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PATRICIA SONEY
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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Discusses the visits of Henry Ford to Walpole Island.
- Discusses the various passenger boats that used to stop at
Walpole Island.
Alfred: I think I started going to school when I was nearing
nine.
Burton: Yeah. Which school would that be?
Alfred: That would be the front.
Burton: The red school house, eh?
Alfred: The Number One school, yeah. I really don't remember
too much.
Burton: Well, by putting all this story together, you know,
we generally can make something out. Some people don't
remember the names of the teachers, and others, you know, they
tell us about other things in the school. But that was the
little red school house and they called it Number One school.
Alfred: I think they called it Number One school, yeah. And
I think my first teacher was an oldish man, he must have been
about 60. He had a mustache and I forgot his name now. But he
was, I don't think he was all there.

Burton: Well, was he a non-Indian or an Indian?

Alfred: No, he was white. And I don't know, he was a little funny, I thought anyway. He would go, he would board in a home near the school, like Thomas, what's his name, Evelyn Kick's father.

Burton: Peter Maccoons?

Alfred: No, Peter Thomas, I think. And I think he boarded there first, but he just stayed there only two weeks, then he found another place, another place, another place. I guess they couldn't stand him or something.

Burton: What type of desks did you use?

Alfred: Desks?

Burton: Yeah, you know, where you sit down.

Alfred: Oh, just two, it held two pupils. Yeah, it's... Yeah, I think it held two pupils, because I, there used to be two good-looking girls sitting behind me and they used to tease me, you know, and I'd turn around and talk with them. The teacher would make me sit with one of them and my partner would sit with the other, Irene Shipman and Helen -- I forget her last name -- Mavis Jacobs's older sister, they had... What was the father's name anyway?

Burton: Mavis's father?

Alfred: Yeah.

Burton: John.

Alfred: John Solomon. Well, Helen and... Helen Solomon, they're the ones that sat in the back of me and the teacher would make us sit with, you know. I don't know what good that did.

Burton: What subjects did the teacher teach?

Alfred: Well, that I don't remember. Copying, I guess, is what as far as I remember. I mean at that time we thought it was just... She writes them on the board and we'd copy it. And...

Burton: Do you remember whether that little school had a bell up on the roof?

Alfred: Yeah, yeah.

Burton: And the teacher would ring...

Alfred: Ring it for nine o'clock in the morning, and one

o'clock, at noon hour, after lunch. I don't remember too much about this.

Burton: Well, I've heard that there were Indian teachers that taught there at some point. Do you...?

Alfred: No, I don't remember. No, I don't think so. Not in my time.

Burton: No. Oh, it must have been before.

Alfred: Could have been before. Oh yeah, yeah, before. That was Charlie K. Johnson, I think, used to. That was before my time though. But we had all white teachers.

Burton: Approximately when would that be when you went to school?

Alfred: 19---, about 1909 I think, it might have been '10. That's when I first started. Because Wally went, we went together the first time. He was seven, I think, so I must have been about nine when I started school.

Burton: And you walked to school?

Alfred: Yeah. But Ed Morrow and all the... from Squirrel Island, they walked that every day.

Burton: About, well, about three miles?

Alfred: Oh, it's more than that.

Burton: Oh way down, they lived way down the other end?

Alfred: Yeah, way down. They were across from Tashmoo Park, that's where they lived. Ed Morrow and...

Burton: That must be about four and a half miles, eh?

Alfred: About four miles and a half, yeah. Chapman, he used to, and his sisters. They walked every day.

Burton: How big a class did you have?

Alfred: Well, if I remember correctly, when everybody was there we had about 25 or 30. That was when everybody came. But most of the time I would say we had about 15.

Burton: And they had the blackboard up in front?

Alfred: Yeah, I think we had two blackboards.

Burton: What about your heating system?

Alfred: We had a big potbelly stove, and the woodshed was in the back.

Burton: Where they kept this wood?

Alfred: Yeah. I think they had three foot wood.

Burton: That must have been a pretty big stove.

Alfred: Yeah. I don't know who brought the wood in. I suppose it's the janitor, whoever it was, I don't know. Anyway...

