

Transcription of Interview with Leah Barton, Springhill. Junction Rd. Complex.

[b.1903. maiden name White. m. June 1921.

b.Springhill. Lived on French Hill, Pleasant St. Now. So many French people there.

she's French herself.
Her father was LeBlanc. Mother, father were French.
Family was born in Coquin, mother was born in ?
New Brunswick.

Came in 1890s--they were here for the first explosion.

[Women's incomprehension of mining terms "Packs" and "pans"--you'd hear that all day.]

her mother spoke French at home. we used to talk to her in English, especially after the started going to the English school.

There used to be some families. Also Belgians come over.

lived in Oxford for a while.

ten children in her family. six girls and four boys. her father was the only one working.

renting house from French hill. Her papa never owned a house.

had own garden. potatoes, beans, things like that.

worked at housework for 50c a day.

worked in other people's houses. most of the girls in the family did that, to get buy. when she was 14 or 15 years old.

"Might as well get married and work for myself."

Grade 8 schooling.

she used to sit at the table to eat at one house, but at another she ate out in the kitchen, alone.

Other family was a "little high, you know--high and mighty."

a full, live-in domestic servant

husband discharged 1919; they got married 1921.

was born in Bathurst--he was of French descent, too.

used to walk to Saltsprings and pick blueberries and carry them home, in a great big bucket.

It was a hard struggle, when the mines used to be on strike.

" One time they were working only three days a week. If you had a load of coal, it took pretty near all your pay."

houses she lived in--calls them "pretty cold"

" I remember getting up in the morning [in the house on Mechanic Street her father lived in] and there was frost on the walls. "

one stove in the kitchen and one in the room.

three or four bedrooms and three rooms down.

her husband went out west during the 1925 strike. Harvest Excursion. "He didn't ask me. I had to stay home and look after the children."

she had three boys.

eldest boy, Joe, had his leg off in the mine--he was only eighteen.

'If there was a ball game or a hockey game, they'd stay off. If they was afternoon shift, they'd stay off.'

Remember the time that Dick [Vittoz?] and them stayed off for the fight? It was Joe Lewis, wasn't it? The afternoon shift, and the round only went in the first round--and it was over. And they missed a shift over that! Crazy!

Q. Why would they miss work like that? A. Well, just miss it for the fun of it, I suppose.

She'd get up with him--at half-past four in the morning. He'd leave the house at five o'clock. If I had any washing to do, I'd stay up and do it.

--nice tale of wallpapering with her husband.

her husband was always Conservative. his family...Conservative

Father Doody. "He used to take the rung of a chair and hit you over the head. And if you knew your catechism, if you knew the question, it was alright, and you didn't, you got a crack anyway. He'd say, "Well done, well done!"

[Father Doody broke a broomstick over a boy's leg.]

["He turned a lot of people away from the church."]

"He used to lock the church doors so you couldn't get out until church was over."

[He was in Springhill for thirty-five years. I think it was a bit too long.]

Father Doody died sometime in the early thirties--1935?

[Father's temper said to be so bad that his headstone is cracking.]

Years ago, they wouldn't let them go into Protestant Church for anything. If there was a wedding on, Catholics would have to ask the priest to let them go. ["I wouldn't ask Father Doody."]