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T977.02

(also see T976.18)

INFORMANT: ROBERT BELLEROSE

SUBJECT: The Bellerose
family, farming in
St. Albert

PERIOD: 1830 - 1974

LENGTH OF TAPE: 1 hour, 20 mins

INTERVIEWED BY: A. Borgstede
March 22nd, 1977

- 005 - 008 Robert Octave Bellerose, born Colington, Alberta,
7th November, 1913.
- 009 - 051 Great-grandfather: Olivier Bellerose, was a fur buyer from
Trois Rivières, Quebec, settled on what is now River Lot #35
in about 1830.
Raised a family of 13, 8 boys, 5 girls.
Came out with four other men from Three Rivers who settled
around the area, one at Devil's Lake.
Father Lacombe brought other families here in 1861 from Lac
Ste. Anne.
Great-grandfather Beaudry had two river lots in downtown
St. Albert probably before 1861.
River lots were settled similar to Quebec.
- 052 - 060 Married Mary Savard, half French, half native, from Manitoba.
- 061 - 082 Grandfather: Octave Bellerose settled on River Lot #38.
Three brothers, also settled on river lots: Milian - #37
Narcisse - R.L. #62, Norbert - R.L. #41 across the river.
Freighted to Grouard, Slave Lake, Wabesca and Athabasca.
Octave was born at Grouard while father was on a fur buying
trip c. 1853.
- 083 - 102 Father, Pierre Bellerose freighted, ran a taxi service from
Athabasca to Edmonton.
Father did some farming on present land, plowed land one year
on Feb. 10th, sowed wheat on 26 March. (pre 1900). No snow
that year, attended Midnight Mass in buggy.
- 103 - 134 Octave married Lucy L'Hirondelle from St. Albert. Had 7
children (one died as a baby), all stayed in Alberta:
Mrs. Margaret Iseke (four miles west of St. Albert,
Mrs. Nancy Killips (north Edmonton)
Mrs. Joe (Frances) Ferguson (High Prairie)
Mrs. Helen Ryan (died with second baby)
Jim took half of his father's land, raised 13 children
Sold his land in 1927, moved into St. Albert for 2 years,
homesteaded at Wandering River, then moved to a Metis
colony at Kickinow (?), 30 miles south of Lac La Biche
where he died.
Kerre: took the other half of his father's farm

- 135 - 149 Did not really know his maternal grandparents, Narcisse Beaudry.
- 150 - 179 Pierre Bellerose, born on a buffalo hunt at Buffalo Lake 16 April, 1875.
- 180 - 199 Freightng, taxi service, discussion about Grandfather's capability ~~with~~ buffalo hunting.
- 200 - 238 Father took over farm in 1915. Octave died 1910, Jim ran the farm for 5 years. Pierre sold the livery barn in Athabasca in 1910 or 11, moved to the Colington homestead. Jim's farm included all the buildings so Pierre had to build a small house.
Much of the farm was already broken, father broke more land with a sulky plow and three horses, sowed barley, wheat, and oats for green feed.
- 239 - 258 Farm consisted of 237 acres; in 1924, 50 acres of lowland was broken with 8 horses and a breaking plow, in 1926, 15 acres was broken, the last with a plow and horses. In 1956 the final 10 acres was broken with a tractor.
- 259 - 307 Married Justine Beaudry in 1903 at Egg Lake where Beaudry had land. (She was 25 years old)
Had 13 children, the oldest died at 3 years.
Bertha, Tom, Elizabeth, Lillian, Patrick, Laura, Robert, Alfred, Margaret, Dorothy, George, Harry. Some went to Colington to work father's homestead.
- 308 - 324 Robert took over the farm in 1942, when his father died. It had been left to his mother who died in 1948. Three brothers were in the army, Harry did not want to farm.
- 325 - 360 Early life on the farm: each child had to milk two cows each before school, hauled wood, coal and cut ice on the river. Used river ice for drinking, would put away 300-400 blocks each winter. River water used for washing clothes etc.
- 361 - 394 Mother had a large garden, preserved food for the winter. Boys hunted for partridge, grouse, deer, etc. ^{grouse, partridge, deer, etc.} and fished in the Sturgeon. Father got large boxes of fish from Slave Lake in the winter.
- 395 - 455 Christmas was a big family affair, would often celebrate with mother's sisters from Morinville. Mother baked plum puddings in baking powder cans. Attended Midnight Mass with a team and sleigh. Presents were little things; homemade toys, mitts, scarves, etc. one aunt had 22 children, the other had 9.
Easter: took turns attending 'the Way of the Cross', coloured boiled eggs.
- 456 - 492 Father was a big man, 6' 1", weighed 129 lbs when married, 280 lbs when he died. He was strict but not mean. Had been left crippled from a broken ankle at about 35 years of age.
Died from 'bladder problems'