Burton: Well, were the other schools in existence at that time, when you went to school?

Alfred: Yeah, there was one in the back, Number Two school.

Burton: And what about the Number Three?

Alfred: No.

Burton: You don't remember that?

Alfred: No, there was just the two schools.

Burton: That must have been discontinued. They speak of Number Three school.

Alfred: Well, yeah, one. The Number Three school came and then they shut down this here Number One school.

Burton: I wonder if you could tell us something about the boats, the passenger boats that used to stop on Walpole, either up in front here or at Highbanks?

Alfred: Well, we used to have a big dock down by the old Customs, you know, by...

Burton: Yeah, in front of the office.

Alfred: Yeah. Tashmoo used to stop there at fair time. In fact there used to be a couple boats stopped at fair time. Wakita was one of them. And they used to have stands on both sides of the Custom office, in front of Joe Isan(?) and down below. They used to have just tables and whenever the boats come in, well, they all go down there and...

Burton: Set up stands.

Alfred: Yeah, set up stands. Some of them had canopy over them, but most of them were just the tables.

Burton: You remember the names of the other boats, if there were any, outside of Tashmoo and Wakita?

Alfred: Yeah, there used to be another boat there.

Burton: It wouldn't be Putten Bay?

Alfred: No. Owana or something like that.

Burton: Yeah.

Alfred: I think it's the Owana.

Burton: Yeah, I remember a mention of Owana.

Alfred: I didn't see it too often, but I think that's the one that used to stop there.

Burton: Yeah. They used to have the fair grounds over by the Anglican Church grounds. And I just can't place the... approximately the year that they moved that...

Alfred: Up here?

Burton: Yeah, location. I think it was in the '20s, sometime in the late '20s.

Alfred: Well, I wasn't, I wasn't here. For about three years I was in the hospital. I imagine around '25 or '26. But I was in the hospital at that time. I know they used to have a dance hall there.

Burton: The... Everybody remembers that rocking arm on that steam boat, Wakita. You know, it had an arm like this and it used to go up and down like that.

Alfred: Oh yeah.

Burton: I often wondered what that was, you know. What was it, part of the motor?

Alfred: That was the, that's the one that turned the wheel. It attached right to the... It was sort of attached to the fly wheel, you know, it acted as the crank shaft. And on each end they were attached to the fly wheel. That's right.

Burton: That rocking arm on that Wakita, I often wondered what that was. You know, two arms like that and they used to go up and down. Well, that steamer, Wakita.

Alfred: That turned the...

Burton: The crank shaft, eh?

Alfred: Yeah, acted like a crank shaft, only one end of the rocker just went up and down, see. But the other one was like this.

Burton: Oh, that was a common boat. It was a old boat, one of the older types, I think. Yeah, we're just talking about the boats that used to stop on Walpole Island.

Alfred: And there used to be a another boat from Mount Clemens, Mineral City was the name of it. It stopped here quite often.

Burton: What about the boats that used to stop at Highbanks? Do you remember people talking about those boats?

Alfred: I don't recall of any boats stopping there. They might have stopped there but...

Burton: Well, Frank Mann has pictures of boats. They were, had a nice picture of two boats tied up at the Highbanks Park, passenger boats. Well, this was before, many years ago.

Alfred: Yeah, probably in the early 1900s.

Burton: Yeah.

Alfred: No, I don't recall of any boats that... My memory's gone. A lot of stuff I can't remember.

Beatrice: Who was that?

Alfred: I don't remember him.

Beatrice: Looks just like your father, looks just like Chuck. "Samples of the work of the man pictured below, Mr. William Soney, have been presented to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth." I never remember his eyes being like that.

Alfred: That was taken around 1910, I think.

Beatrice: "While such fine old steamers as the Putten Bay and the Tashmoo no longer ply the St. Clair and regular, the river is still the busiest highway in the world. The shore to the St. Clarence (inaudible)." Monydoo, Monydoo, is that how you pronounce that?

Burton: Yeah, that's pretty close. Is that a boat, name of a boat?

