

### Consent Form

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Signed

P. K. Allan

interviewee

Signed

Kenny Allan

interviewer

Date

April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1979

## Oral History

Donor: R.L. Allan

Leeds Village, Que

Date: April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1979

Interviewer: Kenny Allan

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Interviewer- Kenny Allan

Interviewee- R.L. Allan

What was your date and place of birth?

In Ayer's Mills, Megantic County, Quebec.

Now what date was that?

Oh, June 18, 1896.

Could you tell us something about your family background?

Well, they were Scotch descent and the Allans came over in 1821 from Scotland.

What were you doing from the period you were born until the beginning of World War II?

Well, I was going to school most of the time. And then carpenter work, mill work.

You were active in World War I?

Yes, in the Canadian Engineers, yes.

What was your occupation during the world war, Second World war?

Carpenter work.

This was at Leeds?

Yes, around here, yes.

When World War II began, had the Great Depression ended here?

Oh yes, yes. Well, we were busy, busy in the mill.

This lumber that you produced, where did it go to?

It went to the Rand in Sherbrooke and Winsor Mills.

That where the most of it went?

Yep

And what would that be used then for?

What went to the Rand was to crate machinery for Russia.

Had you recovered from the depression before the war started?

Oh, yes. Things were beginning to pick up a little when the time the war started. It was very hard to get help.

That was to work in your saw mill.

Yes

In what way did World War II most affect you?

Well, it was very, very hard to get men to work.

Did you have any impressions that would be like the First World War?

Things were severely rationed, we know that, and the gasoline, sugar, tea, coffee, meat, butter.

You were able to provide pretty much on your own?

Oh, yes.

So the rationing didn't hurt you really that much.

No I don't think it affect us very much. The gasoline was really the only thing that affected us that we didn't use so much, gasoline heaters.

Did you own a car at that time?

Yes

What did your saw mill run on?

Steam

So there was no gas or anything involved.

No

Did you know of any black market?

No, not around here. It didn't affect us, the black market.

What rationed goods did you miss the most?

Oh, I guess it was the sugar and stuff like that. But it didn't affect us so we had plenty.

Did you make maple syrup?

Yes, yes we had lots of maple products.

So you could use that as a substitute?

Yes

Did you preserve lots of goods?

Yes, we had sugar enough for that.

So, you were very careful with how you used sugar.

Yes

Do you remember what you were doing when the war began?

Yes, Sunday morning we were going to church at Leeds Villiage.

The word came out that Hitler had declared war.

Was this just by word of mouth?

Well, it came on the telephone.

How did the people react?

Well, a day or two after that they were recruiting for the Canadian Engeers.

Did a lot of people try and get out, or hide from the Army?

Well, yes, there were quite a few. Oh yes, later on in 1940

the bushes, the sugar camps were full of people hiding.

These people who hid from the Army, did they ever get caught?

Yes, most of them did.

Do you know what happened to them?

Well, some of them, I guess some of them had to do a little bit of time in the jail but they were mostly sent away right off.

So there was no real punishment?

Oh, no.

Did you have any family members or relatives volunteer?

No, we didn't have any around here, no.

Did the change male-female ratio affect social life in this area?

No, not, not, it didn't make much difference. It didn't make much difference.

Was that

There weren't very many enlisted from around here. There weren't very many to go.

Was that because of the age catagory?

Yes

What there was mostly older people who were too old for the Army?

Yes, yes and they were all farmers here.

Did you, your family, or friends have a sence of national unity when war broke out?

Oh, yes, oh yes.

What was your opinion of the zombies? It was the people who didn't want to enlist in the war, except for homefront and defence.

Well, a lot of them they ...

Do you remember either of the conscription crises in '42 or '44?

Oh yes.

How did you react to that?

Oh yes the, it made very little difference though in this part for there were very few like at the military age then.

Do you remember when the women were allowed to vote in 1940?

Oh yes.

Did that change political things a lot?

Oh, well yes it did had quite a lot.

Can you explain how?

Well, they had, yes it did change things a little.

Do you recall the end of the war?

Oh yes, yes it was, it was a great relief to everything when things eased off.

Do you remember what you were doing then?

We were up here in the mill that spring in, that was '40, '45, in '45. We were remodelling the mill all up that spring. So you had done a lot of business between '39 and '45 in your mill?

Oh yes.

Was this year round?

Yes, it was then.

