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HIGHLIGHTS:

- The entire document is an account of her education.
Burton: ...things that you attended during your lifetime.

Amyline: Well, around about 1921 I went to the little red school house that was at the front of the Island, back of the parish hall, and it was also near the Anglican Church, St. John's. And I was there for not too long, maybe about two months. And then from there I went to -- they were building a new school, a great big white school. And it opened in 1922 and I went there for another two, three months. And then around about June they started making applications for, to see if I could get into Muncey school. It was being, it was opened for children that had no father or no mother, or had trouble in the family. So, my mother being gone, I was able to get in. My father couldn't very well take care of me in many ways, so I entered Muncey in the fall of 1923.

And I got into the harness, they gave us a uniform and high top black shoes, and good warm underwear, and... Like they did that with everybody that enrolled. And you stayed in uniform, you rarely saw your own clothes on... On Sundays, if you got to go to church about a mile away, it was a United Church. We went there, we marched there, about 130 boys and 130 girls marched down the road. It was nice. Then we come back and...

I remember about going to school was each evening we had a

prayer service. That stuck with me because it kind of put a foundation to my life. The Bible was read, we sang a song, and then one of the teachers or the principal said a prayer and we were all set for night, to go to bed. And then during the day we had classes, we had classrooms we had to attend. It depended on the grade you were in. I started from kindergarten and worked right up to the time when I was in the twelfth grade. No, ninth grade, beg your pardon, ninth grade. And there was eight of us in the class. This around about 1933 in the early summer, early spring. We had our examinations.

And our teacher was Mr. Dodson, Fredrick Dodson, he was a little man, a little short man. But you know, the size of him it didn't make any difference. He was a firm teacher, and he made us tow the mark. And one day he gave us orders. He said, "You know, there's eight of you in that class, senior class," he said, "and I'm going to see that every one of you pass." So, come time to have exams, you know, we went to Melbourne, I think it was Melbourne, Ontario -- just a few miles from there, and we had our examinations. And lo and behold we all passed, and oh, he was so glad. "See," he said, "I told you you were all going to pass." And that was... Well, I skipped a lot from 1923 to 1933.

It was a big school. And they supplied the milk and butter because they had cattle in the barns. They had a cattle barn, and they had a horse barn where they had the horses for people that had to plow the land. We didn't have, at that time we didn't have tractors. We had to use horses and plows to plow the land in order to raise produce to run the school. We had our, they had vegetables, and potatoes, carrots, and all kinds of vegetables. And then we had great big strawberry patch. And I remember they used to... That was a treat to be able to get strawberries. And then from the cow barn we had certain boys that had to do the milking, certain boys that took care of the cows. And from the milk, they used to bring it up and the girls, the older girls would have to take care of the milk, screen it, put it in the great big machinery. And anyway, they made their own butter too, but not cheese, just milk and butter we had.

And then they also had a great big stand where they kept pigs, and every once in a while they slaughtered those for pork for the school's use. Well occasionally too they would kill a few cows in order to have beef. But I'll tell you, all during the

ten years I was away at school, I could never complain about the meals. We had real nourishing meals, good ones.

And the girls were given opportunity to learn how to cook and go upper and lower kitchen. The lower kitchen was where there was a lady that took care of the girls, maybe about eight or ten girls learned how to cook in there, cook for all the 240 or '50 pupils. And they changed the routine. Every once in a while they had different girls working, like every month. They

changed, different number of girls would work in the kitchen to learn how to cook to feed the pupils. And then in the upper kitchen was a place where they learned a little bit more. I remember working with Lila Blackbird -- she is now gone -- but I remember working up there. And we worked for a lady that was cooking for the teachers and for the principal of the school. And there we learned the more finer way of cooking than we did downstairs. Good meals too, same as downstairs, but it was more refined, because it was for the teachers.

And then there was a great big building -- it still stands because I've been to Muncey within the last three years -- and there was a great big brick building where they did all the laundry for the pupils. Those great big machinery for washing, and then there was great big rollers for ironing. And then in there I remember there was, we used to take a bath. Everybody had to take a bath every Friday. And it was just a little square tub. It seems funny to me now to think of it, but we fit in those square tubs. There were a few fat girls in the school, but they managed to get clean too. So that was our clothing and our cleanliness there.

And then in another direction was a great big chicken house. Oh, I think maybe they had, they must have had, oh, 150 chickens. And there we got our eggs from them to feed the

pupils. And the one that was in charge of that was a lady by the name of Lizzie McKinley. I just remember her now. And she did her work well, but she had two or three girls that worked with her, you know. They tried to give us a real rounded-out life, because she rotated the jobs every month. Like one month a girl would be in the kitchen, and another time, the next month perhaps, she'd go into the upper kitchen. And then maybe she'd go into the laundry, and then maybe she'd end up working for Mrs. McKinley in the poultry business. And the boys would be the same. They had rotated jobs too. Some would with the pig pen, take care of the pigs, and the cow barns. Certain boys would have to take care of the milking and feeding of the cows. Then in the horse barn there was certain boys that had to take care of the horses, feed and water them and groom them. And then I think that just about takes care of that.

