



Dalton Jermey

Interview

March 27, 1974

Length: 57 minutes and 49 seconds

Jack Coleman introduces himself and Peter Moran from the Simcoe County Archives. They are at the residence of Dalton Jermey who lives on Lot 1, Concession 9 in Medonte. Dalton was Warden of Simcoe County in 1964 and is presently the president of the Ex-Wardens Association. Dalton was born at Bass Lake in Orillia on January 1, 1914. At that time, his dad ran the sawmill in the area. His dad was Clifford Henry Jermey and his mother was Olive Francis Tompkins. He had no brothers but two younger sisters named Ruth Fowling* (living in Ottawa) and Edna Night (living in Orillia). Dalton's wife was Edith McArthur and they were married on January 23, 1943. They had two daughters and a son. Both daughters are married and his son (Donald) lives at home on the farm.

Dalton started public school about five miles away from where he lived and walked both ways. After graduating, he went on to Orillia [*inaudible*] Institute for four years. From there, he went into the dairy business. The public school was a one room school with 65 kids and one teacher. When he started his career at 18, Dalton worked for the Orillia Creamery during the summer for nine years and worked with his father in the bush in the winter. Then he started on his own in 1939 and bought the house he is currently living on. He bought the place across the road on March 8, 1950.

His father worked in the bush as a lumber man and was in the business for 40 years; he learned the trade in Longford. He then bought his uncle's sawmill on the west end of Bass Lake. In the winter, he moved it across the ice in 1910 to the east side (right next to what is now the Provincial Park). The sawmill industry used to be all hand work. They would saw the logs by





hand and do some work using horses. They would dump the wood on the ice in winter time and before spring came, they would put [*inaudible*] around them to keep them from floating away. The [*inaudible*] ladder ran into the water and the logs were taken in with an endless chain. It was run by steam at that time. His dad had a shingle mill in the winter as well. The logs they cut were either hard or soft wood. He did a lot of custom work for the people in the area. He retailed some of them and usually sold it to J.R. Eatons* in Orillia and would keep some soft wood to sell to people building houses. He did not do any planting there; it was a just mill. It took around 12 men to operate the saw mill and most of them boarded there. The engineer got about \$1.50 a day. They worked 10 hours a day for six days a week. They always finished working at five o'clock on Saturdays so that people would have a chance to go into town.

Longford is where his dad learned the trade and Peter notes that it is in Rama. Peter says there was a tramway from Lake St. John to Lake Couchiching but Dalton doesn't know who owned it. Dalton's father farmed a bit but not on a large scale. His father was a member of County Council from 1919-1924. The best known member that his father sat with was Earl Rowe and they were good friends. He was Reeve of Orillia Township [*it is unclear who they are referring to*]. When the re-forestation committee in Simcoe was created, Dalton's father and Jack Coleman's father were both elected members to that committee in 1922. Going back to the lumber business, when they were skidding in the fall, they usually had a shack in the bush where the horses were kept. When the mill was in operation, all the horses were kept at the saw mill and they belonged to his father.

Dalton kept horses until 1973. He wasn't a horse dealer but raised quite a few and showed horses along with his cattle. He retired from showing in 1956. He kept [*inaudible*] horses. Dalton bought his farm in September 1939 and it was an estate sale. The house had been neglected and it didn't have hydro or water. Dalton was not in the milk business at that time but with what he learned at the creamery he was able to start. He started purebred Ayrshire cattle; he bought some from Hon. Herbert A. Bruce (who was a well-known doctor and Member of Parliament), [*name is inaudible*], and John Riddle* in King City. He continued with Ayrshires until the present time. The accredited herd is no longer in existence, the government got rid of





that so Dalton's herd is not accredited but they are registered. Ayrshires don't give as much milk as a Holstein but they don't give you as much trouble and they don't eat as much. A survey done by the Department of Agriculture in the United States last year proved that Ayrshires were more profitable than all other dairy breeds. A farm labourer's wage in the 1930s would be roughly 50 cents a day with boarding included. In the 1940s a good man would get \$35 a month with boarding included. Dalton kept hired help on his farm year round until 1957. Today it would cost \$400 to \$500 a month plus room and board for hired help; it's much harder to get workers today.

