INTERVIEWER: Dianne Zieman DATE: March 22, 1972

TIME: 2 hours.

Note: I spent two hours with Mrs. McCrea - was unsuccessful in getting her to discuss present-day New Liskeard, other than for a few incidents. Had to leave, but was invited back another time. If I get more information on the past, in which she is most interested, or comments on today, shall add them to this interview form.

1. Mrs. John Rueben McCrea.

2. Mary Modeland.

3. 102 Mary Street, the street was named after her mother-in-law, the wife of the first Crown Land Agent in this area. When they moved the town to this side of the river, Mrs. Armstrong had the honour of having a street named after her. Mrs. McCrea's father-in-law, John Armstrong, was the first mayor, and there are streets in New Liskeard bearing his name.

4. 647-4572.

5. Retired. Her husband Rueben was the Crown Land Agent when he came back from the war - W.W.1 - involved in work in the Crown Land office and real estate. Mrs. McCrea was once a milliner.

6. The senior Mr. McCrea was a bridge builder. He was working in the Canadian Rockies, and his wife and son, Rueben, were in the camp with him. They were on a work train, when there was an accident. Mr. McCrea was killed; Mrs. McCrea suffered a broken leg, but the baby, Rueben, who was sitting on her knee, was unhurt. Mrs. McCrea returned to Muskoka with her son; she had been a public school teacher, and returned to teaching. She then met Mr. John Armstrong and married him. They came here in 1892, he as the first Crown Land Agent for the District of Temiskaming.

6. She was born near Seaforth, Ontario - near Stratford - about 25 miles further along the Huron Tract Highway. She learned her trade there - she was a milliner when the women wore hats.

7. Her parents - her father was born in the township of Chinkoushi (spelling?) near Brampton. Her mother was born near Clinton, Huron County.

8. Married August 10th, 1927 - has been a widow for the past 14 years.

9. She was born in 1893, on October 26th - now 78 years old.

To answers to date on her impressions of New Liskeard today.

THE PAST:

Mrs. McCrea lives across from the New Liskeard Public School buildings, and watches the children coming and going. ~~When she first came to town~~ * Later she said it was here in 1906, where the playground swings are now, a concrete school building was located. In the years that she has lived in that house, she has watched the construction of the newer buildings, replacing the original concrete one. She has a Christmas card, sent to her and her husband by the Taylors, that shows the first school building in New Liskeard, with a caption that the five pupils, consisting of three Armstrongs and two Brooks', were taught by a Miss Cochran. Her husband, Rueben McCrea was one of the Armstrongs mentioned in that caption- he used his step-father's name until he married. The artist of the picture on the Christmas card was Ernest Sawford-Dye. Apparently the Brooks' - the other children who attended the early school, lived on a farm on Dawson Point Road.

Mr. McCrea had a picture of his step-father and his six councillors - when he was dying, he asked his wife to give it to the Town Office for their records. Now hangs in the Council Chamber of the Community Hall. Tom Armstrong also gave a picture of his father to the town.

IMPRESSIONS - She found it a very interesting district - the Clay Belt that stretches north to Swastika. She came by train - got the job in New Liskeard through a millinery wholesaler in Toronto - Gouldings, I think she said, located on Wellington Street. Trained in Seaforth - then worked in Vancouver for three months, when she was out on a holiday. Took a trip from Edmonton down to California with relatives - finally came back east after a year and a half. Came up to New Liskeard in February 1925 to work for Mrs. Coombs. Was here on an on/and/off basis until she married in '27 - due to family illness she had to return to Seaforth several times for varying periods of time.

She worked approximately two years for Mrs. Coombs.

Entertainment - There was a picture show in Haileybury; and an organization called the Cosy Club which met once or twice a month in the Masonic Hall for cards and dancing. They would go on picnics - would drive out of town.

Transportation - People had cars - the year they got married, the Ferguson Highway, named after the Premier of Ontario, opened up - now called Highway 11.

Housing - When she was here as Miss Modeland, she boarded with a family called Bassetts. Her mother-in-law, Mrs. Armstorng, lived at 50 Mary Street for a number of years; then bought the double house at 100-102 Mary Street. Mrs. Armstrong and her mother lived in one half of the house for several years until she died - the McCreas lived in the other half of the house once they were married.

Stores - Pretty much in the same locations, although some of the owners have changed. She remembers when McFarlanes had Cleve Holmes' present shop; Lafond's used to be where Beamishes are now. Greg Fielder's hardware shop across from the Grand Union Hotel and the adjacent jewellery shop were once a tailor shop run by Mr. Coombs and a milliner's shop run by Mrs. Coombs.

Employment - When she worked for Mrs. Coombs, she made $25. a week - an excellent salary then. Working hours were 8:30 to 6:00; after awhile, they got Wednesday afternoons off all year round. Worked Monday to Saturday, and on Saturday night to all hours. People would go to the show, and women would come in after the show to buy a hat, so the shop stayed open.

Medical Facilities: Dr. A.C. Farlinger and his wife - friends of the McCreas- they were married by the same minister. Dr. J.C. and Dr. J.S. McCullough; then Dr. Fleming. There was the Red Cross Hospital, up on the hill, now an apartment building.

Mrs. McCrea is very interested in people and what the old-timers did, etc. Following are some of the stories she told:

Mr. Hill (of Hill, Clark and Francis of later years) was the niece of Mrs. John Armstrong - she and her sister were from Huntsville. John Clark, Sr. learned his building trade in Glasgow, and came to Canada. Len Hill and John Clark met and worked together. Len's father had constructed a lodge, Limberlost, 7 miles out of Huntsville, for Gord, Len's brother. However, although they wanted to go into business together, they decided not to stay in Huntsville, but came up to New Liskeard, and put up a saw mill. Later, they joined up with Frank Francis and created, Hill, Clark & Francis. Mrs. John Clark, wife of the first Mr. Clark, lives on Niven Street, but is very ill in the hospital right now - she is 92 years of age. Mr. Clark's sons, George and Jack are in town - Jack is running the business now.

In W.W.1, her husband had enlisted with the militia and went overseas. His brother, Burt Armstrong, contracted influenza and died overseas. Mac, her name for her husband, Rueben, was in the north of Scotland in the timber limits - came back in 1919. Took a trip before returning to work in New Liskeard.

She has a book, entitled "Sketches of Early New Liskeard Settlers", that the Northern Telephone Company had reprinted for the local library. Mr. Donald McKelvie, President of Northern Telephone, sent Mrs. McCrea a copy of the book because there is a sketch in it of her father-in-law, John Armstrong. There are three letters with the book - two from Mr. McKelvie, and a copy of a letter Mr. McKelvie received from the author of the book, Mr. Roebuck. Mr. Roebuck, around 1906-08, operated the Temiskaming Herald - he ran a series of pen sketches of the early settlers in the newspaper. The artist of the cartoons accompanying the sketches was Mr. J.W. Bengough.

Mr. Frank Haynes, one of the early settlers mentioned in the book, has a daughter, Dorothy Haynes, who apparently is living in a nursing home in Haileybury.

Mrs. McCrea was very close to the Sweetnam family - she has no children and is very fond of Connie Sweetnam, who is now married and living in Dorval. Mr. Sweetnam is the retired principal of the New Liskeard Public School.

FOLLOW:UP:

Miss Dorothy Haynes - Haileybury

Mr. Donald McKelvie

Mr. Herb Sweetnam