



Fred Apperley

Interview One

Wednesday February 6, 1974

Length: 1 hour, 1 minute and 10 seconds

Jack Coleman introduces himself and Peter Moran who are at the home of Mr. Fred Apperley in the village of Cookstown to tape his comments on the history of his family, the Cookstown area, his municipal career, and other important phases in his life. Mr. Coleman notes that this tape will be preserved for all times at the County Archives. Mr. Coleman says he is very pleased to be part of this interview, especially because their families have had much in common over the years. His mother, Beatrice Mod Campbell Graham*, daughter of John and Mary Graham* of Clover Hill, was born in the same year as Mr. Apperley and they started school together. This is the first of a series of interviews they intend to do with citizens who have contributed much to the history of Simcoe County. Mr. Coleman says they would not like Mr. Apperley to be very modest with his answers because they intend to keep this tape so that it will be available for anyone doing research on the Apperley family or Cookstown area.

Mr. Coleman begins by saying that his mother was born in 1881, and he was told that Mr. Apperley was born in 1880. Mr. Apperley confirms this, and says that he was born on December 12th, 1880. His father was Francis Hutton Apperley and his mother was Mary Elizabeth Bannerman*. His mother was born in ... Nottawasaga Township and his father was born in Maple, he believes. They moved to the John Patterson farm in Tecumseth in the fall of '82, on Concession 14. Then they moved to Clover Hill for a number of years before they died. When asked if he knows how Clover Hill got its name, Mr. Apperley says he thought it was just because it was a wonderful place for clover. Mr. Coleman asks if there was a post office in Clover Hill and Mr. Apperley says yes, T.M Banting was Post Master there for a time. Clover Hill had a store, post office, [*inaudible*] houses, a woodworker shop, a hotel, and a blacksmith





shop. Mr. Coleman asks how many brothers and sisters he had. Mr. Apperley had two brothers and three sisters; there were six of them in the family. He was married in 1911 and his wife was Annie Matilda Cooper. They had one daughter named Helen who is living here in Cookstown with Mr. Apperley. Mr. Coleman asks what W.A. stands for in his name and he says his full name is William Alfred Apperley.

Mr. Coleman would now like to speak about the history of the area, particularly Cookstown. Before it was called Cookstown, it was called Dixon's Corners and then Perry's Corners, and eventually named Cookstown after Major Cook. Mr. Apperley says that in his time, Major Cook's christened name was Christopher Cook and he was the only Deputy Reeve in the history of Simcoe County that ever got to be Warden. Mr. Coleman says what about Dr. Banting? Mr. Apperley says that was years after. They note that this doesn't happen very often. Mr. Apperley says Cook was Warden when he was born in '80, so he can't remember him. Cook was the Deputy Reeve of Tecumseth and the area was named after him, as far as Mr. Apperley knows. Cook built the house on the Ledley Farm, a brick house which is an apartment now.

Mr. Coleman says that he would like to begin at the United Church on the west and south of Queens Street. Mr. Apperley says that the house which is now the United Church was a conglomeration of framed buildings all in one. It was called P.H Stewart Block*. In his time, as far back as he can remember, the undertaker (named Walker) and furniture dealer had one part of it, the Cookstown advocate had another part, and at one time Herb Duffy married to Emma Coleman, the Postmaster's daughter, had a big ice cream parlor. The top story was possibly used for a tailor and dress maker's shop, among other things. This was torn down to build the Parsonage. Next to the Parsonage, the house that the Post Office was a part of was just a house at the time. Mr. Coleman says coming north to the next building was Herb Jebb's house and cartage business, but Mr. Apperley says it was Mrs. Geen's* bookstore. When he was married, Harry Rankin built the house that Dr. McFarlane is living in now. The next house belonged to Charlie Hamilton who had a harness shop, then a building where Joe Banting sold machinery, and then the drugstore. Frank Robinson had a hardware store and John King had a tin shop.





Suddenly Mr. Apperley says that he's got it all wrong – next to Harry Rankin's house was a vacant lot, then Charlie Hamilton's shop, then Joe Banting's machine building, and then Mrs. Gallop's house and her store. Alec McCullough was in there somewhere, where the Municipal Office is now. John S. Willoughby sold groceries and Dr. McKay and his brother set up a drugstore in the west part. There was also a barber shop owned by Tom Madill for a time in that same store.