Beatrice: No, that is God. Mushmeatoo(?) I guess it is. Well... Jacobs's cable fare, eh? You didn't know I had this, did you?

Alfred: No.

Burton: What is that?

Beatrice: It's a pamphlet that was put out in 1968 called "Walpole Island". Here's the steeple of the church. Here's...

Burton: That's one, probably one of the summer students' program.

Beatrice: Here's one, "Know Your Ships", but I don't think any of the old ones would be in here. "The (inaudible) John Erickson seen about 1920 leaving the first (inaudible) with a barge in tow." Now that's an old ship. "Remember when the Polateral Northwest, one of the many passenger ships that once plied the Great Lakes". Remember that?

Alfred: (Inaudible).

Beatrice: And "The S.S. Douglas Holton". This is the (inaudible). This is the one that went here yesterday and I said it's one of Ford's, remember? And what's this? "The John J. Borman" -- this still goes up and down. "The Norwegian vessel Jeroso discharging volkswagens". Oh, that's at Toronto port, we're not interested in that. That's a coast guard boat. Well, there's John A. Macdonald. That's an ice breaker, isn't it? This is an older book than that, but I think it's got... No, it doesn't have the same thing, does it? "Their ships of yesteryears, the schooner Our Son." Do you remember that? You don't? That's a sailboat. (Inaudible).

Alfred: I remember the sailboats that used to go up and down here.

Beatrice: You remember the sailboats? Well, that's one of them.

Burton: Was that a two mast or one?

Beatrice: No, that's four.

Burton: Oh yeah. Well, that's something.

Alfred: They used to tow these sailboats with a tug or something, you know, have about four in the, you know...

Burton: Four sailboats in tow?

Alfred: Yeah. They had the sails down and they tow them up. If they were loaded, well, I've seen lumber on there, and fish, lumber and fence posts.

Beatrice: I don't know whether there'd be anything in here. This is Ontario. (Inaudible).

Burton: Do you remember Ford coming to Walpole, Henry Ford?

Alfred: Yeah, I heard but I never...

Burton: You didn't see his boat?

Alfred: No, I didn't see his boat. I saw him at Briggum's place, you know. He was, they were out on the lawn, they were talking about something.

Beatrice: He used to come down the dock and he used to give the

kids 50 cents. And he gave Alida Bernum 50 cents one day, and she hung onto that 50 cents for years. She said it's probably the only thing she'd ever get from Henry Ford. Here's a book. This is "The Loon Feather", but you'd have to... But the boats and the stuff that are in this are all authentic. There's a lot of, what should I say, the plot through here is imaginative, but the boats and stuff is authentic. This is of the fishing era and some are 1814. "Was to bring so many changes beginning as no other summer except for the Mohawks when the women begin making them in numbers. Little boxes of birch bark that one could easily hold in the palm of the hand, covered with design worked colored quills. They're meant to hold little cakes or sugar. I knew we were going to do

something different." That's all about life on the Great Lakes. And this goes back even before you can, you can't even remember 1814.

Alfred: I can't even remember 1920.

Burton: Yeah, I'm doing quite a lot of research on Ford, Henry Ford, when he used to visit Walpole Island. He must have thought that young Bernum was one of the natives, eh?

Beatrice: Yeah. Well she was down there with all the Indian kids. You know, they were all lined up along there and I suppose he couldn't give all the other kids 50 cents and not give her one.

Alfred: Fifty cents? He was generous. Most of the time he gave out dimes.

Beatrice: No, he gave them 50 cents that day, because I remember her telling about it. Now she played with Ford a lot. Now whether Ford would have been down there or not I don't know, but I do know that the (name) and Ford played together all along. This is a real good book on the authenticity of the early...

Alfred: He stopped...

Beatrice: And it's about the fur business, and Esther and Jacobs. "In the days of the side of a black feather brings it all back to me. It grows a feather and his hat was the badge of the leader of the Brigade, and it was coveted by every man who hadn't it. It wasn't easily come by, but it was rather like the laurel leaf of the olden days. As Pierre said. 'A man, to win it, a man must be a better man than the rest. He must be able to fight better, walk longer distances, and carry more than the usual 100 pounds or the portage if need be.'"