For recreation I just don't remember what we did. Well, we were in the yard, we could walk around, and we could play games. And I remember we had a teeter-totter, great big teeter-totter. But outside of that I don't remember any other recreation, other than just to walk around and make up our own games. And in the playroom, they called them the playrooms, it's really where we had our boxes, where the girls kept their belongings. Each box, maybe one or two girls would have. They kept their candy there maybe, if they had any, and a few personal things, but there was about 30 or 40 boxes. Everybody didn't have one, some of the younger children didn't need any, really. And that's where we spent a lot of the time.

And up above the playroom on the girls' side was the sewing

room where they taught us to sew. We made uniforms that we wore all the time, you know. After having our weekly bath everybody had a clean set of clothes to put on, from underwear right to the dress, or the overalls for the boys. And we made

our own quilts in the sewing room. They made -- stop and think about it now -- it was denim, blue denim, pretty blue, really dark blue. And it was the same material as our dresses were made from. But we made these quilts, the bottom would be one whole piece of blue denim and then batting in between, and then another piece of blue denim. And, well, they were good-looking by the time we got through sewing them. I think we made on the average two or three a month, because all the girls didn't sew. Some of the younger girls did something else. They taught us also to knit, they taught us to crochet, as well as just do mending. They had some machines in the sewing room, maybe about half a dozen, and some of the girls ran those -- not always. I had to learn the hard way, I got my finger caught in the needle one time and we had a hard time extracting the needle out of my finger. But I learned to sew on the machine. I learned to make quilts, and learned to make dresses. And we mended well so...

And up above the sewing room was a great big dormitory for the girls that were... Like they were a dormitory for the juniors and the intermediates, and the seniors. There was one, two, three dormitories for the girls, the same for the boys.

And the principal, I remember, he wasn't principal too long because another man came in. I think he was just old, I think that's what happened. But he had a girl going to college in London -- her name was Helen -- and during, oh, I think it was around about June she died, And, you know, they brought the body to the school and all the girls were sewing. Oh, we didn't know anything about death, you know, but this is the way that we learned what happens when a person passes out of this world -- they die. And everybody, all the girls and all the boys were asked if they wanted to go in and view the body. It was in a place where we could all march in and see her. To

this day I think of it, you know, it was one of the most beautiful funerals I've ever seen -- if you could ever call a funeral beautiful. And the room was just full of roses, yellow roses, pink roses, red roses -- being the month of June, you know, that's the month for roses when they're at their best. And in the course of time Mr. (name) left and he took his other daughter, Laura. They went back to London.

And in comes Reverend O.B. Strapp. He was there, for all the time I was there, he was there, but he lived up to his name. We used to call him -- well, Mr. Strapp was his name -- and a lot of us got strapping. And it was funny, you know, while we got good meals some of us snitched. One time three or four of us went and broke into the place where they had syrup. We went in there and we swiped some bread and we soaked up the bread with syrup and somehow he got hold of that. I don't remember

getting caught, but anyways somebody must have squealed and we all got a strapping. Great big thick strap he used. It used to make our hands feel like they were about two inches thick. And then another time I remember one of the girls -- I don't even know if she was hungry -- but anyway she swiped some bread and she really put a lot of lard, what she thought was lard she put it on her bread and she hid it away -- she told me this later on. And she went to a place to eat by herself after work, after she got out of the kitchen. She thought, "Well, I'm going to go someplace and have a nice lard sandwich." So she went up in the stairway where there was nobody going up or down and she ate her sandwich. And she said, "Amyline, you know what happened?" She said, "I started to get bubbles coming out of my mouth. And you know, I had used soap." That soap that comes in the barrels, that's the kind of lard she put on there. She didn't know, she was stealing, you know, and she didn't know. Well anyway, we'll skip that part. I guess I should say it doesn't pay to steal because it doesn't turn out right anyway.

Well, after -- I was there from 1923 to 1933. I think I have just about everything covered except that some of the teachers I remember was a Miss Outree(?), she was a French teacher. And then there was a lady from England and she was the nurse in the school. And the one thing I remember about her was she had two bulldogs for pets. Well, they were well known in the school, kids knew them and they were not cross or anything, they looked ugly. But their names were Maggy and Jiggs. And I think that's about all I can remember.

