

Transcription of Interview with Miss Gladys Wilson, June 27 1979, Springhill

[ Her grandfather was William Conway. He mined gold in California in the 1860s. Born in Eureka, Pictou Co. She thinks his grandfather came out from Scotland. There was a number of them. Her mother was born in Albion Mines. Grandp had moved from Eureka to Stellarton then. Father was born in Albion Mines. Her father was born in Albion Mines. In the Red Row, a row of houses that belonged to the coal company. And when they came to Springhill, all those old miners, they lived in those old houses along Queen Street.]

[The Conways would live in one end, the Blues in another, the Wilsons in another, etc.etc. The Lorimers. The Walls in another. All those families that came. The Murrays. All lived in company houses to start out with. At that time there were only six houses--no company rows then.

Pauls: "They were all stinking Liberals."

'My grandfather used to have pictures of Charles Tupper hanging in his hall'--Mr. Conway.

Mr. Conway used to work with Sir Charles Tupper in election campaigns.

Conways on her mother's side; father's side came 1876. coal miners from Pictou Co.

grandfather and grandmother came over from Kilmarnock, Scotland, in 1853. one. Decided to come to Canada 1873. settled first in Port Morien or Albion Mines--lived in both places.

'In thosedays you moved where the work was. If one place went on strike, you moved to the other.'

her father was born in 1857. ]

nobody in the world had as nice a grandmother and grandfather as they had. Conway--my mother's people.

Conway could grow anything. Conway had a little dog that J.R. Cowans, the superintendent, gave him--a little brown and white terrier, of all things he called him 'Pansy'.

Conway did everything in a heavy way. Thorough in everything. devoted reader of the Montreal Star, the Halifax Herald, Maclean's Magazine. Grandfather was a very strong Conservative. letter from Charles Tupper.

he was a Presbyterian. David Wright was in the house a lot.

Paper written by William Conway on the discovery of No.2.

at one time John Anderson owned all the land off Main Street, from bottom to top. gave land to St. Andrew's.

[she has lovely panoramic shots of Springhill]. goes all the way back to the 1870s.

Used to be Italians came around in the summer with performing bears. Get them in the big square in front of the post office. performing bears.

All the kids turned out on that day to see the bear. come once a year.

has a photo of William Conway.

grandpa died--February. died of heartbreak? 1917.

he look after cables. You learned this on the job--no formal apprenticeship. Very much blike blacksmith work.

had a system, though, with helpers and handing on the job to them.

they judged you--for advancement from one job to another.

[complex process of bargaining].

--from trapper he became a ~~tripp~~ runner, a bottomer.

A bottomer protects all the coal cars coming into the slope, and then breaks it up in rakes.

--the bottomer makes up the rakes.

--two or three bottoms going.

pay as a bottomer: as a trip-runner: a trip runner got an extra 15c.

'You never got any great amount [of an increase]. If you came to a bottomer or a trapper to an oiler or a lamp carrier or whatever it might be, then you increased 10 or 15c.'

--this means steps up are very gradual--these are the jobs next to the bottom.

according to your skill, in other words.

quite a ladder of jobs. 'You started as a boy and ended up as a boy.'

--when old miners retired to become boys, they kept a higher rate.

'People lived in the mine and died in the mine, and probably right tomorrow if I wanted a job and they said, 'Would you like a job', I wouldn't hesitate to go back to the mine.

--just another day's work--going underground is a very different world.

'They tried to get One Big Union at one time, Robb, but it didn't work. So UMW came in after the big strike in Springhill.'

he never left home, but always remained with his parents right until they passed away.

he loved spors--started out as a boxer, then went into baseball and liked it. Was president and manager of the Springhill Iron Dukes from 1933 to 1940. won three Maritime titles.

1941, 42 was manager of Springhill Fencebusters. won 1945 N.S.-Maritime Championship. The last time Springhill won a championship.

formed a group of Square Dancers called the Coal Dusters, because everywhere a Springhiller went, they 'd say, "Take the coal dust out of your eyes, take the coal dust out of your eyes."

loves, loves to lance.

hockey not prevalent in the modern time...

very strict Irish priest--he didn't beat children, but he did have a swagger stick. poke you in the ribs--"You can do better than this."

All the Catholics loved to go to the Orange picnics. "They were really treated nice, the hospitality for them was perfect. And we enjoyed them."

--one of leading catholics was a caller--they'd put a sash on him for the celebrations.

Father Doody made a donation to the Orange Order. for their celebrations.

not all French families are Liberal, he says.

I started out living in a tent. Then moved in with one of his friends.

he did not start out living in a tent--this is an example of pillicking.

Royal Order of Buffaloes. faithful member.

left in 1920s during the strike--went to Ontario. worked in New Liskeard. 'If you lived in Springhill for any number of years, you'll always come back.'

Transcription of Interview with Gladys Wilson.

HER uncle Bill and her father cut out a solid block of coal for the Halifax exhibition, msust have been from No.1?

father worked in the coal mine until 1886.  
had small business on Main Street.

bought from Dr.Cove a piece of ppperty further up Main Street.

1898, father decided to enlarge the building. built the largest business in town. in it he carried everything, hardware, groceries, millinery, dry goods by the yar', women's clothing, he had all kinds of notions, but no cosmetics. boots and shoes and men's furnishings. upstairs over the building he had offices. used as doctor's offices.

Twentieth-Century Club had rooms there. a social club. pool table, sort of a meeting place. used to have dances at the Twentieth-Century Club too. 'It really was the prominent dance hall in the town at that time.'

father made a fairly good living out of the store. alludes to circumstances which kept her father making more money--a partner who wasn't honest?

