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HIGHLIGHTS:

- General account of his working life.

Mr. Hart: What did you want to know?

Margaret: Well, were your parents born at Oxford House?

Mr. Hart: I was born at Oxford, yes.

Margaret: You were born at Oxford?

Mr. Hart: Dad was a boat builder, you know. And the old Greeve, William Greeve, came from the old country and he settled at Oxford House. He was a boat builder. And after he died, my dad took over his work -- that's his uncle, from the old country. And he took his work, that old fellow's work and built York boats for the Hudson's Bay Company. And he used to build six York boats every spring for the Hudson's Bay Company. Two for Cross Lake and two for Oxford and two for Anna Lake for the Hudson's Bay. And he used to cut logs, timber like, in the summertime. And the Hudson's Bay has a spare boat for that to haul the timber like, you know. And after they finished cutting logs, they used to bark them, you know. Peel them like, two sides, and do it this way. And they used to build a stake like, to saw them, just wood saw them. And they sawed until New Year's to finish them for six York boats like, you know, for lumber. And they cut all the roots like, you know. Dad used to do that alone during the summer. Cutting the roots out from the ground like, you know. Big roots about that wide. And he used to carry it himself all alone down back to the bank. And they used to haul it back here. It was the York boat after they took it down from the woods. And he started after Christmas, started...

(End Side A)

(Side B)

Mr. Hart: ...still building York boats at Oxford. Mr. Campbell was in charge. That's the old grandfather, William Campbell, was in charge at York Factory that time. Charlie was just a little boy that time. And Mr. Campbell wanted Dad to come and build the York boat, the model like, you know, but they built them at the York Factory like, schooners like. It looked like a schooner. But them York boats, they wanted, the Eskimos wanted to buy them kind of York boats, you know, the model, like. That's why my father went to York Factory. He had the model for them, you know, for that York boat. So he built them two York boats down there, my father. The time he was finished, two York boats came from Oxford to take some supplies, you know -- they were short on supplies at York Factory that time. It takes a long time for a boat to come there, you know, before break-up, you know. The boats from

Montreal, or else I I don't know where it come from. But there is too much ice there, they couldn't cut through the straits there, they call them. So he came on the York boat coming back. They left one York boat down there at York Factory. Just sixteen men came on one York boat. But they had to walk about a hundred miles, you know, pulling that York boat up that current, you know. It was about a hundred miles current down. That's the Hayes River. You have to walk, pulling that rope like that and walking back to the Factory. And I was only ten years old that time. And I am 66 now.

Margaret: Well, you weren't helping to tow the boat at ten?

Mr. Hart: Oh no, I was just a little boy that time. My mother went there too, and sisters, and we stayed there four months there. But that's where I was born, at Oxford. Dad had been living there all his life there. And after that Mr. Campbell came home. He quit the Hudson's Bay -- Charlie's dad, you know -- and he went to Middlechurch after that, you know. And he came back again and he had a little outfit here I think. Someplace at, this side, the point here. And after that he went and visit down to Oxford again. He stayed there for a year, I think, a year or two years, I don't remember right. And I think he came home around about 1915, something like that. From there he stayed here for good.

Margaret: Well, when did your father build his last York boat? Do you know?

Mr. Hart: Dad? That's the time, that was 1911, I think. No, 1909, that's the last time he built York boats there at York Factory. And he died long ago, my mother too. So after that, a minister came from overseas and he was nineteen years old. And he came to Winnipeg and he said, he was telling me, his name is Nebry(?) from Scotland, you know, John Nebry(?). And he came to Winnipeg, he was nineteen years old. And when the first time he seen Winnipeg, there was just the sidewalks there. And the main streets were just mud, he said. The horses pulling the wagons like, you know. And it was all mud and just a few houses making the city hall there. And he went over to... After that he went to Calgary. And he was looking after the residence school, the Indian residence school there. The students, you know. And he talked the language too. And he came to Oxford, that was 1912. And he took me when I was a little boy, when I was a boy there, and he wanted me to learn him how to talk Cree. And he used to talk Cree and he used to write Cree and he could read Cree too. He could read and write Cree. And so after that we went to Anna Lake. He was a minister there for five years and he went to Red(?) Landing and he stayed there six years. And from there I got married at

Anna Lake there, married to Isbisters. And that's where my cousin Stanley Campbell, Stanley's brother married a sister too.