I came home in 1933 and I went up, during the course of time of... Let's see, came home in June, end of June, and about the next month I went to the office, the band office, and I went to see the chief, or chief and agent. I don't remember his name at the time, I think it was Mr. McCullum. And I asked if I could go to high school in Wallaceburg. "Oh," he says, "I'll fill out some papers." And he said, "Does your father know about this?" And I said, "Well, I asked him if I could go on to school in the fall, maybe about September." He said, "All right, I'll have everything all ready for you to fill out next time you come in." So I went in about a week's time and he said, "You can go to high school in Wallaceburg, but you'll have to ride in the car." He said, "There's Eddie Pinnance going, and there's Vera and Laura Kewayosh, and Edwin James." And he said, "There's a Dorothy Isaac but I think she stays in town. She's already been going to high school. But see if you can get a ride with these people." At the time Eddie had a little car. It was little, but we all managed to squeeze in that car and I went to high school for two years in town. Just went to tenth grade.

But outside of that I feel like I've had a full life. The ten years away at Muncey and then a little bit of schooling I got at the red school and the white school -- that really couldn't

count much only that I got to learning to get along with other kids -- and then the two years in high school they were good. Only my home life wasn't very good. My stepmother and I didn't get along very well, we more or less screeched at each other. We just didn't get along so I thought, "Well, I'll get out and I'll get out on my own." So I started to work out as a domestic. I cleaned homes in Carson's Island, and I went to Alginack and I earned a living. That's it. Maybe you should ask me questions.

Burton: What was the official name of the school in Muncey?

Amyline: Oh, that was the Mt. Elgin Institute, I forgot to say that.

Burton: Well, you spoke of the work the boys and girls did, but I was just wondering how the day was divided between work and class.

Amyline: Well, at nine in the morning everybody went to school, most of them. We went to about 11:30 and everybody went into the dining room to eat. And then again at one o'clock there were certain groups that went to school in the afternoon. They had it divided, certain grades. I think the kindergarten went all day. Then maybe the next few grades they had alternate classes because there was one, two, three classrooms, and for around 240 they couldn't all get into the classrooms. So they alternated the classes, which worked out all right, because there weren't that many teachers -- one, two, three teachers, and two cooks, one principal, one nurse, one lady that took care of the chicken house. I think that's it.

Burton: Who ran the institute? Was it a church?

Amyline: You mean... I always heard, I really can't say for sure, I always heard that it was under the Anglican Church. I never really asked anybody, but I know it was well run.

Burton: Yeah, it was church-funded anyways.

Amyline: I think so, yes.

Burton: All right, getting back to the Walpole Island schools. Did the teacher ring a bell that was up on top of the roof to call classes together, do you remember that?

Amyline: The little red school, yes. But the other one I think they had just a hand bell. They used to go to the door of the school and ring the bell for the children.

Burton: Do you remember who your teacher was in the little red school? Was he an Indian or was he white?

Amyline: No, it was a white lady, McDougall, Miss McDougall. She lived in that big house, you know, where Don Isaac lives now. That's where she lived. And in the white school I had McPherson -- there was a McDougal there too, it was her mother.

Burton: Oh. She was the same teacher that taught in the red school?

Amyline: I don't think so, no, different. Just happened she had the same name. And oh, what else did you want to know?

Burton: What about the heating system, what sort of heating did you have?

Amyline: Well, over on the island here we had wood. In the white school we had, I think it was fuel oil as far as I can remember because I worked for the teachers there too, you know. I kept their quarters clean, the teachers that were living there. I worked there for a while.

Gladys: Did the school have hydro or plumbing?

Amyline: At the time? I can't even remember. Oh, I think we did have, but it wasn't, you know, it was sort of in the primitive. I think we just had two, one in each room, hanging light. And then in Muncey the school was heated by steam heat, because I remember we had radiators and they used to steam quite a bit. And there was certain people that took care of the heating of room, I mean, where they had the big furnace, like they had to keep that heated. And I'm sure they used wood to keep that furnace... No, I know, they had coal to keep the great big furnace heating in order to supply heat for the whole school. And they had radiators in each room. And another thing I can remember is all our clothing had numbers. Like you had your dress with a number on, and your underwear, and your stockings, and even your shoes -- you had to mark your shoes because they can get mixed up with the other pupils. The whole term I was there I had number 59. Quite a few of the pupils were from Walpole. Well, I should say maybe a small percentage. Some of them didn't like to be there and then others enjoyed it. I really enjoyed the whole ten years I was there.

Burton: Were there some that ran away from school?

Amyline: Yes, there was some that ran away, but they were brought back. They'd get the police after them and they'd go

to the different reserves and they'd bring them back to school. I remember two of them running away from the Island. There was

Albert Notty and Nelson Sword. They ran away and they couldn't catch them, but they got to the Island and Nelson often tells us, he says, by the time he got home he was walking on his bare sole. He said his shoes wore out he walked so much. He didn't go back to school. I don't know if he's sorry that he ever ran away or not. But, you know, he said he didn't get a good break. "When I should be going to school," he said, "they put me out in the pig pen to take care of the pigs, or take care of the horses. But when somehow," he said, "I missed my schooling." But he's able to write his name. To this day, you know, he gets along all right. He always says he was cheated somehow, because he didn't attend school like he should have. That I would never be able to explain.

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