Jack notes that Dalton has been on Council for this area and has been Reeve of the Township. He would like to discuss the history of the town. Dalton explains that the township was settled around 1828 to 1836. In 1836, people really started coming in and settled around Penetang Road which is the town line. The area which Dalton's farm is in was settled around the 1830s. The land which he is on was taken from the crown in 1832 by the Hutchinsons*. In the lot north from Dalton, the Reeds* settled in 1828. That farm remained in the Reed family until the late 1930s. Robert Eagle owns that farm now. The industries in the area were predominantly farming and lumber but there was a furniture factory there as well. There was a tramway coming southwest from Coldwater which ran about 10 miles and transported logs to the Georgian Bay Lumber Company. The Copeland* saw mill is still in operation. Peter mentions that he heard there was a great demand for horse hair for furniture stuffing and other things during that time. Dalton says every spring [*name is inaudible*] would come around and buy horse hair from everyone but they'd never give you what it was worth. When the horses' hair got long enough they would trim it from the tail and mane and save it to sell. Dalton believes that from a dozen horses you would get about \$25 worth of hair each year that would be sold into the furniture trade. An old building on Coulson's* corner was a blacksmith shop. There used to be several blacksmith shops in Medonte.

Dalton started farming with horses; they had to change how the farm operated about every 10 years. He bought his first tractor in 1948 and it was used but he got a new one in 1950. Tractors were not available in war time. Most of his neighbours were still using horses. Dalton's





uncle across the road did thrashing and had a tractor in the late 1930s. Cars were very plentiful from the 1930s on, but when Dalton was younger they were scarce. All the custom thrashing in the area was done by steam engines into the late 1940s in some areas. At the present time, there is a plumbing factory in Coldwater which is a growing concern, and a saw mill in Martinville. The major industry in Medonte today is skiing. There are four ski lodges in Medonte. Dalton says Medonte is flooded with subdivisions now.

Dalton's municipal career started in 1944 when the local schools still existed. At the annual meeting one trustee was elected and one was dropped off. During one of the meetings, Dalton didn't attend and when one of his neighbours got back from it, they said that they had elected Dalton to be on the school board. Dalton was always interested in community affairs so he thought he'd do the best he could. He was on the school board for three years. In 1947, some of his neighbours nominated him for Councilor of the Medonte Township. There were only about 12 meetings a year and you were paid \$2 a meeting so he decided to do it. He had to pay his own way back and forth and buy his own meals. The road budget was \$14,000 a year because there was no snow plowing at that time but Dalton changed it to \$16,000 a year. He thinks he was in the Council for about seven years and then he stepped up to Deputy and was Deputy for seven years. He was elected to that position by a majority of about 50 votes. The first Reeve he sat with was Albert Orton*, as well as Lloyd Miller and [name is inaudible]. Dalton was nominated for Reeve along with another man [name is inaudible]. The other man quit so Dalton became Reeve in 1959 and held the position for the next 12 years. He saw many changes during this time. One change was when snow plowing and sanding came and the road budget increased; but the people wanted it. They never let the township go into debt. The first road grater was bought in 1950. They had custom snow plowing in 1948 or 1949 and just plowed the main roads. Starting in 1950, all of the roads were plowed. The township office and garage was at Moonstone; that's where everyone met. Dalton had no notion of ever wanting to be Warden of the County but Jack Coleman (who was Treasurer of the County and Fred Hunter (who was County Clerk) cornered Dalton and told him to put his name in. He was Warden in 1964 and he





retired from the Township Council in 1968. He thought of retiring from public life but they started the Planning Board and he was put on as Chairman, a position which he still holds today.

Dalton has been continuously connected to various milk boards for 30 years and still is today. He has been President of the local milk board and of South Simcoe County Milk Committee. There has been a decline in the number of dairy farmers in the township. They've been declining at a rate of about 126 a month in Ontario. [*Tape cuts out and then resumes*] He thinks it will continue to decline. Existing herds and lands are being depleted and farms are left idle. Some of the farms have been sold and in some cases the owners are getting too old to farm and are living on them retired. There are no "gentlemen farmers" in the area. Dalton still sells quotas, especially in the peak months of May, June, and July. In the fall months nobody wants to buy quotas. If you are switching from industrial to fluid milk you need a fluid quota to ship the milk. There are not many people in Medonte who ship cream. Dalton explains that people in the cream business haven't changed to shipping milk, but have just quit. The quota (the amount you have to produce) is 679 pounds a day of fluid milk. That must be kept up year round. It can drop to 90%, but only for 30 days. If you drop 30% for 60 days then that becomes your new quota. For industrial milk, the quota is 102,000. You are guaranteed the number one price on quota milk but if only 85-90% gets used then that's all they're paid. The balance goes to industrial milk for a lower price. There is a higher demand for milk than there is supply. Dalton grosses approximately 20 cents a quart. In the supermarket a quart of milk is approximately 38 to 44 cents depending on the form you buy it in. Dalton says that not many older farmers have part time jobs but younger ones will work three to four days on the ski lodges in addition to their farming. The area where Dalton lives has very good land because it's a clay loam.