Margaret: Well, here are the old, old families of this whole province.

Mr. Hart: Yeah, and the other one was Ashdown. And the other sister was a Swede, married the other sister. And after that then we went to Berens River and he stayed there and I stayed with them until I was twenty-one and I left there and I travelled all over the hinterland. I used to travel to Sandy Lake, Deer Lake, (inaudible) and Little Grand Rapids. And after I came back from Berens River, I started to trap and trade, buying for the the rest of the guys who used to trade there. I never worked for the Hudson's Bay yet. And we used to trap for \$10 license, you know, for buying fur. Dogs, used

dogs for buying fur all over there, because people, they never used to live in the reserve like. They used to go out hinterlands and wintering camps, you know. They would all go out and we bought the fur off them like that.

So, after that then we, I used to be a guide for trappers. I worked for Tapper Outfit(?), a trading company, a Jew. And he had cut the road from Anna Lake to Cross Lake, that trap route, and from there Opasquia Lake, Ontario. And from there to Sandy Lake and Favourable Lake mines, I guess you heard about that. And I cut that road myself, that factory road. And I had sometimes ten men, sometimes eighteen men cutting that track when I was a guide. I didn't have any map but I know the country well. And I cut the road for, one was a forty mile portage. That's pretty hard to cut it. And the only thing I was afraid sometimes to get through the steep rocks, you know. Going through like, you know, guessing, just guessing, that was the only thing I was afraid. After they were wasting the work and we would have to turn it and cut it over again, you know. That's the only thing but I never hit any steep rocks or anything like that. The only thing, we climbed about the hill, that is the height of land they call it. Towards Sandy Lake, the highest you climb is about three miles, I guess. But you don't notice it, you climb about three miles. And at the top you can see all the little lakes all over from the top there after you climb it. It's not a steep hill, you know, but it's sloped like that and you climb about three miles, I guess. That hill has the height of land. It runs way down towards York Factory, that way. It starts from Black River, they call it inland, I don't know how many miles. Black River they call it, Winnipeg Lake. It starts from there, it is just a ridge like, you know, off the muskeg and you see little jackpines growing in the sand heap like that. They start like that. So, I quit that.

Margaret: When did you finish that?

Mr. Hart: Me? Since... I don't know how many years ago. And I worked for the mines after that, Gods Lake mines. After the mines was quit, you know, I went to Island Lake, back there to build a house and I was to work for that guy there. For the name Oscar and he took over a trading outfit there for Tapper Outfit. That's the fellow I started with. But I went and built a house for him. Like he wanted to build a house down there so I stayed there for a while and built a house there. We had to fix it so. And a little trading outfit there. After the old fellow died, the old Mr. Tapper, the guy that managed it went to Winnipeg, and we quit there, and the fellow, I worked with him fourteen years. I worked for him for fourteen years and that fellow went to Winnipeg. He was an Englishman. That's the chap that married Charlie's brother's daughter. And that's his daughter there and she is a registered nurse.

And after that I came home. I built a house there and I sold it for \$200, the house, and the other one at Gods Lake, I sold it for \$60, the house that I built there. So, the mines, they sold for \$10 because they had to sell just... (inaudible) after

the mine was closed. So, I stayed there for a while. I ran the store, what do you call it, at what you call (inaudible) Point. And the boss stayed at Garden House. I had a little picture show there in the cabins, you know. We had a little camp, you know; they had a show there. Every Saturday he used to come there, you know, and he had a picture show there. So I stayed two years there, running the store there, buying fur there, you know, down at (inaudible) Point. That's a Catholic Reserve, that's Anna Lake there I am talking about.

So then the old fellow died so we quit trading. So I came this way, this way here and I built my house. That's the building there. And I gave it to my son after he got married and I built this one here. (Phone rings) And I worked for the hospital thirteen years here, the Indian hospital. And we had to write on our exams, four classes, doing engineer. But I took sick, heart trouble, and the doctor didn't want me to work on the boards. But in case of accidents, something like that, you know. So I went to hospital in St. Boniface for a month. So I stayed there and I didn't work about three months. And I went back there and they took, transferred me to a night watchman. So I have retirement now. Last year, I retired last year in March. So I am fixing the house, like I am finishing, painting, repainting this house now. And I think one of the (name) wants to rent it. I will rent it for a winter, you see. So it's a chance for me to go stay in the city for over the

winter like, you know. My son is down there. He just got married last February and my wife and I went there, you know, to see the wedding. He married a French girl in St. Boniface. Wait, I'll show you.