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Beatrice: Briggum, yeah, Briggum who...?

Burton: Reverend Briggum.

Alfred: And he donated one or two tractors to the Indians. And if I remember correctly a threshing machine.

Burton: Yeah, a steam tractor, eh?

Alfred: Yeah. No, no, no...

Burton: Oh yeah. With those, you mean with those tractors? Yeah, that's right.

Beatrice: He wanted to buy the point up there, you know, the point where the (inaudible) leaves the St. Clair River.

Burton: You mean St. Anne's?

Beatrice: No, not St. Anne's, up here. Up in the Highbanks. Well, if it's not Highbanks it's very low. He wanted to buy that and they wouldn't sell it to him. He wanted to build a home right on that point, but he didn't want it unless he could buy the land.

Burton: They should have sold it to him.

Alfred: Yeah.

Beatrice: Well, they didn't, they wouldn't sell it to him. The Bernums were here then, you know, coming back and forth.

Burton: You don't know anybody that took a picture of his boat?

Beatrice: Well, if the Bernums would have taken anything it's been destroyed. It seems to me that Ford should be able to remember him coming.

Burton: Yeah.

Beatrice: Because... It was before I ever came up here and I've been coming up here nearly 50 years. What are you doing, making up a book or something, Burton?

Burton: Well no, we're just... Well, yes and no. Well, first of all we have to collect some material and afterwards try and put it into a story form. That part about Ford buying that portion of Highbanks, that must have been sort of an informal thing with the chiefs and councillors on the road, because I've never seen that on record, you know, in the minutes any place.

Beatrice: Well, I don't know whether it was ever voted on or anything, but I do know this Mrs. Bernum was always telling me, you know, about him wanting to buy that and they wouldn't sell it to him.

Alfred: It may be just informal talk.

Beatrice: Well, it could have been just talk. And they just said no and that never got any farther.

Burton: I don't suppose any of the Bernums would be living yet, eh?

Beatrice: Just Elida.

Burton: Elida, eh?

Beatrice: Well, Madeleine is and Ruth is but I don't think they'd know anything about that.

Alfred: Ruth might, I mean Madeleine might.

Burton: Do they still come around to the resort or...?

Beatrice: No, but she was up here when I was away. I was in the hospital. I don't think you'd get any information out of them, I really don't. If Elida was here you might, but Elida is in Florida. But at that time they... At that time the Soneys were living back over here, you know, and they were very close.

Alfred: Joe (name) told me (inaudible).

Beatrice: Well Joe Day would be apt to know more. Where is Joe Day?

Burton: He was in Essex the last time I heard. He was in the fruit business, I think.

Beatrice: Oh, he's growing it?

Burton: Yeah.

Alfred: Gerald might be able to give you some information too.

Burton: Yeah.

Beatrice: I don't think she could give as much Joe Day, because Joe Day was up there at the store.

Alfred: Oh, I know. You'd get some good information from that Henry Riley.

Burton: Yeah.

Alfred: He must be about 80 years old.

Burton: Well, he says he's 97.

Alfred: Ninety-seven. Well, he should give you some good information.

Beatrice: Well now, when we had the senior citizens from the Methodist Church up here this man came down and gave a talk. I can't tell you what his name was, but I think that was the man.

Alfred: Henry Riley?

Beatrice: Yeah. And he had all kinds of written documents, all kinds. He had suitcases full of documents and things that he had in there.

Alfred: Yeah, I think that you could get some good information from Henry.

Beatrice: Well, I don't think he'd do it by memory, because I thinks he's got records. If he's the man that came down and gave the talk. He was real old at that time and it was very difficult for him to talk, and he sat down all the while he was talking. Does that sound like him?

Alfred: Yeah.

Beatrice: But he really had an awful lot of material. He couldn't possibly have given it all in a half hour.

Alfred: He used to sell souvenirs down at that Tashmoo Park.

Beatrice: He did?

Alfred: Yeah, if that's the man that you're talking about. He was an Indian?