You were busy the whole time.

Oh yes.

When the war stopped did you still get this, a lot of lumber for the mill?

Oh yes, oh yes, we were busy, busy there for about 20 years.

Was this still going to Sherbrooke and Winsor?

Oh yes, Sherbrooke and hard wood went to Montreal.

How did the end of the war affect you?

Well, we were able to hire men, more men, then.

So there was lots of work and lots of men looking for work?

A lot of them were afraid to come and work in the mill. They were all suppose to be farmers and as long as they were farming they didn't, weren't so anxious to take them into the Army. But as soon as the war stopped, you could work anywhere then.

These people who didn't enlist in the Army, you mentioned hiding in sugar bushes, when the war was over what did they do then?

Oh, they came out.

They didn't have any fear then of being caught?

Oh no, they were, they came out.

Just as if nothing had happened.

Oh yes.

Did you know anything about bounty hunting?

Was that like people were paid to inform?



Yes

There was a little of that went on.

Would these people be caught then?

Oh, they were just put into the army and that's all that all they would do if they didn't.

Did you know of any military installations in Sherbrooke?

Well, there was the prison camp in Newwington.

Do you know anything about it?

Well, I guess a few of them did escape, but there was one fellow he was shot just as he got out through the wire.

And they just brought the other prisoners out for to dig a grave and they buried him right off.

Did you know of a lot of escapes?

No, I didn't know so very much about that, but we knew of this boy that was shot.

So, you don't know if the guard security was tight?

Oh no, they were right on the job.

Did you know of any military installations in this area or any training camps?

No

So, in general in this area ...

You see this is military district number 5 and it was Quebec who were the only, and St. John's .

But when you say number 5

That was the military, that's the district that we belong to here.

What, that takes in Leed?

Oh, it took in the greater part of, the greater part east of Montreal.

Well, that's quite a

The province of Quebec. Oh yes.

That's quite a large area.

See the ones from down there in Gaspé and Lasapédia they all had to come to Quebec, till Quebec got their discharge.

And the people enlisted went to Quebec for their training from this area?

Oh, it was very little the last war. Very few had any military training they were just sent over immediately and trained over there.

Without training at all.

They were in the military camps over there.

So, did they receive their training over there?

Oh yes.

And we did too in the first war.

Why wouldn't they be trained here at home?

Well, I don't know. We only had about a week here before we were sent over in the first.

How long did your training last over there?

Well, it would be about three months maybe.

That's a relatively short period of time.

Oh yes.

Did you just have time for the basics of the training?

Oh yes.

Long hour days.

Building railroads and digging trenches, working on the transport wagon.

Really then in the Eastern Townships Sherbrooke was the only big area or big city?

Oh yes. I guess they had a camp at Bury.

At Bury?

I think they had.

That wouldn't be as large as Newington?

Oh no.

Did you ever see any planes flying overhead that were foreign planes?

Over there?

No over here.

Oh no, not here. The training planes we, they passes over here, let me see where did they have, they had an air force base at Winsor Mills, I think. We used to see them go by the dozens by the place here. Two of them nearly crashed out here in front of the house was a garden.

What happened?

One got on top of the other. They weren't more than twenty feet off the corner of the fence up there. They had to work hard to get over the bush when they got over.

And they made it away safely?

Yes, they got away safely.

Getting back to your work in the saw mill. What kind of  
lumber did you sent to Sherbrooke?

It was inch lumber. It had to be all dressed on four sides.  
Inch lumber, two-by-fours, three-by-four, three-by-six, three-  
by-eight, and two-by-eight.

How many men did you have working for you at that time?

I would have three men. Mostly three or four men in the  
mill.

This lumber, where did it come from?

Around here, in Leeds here.

So, the farmers were paid to ... it to you?

Some of these big contractors were buying cuts and Dinnings  
the Dinning brothers, from Maple Grove, they were the ones  
that we worked for mostly.

So they had the contract for this whole area?

Well, yes, right then they had it.

Then it was shipped to Sherbrooke and off to Russia you say?

Well, they were finished with it when , they ran and bought it.  
They were the men who were buying the machinery.

So this was used for crates?

Yes, some of the big air compressors they used 1400 feet  
of lumber to crate them.

On an average how many feet would you put through your mill a  
day?

Oh, then we were cutting around about 5000 feet I suppose.

You were very busy all along. And that was working a full

six days a week?

Oh yes.