Margaret: So that's another?

Mr. Hart: Two sons, yeah, that's all I got. One's working at Trans-Airways there and the other boy is working at the wholesale for Western Groceries. So that's where, they want us, he wants us to come like, you know. They want us to come and stay there for a winter. So if that fellow don't change his mind...

Margaret: Well, you've done a lot of building in your lifetime.

Mr. Hart: Yeah, a lot of building. Just helping around at the mines too, you know. Taking the pipe out, dangerous job there. (Inaudible) You climb down about 600 feet down, you know, down to the 600 foot level that they go down. And the other one, number two shaft, is 2000 feet. I worked there too. Not mining, like I mean, just taking the pipes out after they quit there, you know. We had to take them out, the pipes and rails, you know. For the cars because that's where they push the ore like, you know, iron, you know. Then it goes up the shaft.

Margaret: Well, what about places like Gods Lake? Do you think there is any chance of those mines coming back again?

Mr. Hart: They were talking about it. They were talking about it to send the (inaudible) mines. They were talking about it but I don't know. I don't know about the mines there. Not until they open the country, I guess. If there is trains or something like that it will be all right. But it is expensive for trains. But we used to go down the shaft, you know, we used to go down from the head frame down, down like that, to the core. We were standing on top of the cage. I used to have a belt here. The first time I went there, it was kind of creepy. (Laughs) You get a creepy feeling like, you know, when you are going down. Like you see an open, you know. But it is just slow like, you know, down, you're hitting them galleys all the time. A board comes out sometimes, you know. When the cage goes up, it hits them boards that sticks out. So they have the dogs there, they call them dogs. They put these in, they are not bricks. The dogs grab them, then there is no danger there, if the cable breaks, it will go down, down, like that. Crash there. And if the cable lets go, you know, something lets go, you know. They call it the dog scratched their heads. But when a cable go like that, we don't work

like, you know. But if it breaks, you'll crack them. (Inaudible) Goes down through there. But if that thing goes down there, there is a way past the station there. I don't know how many feet down, about a hundred feet down it is full of water, you know. So that's, it lets go like that and if the cable breaks, it will drown everybody like that. (Laughs) It is dangerous sometimes. I mean it is a queezy feeling like when you are going down. Sometimes the hoistman is drunk when he comes to work, so they watch them all the time. But sometimes we don't go. Every month we test them. And sometimes we don't go down because they are drunk. He may not stop the cage, you know, when we were going down.

Margaret: You didn't feel like going in for mining?

Mr. Hart: Me? No, not mining because I am not strong enough to do that. A healthy man would do that. A heavy person, very heavy. It is wonderful there, in the underground, just like a thunderstorm all the time. The sounds, you know, echoes. Just like the dripping, water dripping all the time, just thunder like, you know. And one of the engineers, under the ground like, you know, he went to, it's a mile and a half, 600 level like, down there, to hit the other number two shaft. He just missed about four inches, the difference, a little higher, that's all. Under the water, you know, that's a mile and a half. And the boss used to walk from the number two and he comes out number one, from 600 feet down. That's a mile and a half. He must be a good engineer, eh? To go like that, you know, to head straight. Right from there. And my son worked there. For a while. He went there.

Margaret: Well, around Oxford House, what are the main names of the people there?

Mr. Hart: Epps, Winosks, the last names? And Woods, a few Woods, and Fletchers and Harts, with my two sisters there, and

Sinclairs.

Margaret: Well, Mrs. Remple comes from there, what was her name?

Mr. Hart: Oh, she is a Smith. Willie Smith's mother came from Gods Lake. She is a Gods Laker. And I don't know who else. I forgot the names. There used to be Homes there, H-o-m-e, at Oxford. But they died off.

Margaret: Is there a Mr. Home here now?