Beatrice: Oh yeah.

Alfred: Yeah, well that's Henry Riley.

Burton: It must have been one of those days that I was missing. I don't remember.

Beatrice: Well you wouldn't have been there anyway, Burton. It was a group of senior citizens from Detroit. They come up on a bus. And oh, this would be about what, five, six years ago or more. And I think... I don't know whether it was Aaron or who, got the man to come down and talk to us. But they wanted someone from the Island to come and, you know, talk to them. I think it was Aaron that got him to come down and talk. And he came and there was... See, we had it at the church grounds down there, you know, that building.

Burton: In the Anglican Church?

Beatrice: Yeah, at the Anglican Church. And we had it in the, you know, the centre thing there, which needs to be replaced. And...

Alfred: Did you say five or six years ago?

Beatrice: Yeah, or longer. It's when I was secretary to the church down there, you know, when I was secretary to United Methodist Church. And the woman who had charge of the activities at the nursing home wanted to know if they could come up here for a day. So we made arrangements and he came down.

Burton: I have no idea who that could be.

Beatrice: Well, he's an older man. He was old then -- he couldn't stand up to talk, he had to sit down. And what did you say his name is?

Alfred: Henry Riley.

Burton: Well, Henry Riley is a big guy about... Well, even right now he weighs 230, '40 pounds. Would that be him?

Beatrice: Well, he wouldn't have weighed that much but he wasn't a small man by any means. He was a good sized man.

Alfred: Well, you could ask Aaron.

Beatrice: Or you could ask Henry, he'd know.

Burton: Did this fellow have a mustache on, do you remember? Joe (name) used to be in that business too, you know.

Beatrice: And is he dead?

Burton: Yeah.

Beatrice: I don't remember him having a mustache.

Alfred: Well, he wasn't old.

Beatrice: He wasn't old?

Alfred: No.

Beatrice: Well whose man was up in years?

Patricia: See, Henry Riley is 97 now. Would he be that old six years back?

Beatrice: Well, yeah. It could have been six, seven years ago that they were up here.

Patricia: Then he would have been about 90.

Beatrice: About 90. And he talked very slowly and it was a little difficult for him to get his statements in coherence.

Burton: Well, I'll have to ask Aaron who that gentleman was, because if he had documents that's what we're looking for.

Beatrice: He had a lot of them, he really did, Burton. And he gave a very... He talked about, you know, the beginning of the island, and Tecumseh and all that sort of stuff. He gave a lot of information that I never heard of before. Of course this monument down here that's supposed to have had Tecumseh's monument on the top of that, Garwood was supposed to furnish that, according to Mrs. Bernum. Do you know anything about that?

Burton: Well, yes. He supplied the base.

Beatrice: Oh, he supplied the base?

Burton: Yeah. Yeah, what you see there now.

Beatrice: Oh, Garwood supplied that? Then who was supposed to put the monument up?

Burton: I don't know. That was up to the Soldiers' Club, I think.

Beatrice: Well, the way she got it was that he was supposed to have supplied the monument. I can't remember when that monument, when that base wasn't there. But they've never done anything about a monument to Tecumseh. And is Tecumseh's bones buried underneath that thing?

Alfred: Yep.

Burton: Well, they're supposed to be. Were you there when they had that big burial service for Tecumseh?

Beatrice: No.

Burton: That was in '41, I think it is.

Beatrice: No. If I'd been on the island I probably wouldn't have gone anyways, but I don't think I was...

Burton: Well, just about everybody was there. They had quite a big crowd. They had the bishop come over to perform the service.

Alfred: They displayed the scalp before that at the parish hall.

Beatrice: Oh, Tecumseh's scalp.

Alfred: And I don't know too much about it. I was there but I didn't pay too much attention.

Beatrice: Well I think in this book, "The Loon Feather," there's quite a bit in here about Tecumseh. I got to get my other glasses on because I can hardly read with these, you know. Most of this centres around Mackinaw Island.

Girl: Looks like somebody is bringing Matt in.

Burton: Well, it must be getting on noon anyway, so maybe we better conclude.

(END OF SIDE B)

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