'Oh, that was hard on business'--comment on strikes. 'We had a bad one in 1925,...lasted six months....It ruine'd some of the businesses in town [referring to strike of 1909-11]....Wilson's store--wouldn't be anything other than choice article. high grade of everything. 'He had a lot of credit.' --went on a cash basis but the strikes forced him off it.

-pcontinued on in business until 1933, when he became ill with arthritis. --two sons, James and William, carried on the business. --died January, 1950. he would have been 93 in August of that year.

--loved to fish: went away to the Maccan River and fished trout, all during the summer months.

he wasn't mayor but his brother was mayor for 24 years.

her grandfather Conway was mayor, in 1896. but in the next year he was defeated by her uncle Sandy Wilson.

Conway: he was a fiery mayor....

Cowans married the daughter of Mrs. John Anderson. She was a Douglas. Q.Do you remember Mr. Cowans?

'Oh, indeed I do. I remember him. I was a little girl. How classy I used to think he was! He always had horses--he had race horses....He opened the Victoria Driving Park....'

--24th of May the beginning of Racing Season.

--1st of July, Labour Day. Saturdays or days in between. horse races.

'He used to come out in the winter time with a beautiful red tongue[?] and a lovely fast horse with a lot of jingly bells on it, all shined up--brass, silver, glinting! He would have a raccoon coat on, and a fur hat. And I remember he always had woolin his ears....Oh, we had some classy people then. ...

[barber--Jack Coon. he always had a classy rig, black wagon with rubber tired wheels and a black horse. livery stable owned by Hiram Glendenning. his wife was a very dressy woman. She always drove a nice team. Glendenning became the keeper of the company's horses. Company had big horses, heavy horses. Used them for trucking lumber.'

Q.Was there a 'fashionable element' in town? A.Oh, indeed there was....

on Cowans: 'He didn't mingle a great deal with Springhill people.' 'He was a stranger when he came here....he came from Montreal, I think. And his wife was a Springhill woman, she was well-liked. And they had children. And they were related to Dr.Sutherland because Dr.Sutherland's wife was Mrs. Cowans' sister. She was a very nice woman. She was my first teacher in school....'

--Cowans was Conservative.

her grandfather very close to C.H. Cahan.

up in her grandmother's attic they used to store banners that said, Vote for Cahan and Tupper.

--Cowan used to entertain, but mostly mine officials from elsewhere.

--McLeods were very strong Presbyterians, more the 'backbone' of the church than Cowans.

'Our first dentist was Dr. Clay.' Dentistry in those days was something, an old foot-drill, a little dark grimy office, little try with a number of drills in it, pain of drilling teeth.

just getting out of school--later than when the war breaks out.  
(this probably means that she was as far as gd.11. no gd.12.)  
(no quite that old).

'Strapping was a common thing then.'

went up to Guelph in 1930 and took household science.

she never got a chance to use her household science career.

grandfather of Miss Wilson--her mother's father--was William Conway. He was born in Eureka, Pictou Co., and his father before him was born there. There are still relatives in Eureka.

Don't know where they came from--they may have come from Glasgow, and they may have been mining people.

stories of his coming to Springhill: He and Mr. William Hall ~~xxxx~~ and Mr. John Anderson, the first postmaster, came about the same time. Mr. John Anderson was born in Scotland. He lived at the bottom of Main Street on the site of what is now the curling club. They all came, among others, to Springhill together. There were the Blues, the Lorimers, and the Conways, and the Wilsons, the Halls, and the Simpsons. Founding families of Springhill. Nearly all Pictou Co. settlers--the early settlers. Mostly from Westville and Stellarton. Lorimers came from Westville. Wilsons came from Stellarton, although they had come out from Scotland in 1853 from Kilmarnock, Scotland. Conways came out [from Scotland] before that, grandmother Conway was a Coathill, her father was brought out by Ferguson Industries in Pictou to do cabinet work on the ships. Exceptionally fine cabinet maker--Miss Wilson still has a bed made by him. [Doesn't know when, but it must have been sometime in 1830s. her grandmother was born in 1839 in Pictou.]

mine opened 1873. grandfather came in 1872. William Hall came as manager and grandfather Conway came as underground manager.

background of William Hall: believed to be Scottish.  
[Mathesons were one of the first mining families].

[Grandfather Conway] He was, in those days...they would have little strikes [the boys], but grandfather was going down the mine on his cane--he was a very tall man, over six feet, and he had been caught by the rake and dragged and doctors in those days weren't too knowledgeable. And they thought his hip was out of joint--" doctors pulled his hip out, it wasn't out of joint, it was broken. Always walked with a bit of a limp after that. '...and he was going down the mine one day and he met a pack of oungesters young boys coming up. In those days the boys went to the mines very young. My father went to the mine when he was eight years old...And he said 'Where are you going'? Of course he used a few words as adjectives with it. And they said, 'We're going on strike.' And he said, 'Oh no, you're not!' And he raised his cane and chased them back to work. That's the way they settled strikes in those days. They didn't have any unions. But he was generally liked, he was a well-liked man.

--mentions loving cup, dated 1836, given to Conway by the miners of Springhill.

BIA. remembers William Matthews.

grandfather and Robert Drummond were great friends.

corner of Drummond and Elm--Drummond's house still standing.

Diagonally across from the medical clinic. where John Heron lives is Bobby Drummond's old house.

Conway demoted for some reason or other. drinking?

Conway died 1917.

Conway a very practical man, could do anything. if he wanted to build a house, he could build a house.

insulated with sawdust. couldn't find a draft in it.

Presbyterianism runs strong in the Wilsons.

elder in the Presbyterian church, grandfather Conway was leader of the choir in the Presbyterian church.

Scotch presbyterians, very strong among early settlers.

money in the first mining company? English? thinks Miss Wilson.

day the Dominion Coal Co. took over was "a bad day for us."