Mr. Coleman moves on to discussing the Ledley Hotel (Queen's Hotel), June Coulter's Hotel. Mr. Apperley says that it was almost where the bank sits now. This is the hotel that was operated by the Ledleys at one time (Harry Ledley's father and mother), after the Coulters. The Royal Bank was built much later than these buildings they're discussing, a little before 1920. Mr. MacMillan was the bank manager when Mr. Coleman remembers. Mr. Apperley says there was a manager before him, and the bank was built at the turn of the century. Alec Arnold had his machine shop on the next property in the back of the lot; in the front was a store run by Josh McMann and operated by Harry Fisher. Next to that was Harry Fisher's house, and then Harry Rankin built another house (the McClush* house). Mr. Apperley says that McClush* house was built out of a ...shop run by Herb Barnes. Then there was the Couatts* property; a barber built that house. At the corner was the Monkman property, run by J.G Monkman (Tom Monkman's uncle). Across that street from that, to the East, was Tom Burns' wood working shop on the corner. [*Tape cuts out*]

[*Tape resumes*] Mr. Coleman would now like to discuss the south where Tom Webb's blacksmith shop was. Mr. Apperley says this was run by Henry Dunning's* father. Going east, W.J Findlay* operated the shoe store and there was Bauldry's* bake shop. Next to that was the barber shop operated by Jim Jebb which used to be a doctor's office with Dr. Rothwitz* and Dr. Brown. Also before the doctor's office, there was a butcher's shop owned by Jake Wilcox (this was in the 1890s). Up the street was the Presbyterian Church and at the top of the hill, on the north side of the road, was St. John's Anglican Church. Mr. Apperley says coming back west, down to the corner where the drugstore is now, was where his Uncle John Summerfelt* had a hotel. He sold it to people with last name Glassford. That's the first place the Ledleys (Henry





Ledley and his family) moved when they came from Minesing. They kept it for a time until it burned down. They sold it after a number of years and they bought a different hotel from Chris Armstrong. After a time, William McKay, a druggist from Creemore, bought the corner and built his house and drug store. Mr. Coleman asks if the blacksmith's shop was always on the east side of King Street. Mr. Apperley says yes and Alfred Earst* had it before Charlie Clute.

Coming west from the drug store, Tom McKnight had an office. Then there was the Masonic Hall, a furniture store, a shoe repair, and Mel McFadden's* printing press. Then there was Charlie Watson's property (the undertaker) which is an antiques store now. The next property was Harry Rankin's and Mr. Apperley says before that, Tom Webb put up a covered skating rink. Next to that was Dave Hopper's* general store, which Mr. Apperley remembers once being owned by Thomas Elliot. Then there was Coutts'* residence and the Coutts'* store. Before that, Mr. Apperley remembers it being Elliot's residence and a grocery store owned by Robert Joseph Coleman. Next to that was the Lewis Hotel owned by Chris Armstrong (and later by the Ledleys), and a tailor shop owned by W.J Eves*. T.A.C Banting's jewelry shop was where the Cookstown (Telephone) Exchange used to be. Next to that was the butcher shop which Pugsley* operated. Mr. Apperley remembers that this used to be a grocery store owned by Bob Coleman (before he moved his store beside the Elliot's residence) and John S. Willoughby clerked for him. On the corner where Denning's garage was, Mr. Apperley says Harry Rankin sold machinery. Down to the west there was a public... in the ditch which was operated by the Postmaster, Henry Coleman. Directly from that, Sam Hayes* had a boot and shoe store. Directly west from that, Martin had a jewelry store. These were burned down by a fire and houses were then built there.

Mr. Coleman asks if there were any businesses on the tracks at the freight sheds, or any mills. There was a ...mill which turned into a livery stable. There was a chopping mill that was built in 1872 by James Fennell* (Bill Fennell's* father). By the freight sheds there used to be two grain buyers and they would have a representative up on the front street. The farmers would take their grain in and bid against each other. Mr. Coleman asks about drovers and Mr. Apperley says in those days the drovers went out to your farm and bought in bulk, sometimes by





pound. Everything was driven on foot into market; into Cookstown. The loading sheds were just north of where the station was and they used to ship certain days of the week. Andy Agnew was a drover who could neither read nor write and he did business off hand; everything was paid in cash (they didn't even have a bank at that time).

The school was up north of Jack Donald's* house on King Street, close to where the new school is now. The United Church was on the westerly end of King Street, across from the Parsonage. Mr. Coleman asks if there is anything else Mr. Apperley would like to mention about Cookstown. He responds that Cookstown was a real metropolis in that time; there was nowhere else to go since transportation was either by horse or foot. It was so crowded on a Saturday night that you couldn't go up and down the street without stepping off the sidewalk. There were several horse sheds, three hotels, and three churches. Monkman's store had a horse shed that would be filled with horses along the streets.

