

Transcription of Interview with William Burbine.

b.1293. in Lower Cove.

'Father used to be a grindstone cutter.'

--Ruf Hibbert--he run the quarry there. 'It used to be quite a place at one time.'

--must have been 75 or 100 men.

--had a mill for sawing quarry stones. No teeth in the saw. stone was cut by water. 'They'd finish it by hand.'

'The Church over there--that wall, was, all the men over there, all the Catholic men, after their day's work, they went back and cut the stone for that wall for that church. That was in 1394. And then Hibbert's teams hauled it down here for the Church, so it didn't cost anything for the wall.'

--men donated their labour to the Church.

--his father quit the grindstone quarry (closed down 1904), and went coal mining.

Father worked here at the Old Joggins, and at the Kimberley, River Hebert, and at the Five-and-Ten.

--Dwyer named this the Five-and-Ten because you got five cars of stone for 1 car of coal. from Cape Breton.

--miners would go to Cape Breton to work and tell mine managers they had worked at the 'Five and Ten'--managers would turn them down because they thought they meant that they'd work in a store.

father died 1931. only 64 years old.
his mother died at 53.

he started working in the mine when he was 15. 75c a day, ten hours a day. his first job was taking off the tallies off the boxes. used to shove the entry up and take the tallies off.

--mine at the bottom of Main Street. 'It was a big mine. There was 450 lamps that went down that pit.'

--three shifts. men called it the 'Old Joggins.'

--started 1898, right around there, and closed 25th of January, 1925.
(The mine--Old Joggins).

--his next job was running the tippie.

--had a picking table--you dumped the coal, it went down on the picking table and there were men there picking the stone out of it. this was 'old-time stuff'.

--men at picking table were standing up. --quite a lot of stone in the coal.

--father was getting around \$2 a day. c. 1912.

--his father had blood poison in his arm and was laid-up for a whole year.
--had it very tough--no welfare or nothing those days.

--company put him on the picking tables--and let him go down on odd days to work at the coal, to see if he could get his strength back in his arm.

--fellow McCarthy made this arrangement with his father.

--drove the old slope right between two old steps.

--family lived in a company house on the pit road. \$4.10 a month, including lights.

--have been in this house 59 years.

--his father was on a strike. 1394, big strike. --bunch from River Hebert came in scabbing--stayed in the PWA hall.--six-months strike.

when the scabs came in--they picked up the sled and turned it over when the scabs in it.

1896 strike. arrested men.

--Burchell came here and Burchell wanted to break up the union--his analysis of 1896 events.

--lot of Joggins went to the U.S.--men won the strike, but they lost the union.

--UMW came in in 1919--long gap between the two unions.

--'To get organized, they used to canvass the houses after dark.'

--they'd put up notices up for a meeting--underground manager would rip them down before the men could see them. 1920s. Difficulties of organizing.

--union ended in 1961.

--his father was an officer in the PMA.

--first started school in Lower Cove. moved to River Hebert, then moved to Joggins in 1920. (that's what she says).

--he was a 'bad bugger' at school

--quit school at grade six and went to work.

'I used to get a trimming every day of the week.'

routine 'trimmings' for two missed spellings.

ran away from school. just decided to get a job. on his way to school, just decided to go get a job. didn't ask about his parents or anything like that.

--Dave Blackwood, outside Overman, hired him.

--hired 1913 at the mine.

--doesn't remember any objections to getting Springhillers here during the big strike.

'There were some of all kinds over there. co. had built a lot of houses up there.

--french fellows up there used to sing those 'hottentots' and that's how they named it.

--used to get paysheets on Friday and you'd get your pay on Saturday.

mother--she was a Burke when she was married.

did not speak French in the house--they could speak it but they didn't.

--French was spoken.

--her mother was from Quebec.

--her father was from Minulie. --went to work in Quebec with a mill crew.

--four in William Burbine's family.

--did company work all his life. that was his preference.

worked in the pit. --Five-and-Ten at the River--transferred out there. worked at Green Crow, Funny (way up lower cove road).

--quite a ways up the Lower Cove Road.

Ox Pife, Bill Taylor. 'If Bill Taylor had of lived, the Green Crow would be going today.'