Jack asks about the transportation they had available. Dalton says the CPR main line railway was just north and shipped cattle on it. Then trucks took over the livestock industry. The CNR was from Midland to Orillia and it crossed at Medonte Junction but it wasn't prominent in the area. Dalton put hydro on his farm in 1944. There was hydro in the area but it was limited. The telephone at that time was owned by Ray Piers* within the township and it was a municipal phone. When you bought your house you also bought shares of telephone. Dalton was a





shareowner until it was sold to Bell (Bell took over about five years ago). The service was not any better and was no longer personalized but you could speak to someone from a farther distance. When they had the main line, you could tell the operator you were going away for the day and she would tell whoever called that you were out. The operator knew everyone. Mail was already being delivered when Dalton arrived in the town. There were post offices in Coldwater and Moonstone. Waverley had a post office at one point but it was before Dalton's time. Before the milk board took over, they shipped milk to Orillia and had to go there every two weeks to pick up their checks. While they were there, they did their shopping. Dalton's wife was born in Orillia and Dalton himself was born near there; they still go to Orillia. It was about eight miles to get there.

Dalton got his first car in 1932 or 1933 and it was a Model T Roadster. This was during The Depression but he had some money saved up. His first car cost \$39. During The Depression spending money was scarce but they could still have fun. They would visit neighbours and entertain themselves. There was no TV so they would play ball games and have parties. The Depression did hit the town of Orillia; it was felt everywhere. Jack says he thinks the way most people handled it was by toughing it through. People didn't have money to spend - so they didn't spend it. Things went back to normal around the 1940s. As Dalton remembers it, people were fine as long as they were fed and had some clothes. People made do with what they had and hand-me-down clothing was common. Neighbours would often share clothes when their kids outgrew them.

Jack asks for Dalton's opinion of regional government. Dalton says he doesn't know that much about it because it seems that no one can tell him what he needs to know. He has a cottage in Muskoka and his taxes are getting higher and higher but the government is apparently struggling with their budget. He says he has no use for it. Jack asks if Dalton thinks that county government should be changed. Dalton says when he was there in 1964 and 1965, they set up a committee to look at the County and they recommended some changes. One recommendation was that they could cut out a lot of the Deputy Reeves but their proposal was turned down by the Council. The way Council is now, Dalton wouldn't want to be part of it because it's a full





time job. There are five members of Council and they can never catch up to the amount of paper work coming from the provincial government.

Dalton thinks that certain matters should be left to the local government and not the County. He thinks County Council could operate just as well with 30 members (a reduced number). Jack notes that there will be 33 municipalities now as of January 1st. Dalton agrees that having just a Reeve from each municipality on the Council would be good; then there would be 33 members. Dalton does not know if it would cost more or less to operate this way. It all depends on what the demands of the province are. Dalton thinks it is the fault of the provincial government for interfering in local affairs and wanting more information. Today, the Prime Minister and the rest of the Cabinet Ministers have so many advisors telling them how to do things. He thinks that the government is relying too much on the civil servants. As Dalton has said, he was on the Planning Board and they met with 18 different departments. The Department of Planning said that there was no way that Medonte would be allowed to expand yet at the same meeting the Chairman of the [inaudible] said that they needed a plan to take people out of Toronto. There are many conflicting committees with different opinions and plans.

Dalton hasn't been associated with the County now for six years so he is not sure of what is currently taking place. In his time, he thinks County Council was a well-run organization. He thinks it would be detrimental to the County if they ever got a business administrator to run it. The Reeves or County representatives should be the ones that set the policy and run the county. Dalton thinks assessments should be done by the County. Nobody knows an area better than the person that lives there. The school board should be kept more local as well. They debate whether or not education has "improved" since before it was made provincially uniform.

Jack asks if Dalton would like to name any prominent people who grew up in this area of Medonte. Dalton says Sir. Sam Steele was born in Fair Valley which is five miles from Dalton's farm. He organized the North West Mounted Police. Lance Rumble was quite a figure from Hillsdale who [inaudible] in Toronto. He was a great after-dinner speaker. He used to write articles in the Globe and Mail. He once wrote an article about Edgar Archer and his advisors told him that he should be careful because he could be sued. There was Prices from Prices'





Corners*; he put himself through school to be a druggist. There were the Robinsons from Moonstone; T.B. Robinson held a clerkship in Medonte for 57 years. The Drurys from Moonstone played professional hockey. Jack and Peter thank Dalton for his time. [*Tape cuts out*]

*Note: * Indicates that the word or name is written as it sounded, and therefore may be incorrect.*