Mr. Moran asks Mr. Apperley when the village started to decline and he says after the motor came in, when the paving started, and Highway 27 was built. The first cars came in around 1910; the cars came before the roads. This meant that all the traffic would go through to the larger center to do their business. The upshot of this was that it starved their merchants. Mr. Moran tells Mr. Apperley that he read in the newspaper that he was instrumental in bringing hydro to part of the community. Mr. Apperley says that he signed the petition, and that's all. They had to petition to get a branch off the main line for hydro and they got it just after the 1930s. Prior to the hydro coming in, they used gasoline engines and lots of people used wind power.

Mr. Coleman asks if he ever saw a smoke house, to smoke meats in. Mr. Apperley says he heard of them but never saw one. He did see ice houses to take care of the meats in the summer. Mr. Coleman asks about barn builders or barn framers. Mr. Apperley says when these builders finished getting everything framed; they would call in all the neighbours to celebrate. Up to 100 people would come. [*Tape cuts out and then resumes*] They would have a picnic for everyone and push the frame into position with 'pipe poles'. Then they could start putting up the 'plates' to start the roof and rafters; this was an exciting time. Whoever was building the farm





would provide the food, but neighbours helped. It took about half an hour to raise the barn after the framing was done. Mr. Coleman would like to know what else they did for entertainment. Mr. Apperley says that, through the winter, the churches would put on parlor socials (equivalent to a box social). However, they didn't play cards in those days because it was taboo. They played the piano, danced, and amused themselves. Drinking alcohol was also taboo at gatherings.

Mr. Coleman asks if Mr. Apperley would like to mention some distinguished persons that have come from Cookstown. Mr. Apperley says it was quite a civic and public minded community. Before his time, Thomas Ferguson from Cookstown was a member of parliament. John S. Duff was a member of the Ministry of Agriculture and lived on the fringe of Cookstown. Colonel R.T. Banting was County Clerk, and also Clerk of Essa Township. They had great train service; two trains going north in the morning and two going south in the evening. Colonel Banting would board the train in Cookstown at 8:00am and go to the county buildings all day (he didn't carry a satchel, but a little basket). He did this for years. Jim Moore was Reeve of Alliston and County Auditor at one time. His daughter was Nina* Moore who got into Social Services in the Provincial Government (but that's a different story, not about Cookstown). Tom King was a historian who went out West and died there. Harry (Henry) Coleman and his son had, between the both of them, 50 years of service being Treasurers of Simcoe County. Last August 3rd, Burt Coleman and his wife celebrated 100 years of service in the one family. There was Henry Coleman, his son Frank, and then Burt (the grandson of Henry).

Finally, Mr. Coleman would like to discuss Mr. Apperley's activities in the Council and in the community. Mr. Apperley says he was on the School Board for 13 years and then went into Council for about 16 years. He was Deputy Reeve for two years and Reeve for four years. He was made a honorary member of the Ex-Warden's Association. He has seen 47 Wardens elected without a break (he says this might be a record). He was also President of the Cookstown Fair for a time. Mr. Coleman says what a pleasure it's been to interview Mr. Apperley.

Mr. Moran comments that Mr. Apperley was alive during the Wright brother's first flight and the starting of space flight. Mr. Apperley says that the most memorable thing that he has





seen was the change in transportation. He remembers drawing hay with a pair of oxen and now sees the big trucks today and the huge traffic and heavy transportation is the biggest change. Mr. Moran comments that most people he talks to agrees that transportation is what most people say are the biggest change. Mr. Apperley says that with heavy freight trains that there has always been pollution and that it's nothing new. Maybe there wasn't as much back then and they didn't notice it then but it's now overdone. For every farmer it was common for them to haul out dead stuff in the winter and it was never buried and it became a foul stench and was all pollution. Every age has its own form of pollution. Every house used to be heated by wood and that was a form of pollution as well. London was one of the oldest towns that we know of and there's tons of smog and pollution there and we don't hear anything more about their pollution than we do of our own.

Mr. Moran comments on the evolution of Cookstown and the large number of antique stores there. He asks Mr. Apperley if there was anything he regrets not holding onto. He says there were many things that he thought were useless and threw out, which he should have kept. Cookstown has been growing a lot and gaining subdivisions; it will not be going back to what it was. Cookstown is right on the highways and has no shortage of water so there's no reason why it couldn't keep growing. They ask Mr. Apperley to imagine he was a member of government for a day and ask how he would improve the area. He says he's biased because of the times he has lived in. People used to be hard working and things were cheap and it worked; that's what he'd want. He doesn't think that there are too many people on the council. The government closest to the people is the best way. He agrees with the statement "By the people, for the people", and nowadays it's more "By the democrats, for the democrats". [*Tape cuts out*]

[*Tape resumes*] They speak about how there was no entertainment in the area except for walking up and down the line and maybe getting some ice cream. Mr. Coleman talks about a woman named Stella who was a deaconess for 45 years and now gets \$33.50 pension a month. [*Tape cuts out*]

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

