at St. Leon's. *8 kids*  
*They asked her to come back*
- 442 - 488 Had a girl to look after the baby, at 5 years she put him in the Convent in Morinville. Later had a woman come in twice a week to do laundry etc. After a year in Morinville, her son attended St. Leon's with her.
- 489 - 554 Taught at St. Leon's for many years, then went to Villeneuve, then to Riopel, then taught 14 years at Legal, first 4 miles out of town and then in the town,

*Cuckoo clock  
every 1/2 hr*

In the winter, she would stay for the week, return home for the weekends. In summer she drove her own car. She would live in a teacherage above the school outside Legal, In Legal she boarded.

- 553 - 571 Children in the schools were generally healthy, took part in field days with Bon Accord, Vimy etc.
- 572 - 641 Taught in St. Albert twice in the old brick school. First time was for 3 or 4 years. Didn't like St. Albert much; taught the higher grades with a Sister who was principal; Clara got most of the work load. *Preferred Country School Sr.*
- 642 - 674 Salary went up to \$4050 but never higher. Taught music and took choir to Edmonton for the French Music Festival.
- 675 - Had hired help on the farm in the summer. Had a phone even before 1920 (from Edmonton) and did most of their business in Edmonton. Grew wheat, barley, oats, green feed; had cows, pigs, chickens, turkeys. Milked cows and sold the cream.

TAPE II - Nov 11

- 006 - 019 Farming, continuation. *Had a large garden. Made relish, canned berries*
- 020 - 062 Problems of getting water: dug 5 wells but still had to get drinking water from the city. At one point the wells went dry along with a slough on the farm and they had to haul water from St. Albert for the cattle. In winter they cut the ice on the slough for the cattle and melted snow for washing.
- 063 - 081 Had machinery on the farm; Sam had a threshing machine and did their threshing. At first used eight horses for two outfits.
- 081 - 119 Had a radio and Victrola. Had the Edmonton Bulletin delivered by boys from Calder, later got the Journal. They left the farm before electricity came through.
- 120 - 133 Medical services: Dr. Giroux in St. Albert.
- 134 - 153 Attended card parties at the church and sang in the choir for 25 years.
- 154 - 172 No recollection of prohibition.
- 173 - 216 Clara took holidays every summer during the 1940's and 50's. Travelled through Eastern and Western Canada, and the U.S. by train with other groups. *Early on, Dad had to spend the summers tending to hay*
- 217 - 251 Depression did make any visable impression. *Always poor, didn't notice much difference (lived off farm)*
- 252 - 277 paid taxes to an insurance company.
- 278 - 308 Depression did not seem to effect her students; work with the Junior Red Cross.



- 309 - 366 WW II: son enlisted in the Air Force, went overseas.  
*He had poor eyesight, never flew but served on the ground.*
- 367 - 449 Left the farm in 1949; disposal of the farm is vague. It seems that deBrenis was asked to sell land to the Archdiocese and sold one quarter. Dolhagary's farmed the remaining quarter for awhile while living in town. *Left by choice. Rented the house for a while but it wasn't well maintained.*
- 450 - 483 Moved to Scarboro Place in St. Albert where they had had a house built. Their son had 40 acres which now comprises the Sturgeon Subdivision. He kept four lots on Scarboro Place.
- 484 - 565 Husband died 21st December, 1963. Clara had retired from teaching in 1960 at 65 years. Did some travelling with her husband in the late fifties, early 60's. *Husband was 12 yrs older*
- 566 - 599 Total of 45 years teaching: looks back at the changes with skepticism. *Feels that subjects are too complicated*
- 600 - 673 Honored by the French Canadian Teachers Association in 1957 as the teacher having taught the most number of years. *in Alberta.*
- 674 - 728 Personal views on the retention of the French Culture in her own family. *Difficult to maintain - English crept into home, at school only catechism was French*
- 729 - Other interests; church and the Altar Society.

## SIDE II -

- 001 - 040 Involvement in the church: husband assisted with the building of the present church, laying of sidewalks.
- 041 - 057 Attended liberal meetings, recalls Sir Wilfred Laurier's visit to St. Albert.
- 058 - 067 Celebration of St. Jean Baptiste Day with a banquet, Mass and games and races.
- 068 - 083 Personal recollections of Father Lacombe: remembers him as a small man.
- 084 - 098 Older sister was confirmed by Bishop Grandin.
- 099 - 126 Family attended Edmonton Fairs, never used the Interurban R.R.
- 127 - 157 Travelled to the pilgrimages by "democrat" which was loaded with tent, provisions, etc. Made the trip in two days, stopping at Noyes Crossing (Billy Gray's Place), spent one day at the pilgrimage and returned home in one day.
- 158 - 175 The white church referred to as the "frame" church.
- 176 - 215 Looks back on life with satisfaction; misses the other members of her family. Reminiscences of going to the Fair in the Democrat and sneaking the little children in under the skirts of the older girls.

end of tape.