Art Phillips. mine inspector, lived in Springhill. he wanted the Green Crow, but they didn't want to give it to him.

closed 27th November 1961.

--he denies that the conditions were wet--but then he says, 'The Green Crow was a lot wetter than the Joggins.'--it was wicked there.

--when he first started working at the mine he worked 10 hours a day.

living with his family on the Pit Road.--pretty good house.

\$4.10 a month rent--that included the lights.

no garden. 'It don't pay to have a garden.'

--during the first war, he'd give the miners a raise when the coal went up (this is Bell, the manager)

--was getting \$4.50 a day--for an eight-hour day (after achievement of 2 hour day--1921)

cut them down to \$2.44 a day--was out on strike for a month, but they had to go back for the \$2.44.

--wage cuts of 1921.

--then they had horses in the pit--no haulages to get the men to work.

brought ten horses out of the pit and they had a month out in the pasture. 'They'd just put their heads up and take one deep long breath--it was pitiful to see them.'

--were blind an hour or two after they come out.

--had a months rest in the pasture.

'When they bought a horse for the pit, they bought a horse with a low head, since a high-headed horse would hit the booms and cut their head.'

--wore a special cap for the horses so that if they hit their heads they wouldn't hurt themselves.

--strike 1921. very peaceful--no trouble.

Amos Belliveau--used to be head of the union. (He's dead now.) Harry Weatherbe was secretary. Charlie Johnson was treasurer. --all in the 1921 strike.

--Amos Belliveau--"he could talk with French too, you know."

--he could give the Belgians a talking to. no trouble in unifying the workers.

--had another strike at the Green Crow, but it didn't last too long.--can't remember the date.

--he was around 45 at the time of this strike at the Green Crow. they won that strike.

'Conditions were good.'

--at Joggins you had four feet of coal.

he never left home. [You might note that many miners express surprise when asked, "When did you leave home." The interviewer is bringing in his assumptions about life to the questions!]

m.1932.

ball games in the Joggins. no other entertainment--picture hall here one time.

'The ruination of the Joggins was that big fire in 1929.'

--hotel burned. fire started at the theatre.

also worked in the Fundy mine.

the mines were all good to work in.

belongs to the Knights of Columbus--used to be a lodge in Joggins but it was discontinued.

'The Catholics and the Protestants associate together here.'

--no spirit at all of religious fighting.

--a lot of drinking in the Joggins. a few places used to make homebrew.

--blacks over in the Hottentot used to make home brew.

--there are still some black families over in the Hottentot. name of the Reids.

Bright Light explosion--September 1930. explosion there. (River Hebert).
Old Vic.

Five-and-Ten explosion. December 1932.

--carrying the bodies from the mine over to the trollies.

--first to come up was Danny Boudreau.

'I would of swore to God it was Billy Hashie. They found him right at the switch where Hashie was working, see? The power had went off when the boost the fan....(theorizes spark from the switch exploded the gas). So poor old Mike Boudreau, his father, he come out with his boy, and he said, 'Any of them up yet, Bill?' AND I said, 'Yes,' I says, 'Billy Hashie.' He said, "Where's the body?" I say, "Over in the men's waiting room." He says, "Come on over." So we went over. He said, "That's Danny." I says, "No, that's not Danny. The found him outside the switch." He said, "That's Danny." And Danny had a gold tooth, and he went over and raised the lip and, sure enough, it was him. You see, his face was as black as could be, you know. Couldn't recognize him that way.'

--always used to drive with a horse out to work.

road has been paved ever since 1920.

never had sewers or lights.

Monsignor Currie was a great man, in his opinion. here in 1904. 1894, built the church. built the glebe house. a great man.

--his father had been a Protestant.

Mr. Burbine

[tally boy → tippie].

OLD JOGINS [450 in the mine 28 outside]

1913 - 1925 (closed)

[one year at Fundy Mine.]

[75].

worked in pit
loading for
Jimmy
Bourgeois.

↓

[125-130]

FIVE & TEN

in the smelly Men on

1925 - 1939 (may)

banthead → checkweighman.

↓

GREEN CROW [125]

outside. tippie

May 1939 - 1961.