Volume gets lower ✓

- 439 - 500 Doesn't remember any stories about Father Lacombe or Bishop Grandin.
- 501 - 521 The old Brick Factory was located on Bellerose Drive where the Silver Nurseries was located (just off the highway). Land below the road was dug out for clay. Recalls people who worked there: Octave Chevigny, Bellecourt, Perron, I. Arneault.
- 522 - 561 Robert attended Guilbault School til about 14 years old (gr. 8) Two older sisters went to the convent in St. Albert to finish their schooling, one went to an agricultural school, two younger brothers continued on in St. Albert, travelling by horseback or horse and buggy. *Only Albert went to gr 12*
- 562 - 591 Started working on the farm at 14, had started driving horses at 8 years old.
- 592 - 706 Medical services: some of his younger brothers and sisters were delivered by Mrs. Gardiner. *5 were born on the farm.* Father got the flu in 1918, treated with hot brandy, Dr. Giroux treated with medicine for the fever. Laura and Robert also got the flu. *For fever, there was a powder that got mixed w water* Mother prepared home remedies from roots, etc. *(bullrushes)*
- 707 - 734 Mother continued some of the Indian traditions, tanned her own hides for making moccasins. Both parents spoke Cree. Grandmother Bellerose spoke only Cree and French.
- 735 - Pilgramages to Lac Ste. Anne. *Went every year.*

SIDE II

- 002 - 019 Pilgramages: Children took turns going, would take a few days; travelled the 40 miles in one day, set up tents, then went fishing for food. One day would be services in Cree, another day in French and English. Would often stay for a week, visiting friends. Indians would travel from all over Northern Alberta, as early as a month before., would stop at the farm to trade for food.
- 020 - 061 Entertainment: played hockey, baseball, horseshoes and went dancing at Bagley's Hall in St. Albert or in the schools. (Guilbault, Bouland, Roseridge, Bellerose, O'Donnell, Cunningham) Hockey games were played in Legal, etc. Had a team called the Sturgeon River Rats, played against schools and the Indian school across the river. *Skated on the river all winter.*
- 062 - 087 St. Albert: had two livery barns, one behind the Bruin Inn, one where the Royal Bank is now. The Dawson Block had a confectionary store, a hardware, a dry goods store, a pool room, barber shop and shoemakers shop (from St. Anne St. to the river). Where the arena is now located was a large hole where the livery barns threw all their garbage.

- 088 - 119 Went into St. Albert once or so a month for groceries, produce from the farm was taken into the stores. Dealt at Dawson's (later Lambert's) Ringuette worked at Dawson's dry good store. Hector Lamer ran a confectionary shop on the corner, Bill Veness' father had the hardware store where Jacob Mauckle worked. Lambert also ran horses, delivered freight. They did not go into Edmonton often when children, later delivered coal and hay, etc.
- 120 - 135 Never married. Farmed wheat, oats, barley and used grain to raise hogs (had 500 at one point). Sold hogs to Gainers (father did) later Burns came in, then Swifts and Canada Packers. Also sold to buyers, Bourgeois and Schmit.
- 136 - 165 Depression: had lots to eat, not much money. In 1935 the crop was hailed out, two more years it froze. Twice the farm was up for tax sale (Taxes were about \$75 - \$100, last year he paid \$726) along with many others. ^{Most farms went up for tax sale.}
- 166 - 187 There had been a boom just after WW I, father paid \$7.50 per day for threshing help, had bought a team of horses for \$750, wheat was selling for \$3.10. In 1927, father borrowed \$4000 to clear the Colington homestead. In 1929 he paid \$1.85 per bushel for seed grain in the spring, sold the wheat for 39¢ and 27¢ ^{bushel} in the fall.
- 188 - 196 Was called to enlist but given medical deferrment because of a broken elbow and knee cap. Was called again later but by that time his father had died and he was the only one left on the farm. Three brothers and a sister joined.
- 197 - 235 Got first tractor in 1946, used for the heavy work while still using horses. In 1949 or 50, bought a threshing machine and in 1956 bought a combine and quit working horses. At one point was farming 1000 acres of his own and rented land. In 1964 he sold some land and rented out his farm. At that time offered his farm for sale at \$150,000, last year was offered \$300,000 for it.
- 236 - 272 Early neighbours: Gardiner, Savard ^{4 families} (across the river), west, Aitkenson, Loiselle (earlier), north: Cust (bought out Narcisse Bellerose), Boudreau, Dion, Arcand (two families), West: Morasse, Grenier, Curial (earlier was owned by Walsh) Benoit, Arnault, Maloney, Hogan (by the highway where International Co. is now) Mike Hogan had taught school at the Bellerose School. West of St. Albert: Cunningham, Bellecourt, Brousseau, Bourgeois, Verstrate, Majeau, L'Hirondelle.
- 273 - 351 Does not recall that getting title to land as being a problem. Could get title by proving that you had proved the land. Some of the earlier people did not bother, Dion sold his land to ^{Joe} Housand c. 1900 without having title to it. Grandfather staked out River Lot #38 in 1882 with about 700 acres When land was surveyed in 1882, he moved his stakes on both sides to give more land to those on either side.

pounding
noise
[furniture?]

Early owners retained mineral rights on land.
In 1900 Octave took out a second homestead which took in over 100 acres of lowland that had belonged to the government.

- 352 - 378 From 1952 the river was a problem. All ditches and sloughs from Onoway down were drained into it and it flooded every year putting about 1000 acres of land under water. From 1952 til 1972 the river flooded 29 times: Twice in '53, '54, '59, '61, '65, and '71.
- 379 - 394 Hauled gravel from the railway for the building of the present church in 1922.
- 395 - 400 Grandfather helped to build the first bridge when he was about 18 years old.
- 401 - 424 Changes in St. Albert: nice to see the town grow but doesn't know people like he used to.
- 425 - 459 Bruin Inn: used to be a quarter of the size it is now. On market day, farmers would bring their livestock in to the railway, do shopping etc. and drinking at the Inn. Doesn't remember prohibition.
- 468 - end of tape.