Mr. Hart: Yeah, there is one here now. And at Anna Lake, Mr. Campbell named Scotch names all them that was there, at Anna Lake. And Fletts, Woods and Harpers, you know, like that. Harpers and Fletts and Moniases and like that. There is two reserves there, at Anna Lake, right at Anna Lake and there is another one at Red Sucker Lake. Red Sucker Lake, but they don't give the reserves there, just the lease there. They just lease it there. So many people at Anna Lake, they'd have the biggest reserve in Manitoba, I think. I think that's the biggest reserve.

Margaret: About how many people do you know? Any idea?

Mr. Hart: I think it is close to about 2,000, 2,000 people at Anna Lake, treaty people. It must be now. I don't think it is less than that. Some of them, they have fourteen children, some of them fifteen. Like Chinamen. (laughs) But that's about fifteen years since I left there, Anna Lake.

Margaret: And you have been here for the most part since then?

Mr. Hart: Yeah, I know lots of people there a long time ago but... People like, you know. But the way they used to live like, you know. Not like now. But they say the people they never used to know anything about it, anything like that, you know, civilized people right here but I don't believe it. I think they are more civilized than now. They never go act like the crazy ways like the people are acting now. The same as kids. They listened to their parents, not now. They don't listen to them, they won't, just like nobody owns them like. That's the way I see it now. Because when long ago they used to, when you were 21 years old, a man he is a man that time. And he listened to his dad. When you ask him to do something, he would go there and ask his dad first. They don't run around like till midnight, running around like these people now. And they say they didn't know anything. But I think looks kind of a disgrace when I see all the treaty people travelling, like here. Crazy ways like drinking, they don't know when to stop drinking. That's what I mean. And they say these people didn't know nothing about civilized life before now. (laughs) And from inland it goes to cities, they just go crazy there. They couldn't keep themselves.

Margaret: Well, Tom's father was telling us yesterday of some of the camping trips that he had made going out for furs. Did

you do that kind of thing? By dog sled.

Mr. Hart: Lots of times. That's what I was doing all the time, I was travelling with dogs, you know. I travelled with dogs alone buying fur. I was at Gods Lake buying fur, mostly all alone. Sometimes I sleep twice through the week till I reached the people like -- I camped twice. The only thing is to, the first thing, I tied my dogs first, fed them first, my dogs. And then I make a camp, like the brush, you know, like a square like this and it was about that high with brush, you know, dig all the snow out, all that snow out on the top and you lay right on there where you are camping. And you put brush there and you always dig a little higher where you make a fire so the heat, there is more heat right there. But if you are low, you can't get any heat. You always look for hard ground, not the soft. The soft will burn through the hole like, you know. The fire goes down all the time, you get no heat from it. You always have very hard ground there, hard ground so it won't burn it. And lots of times a fellow gets up in the mornings, you know, the snow was that deep on top of you roof, lots of times. And you couldn't see your dogs, just their heads sticking out there, all covered up, you know. The wind, sometimes in the open, you know, if you camped in the open, you know. Sometimes it fools you, you camped in a camp, you picked a place, looks like lots of wood there to be burned, just a few brush there. You camped there all the time, (inaudible) and sometimes you were so warm, you know, when you sleep, you don't notice it, you know. And you wake up with lots of snow on top of you. (laughs) And that's the way it was. It is kind of miserable sometimes.

Margaret: Did you ever have any spills or did you ever have a bad trip?

Mr. Hart: Oh, lots of times, bad trips. A trying job sometimes. Lots of times I seen these fellows, these young guys from, what you call, traders, you know. They fix them from Winnipeg there, picked them up, you know. I remember one time one of them was a guy I was with named John Cochrane, he was travelling with me one time. And a fellow named Bernard Tache, we went three trips together like, you know. And it was the first trip we made so it was a hard time because of the snow and so often on foot, you know. We would go down to here, you know and it's cold, you know. And I made a fire and I had to go and get the dog and he was the one that came, with Darcy, a French halfbreed. (Inaudible) He said he wants to work so I had to go and look for him. So I loaded my load and went back to look for him. And there he is crying, because the dogs couldn't pull his load. He is slushing off. It was all frozen, muskeg. Not frozen solid, just ice, you know. Just covered up old ice, you know. And he was crying, so I took his load and told him to come. We were boiling the kettle, about a mile and a half and I made it back, you know. So, I took half his load, so I had a big load then, you know. So he could ride. And he was played out too, you know. You get stiff, you know, the first time. You get cold too.

(End of Interview)

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