INTERVIEWER: Dianne Zieman DATE: March 30,1972

TIME: 2½ hours.

INTERVIEW:

Mr. C.L. Rawson of 225 May Street, New Liskeard - phone 647-4478.

Mr. Rawson was born in Woodstock, Ontario on January 21st, 1881. His father fought in the American Civil War for the North - his father was an American; his mother a Canadian of pioneer ancestry who cleared the bush around Woodstock, in Oxford County. His mother died when he was four and he went to live with his grandmother; prior to his mother's death, he had lived in Chicago. His sister went to live with his two maiden aunts who were quite skilled at soap making and weaving. They had a loom and the Rawsons still have some carpeting and quilts that these old aunts had made.

Mrs. Rawson is English, and now in her 88th year. They met when he was injured in W.W.1 and a patient in the hospital where she was nursing; she came to Canada after the war, and they were married.

Although he had been through this area when he was cutting pulpwood in 1908, he came back to live here in 1925, transferred here by the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

The Rawsons had three sons - Peter, James and John. The two oldest boys enlisted in the Second World War; flew in the R.A.F. Peter was killed over North Africa, and Jim over Dusseldorf, Germany - I believe the Rawsons said that neither of the boys had reached their 21st birthday when they were killed. Their remaining son, John, was too young to enlist; he graduated from Queens University as a chemical engineer, and is now with Imperial Oil in Sarnia.

Mr. Rawson's nickname is "Carver Doone", which he earned when in school. They had been reading Lorna Doone and because Mr. Rawson is quite big and had a reputation for being a "toughie" when he played on the Rugby team, he was soon re-named. Apparently many of his old friends still call him "Carver".

Occupation:

Originally, Mr. Rawson was a farmer - bought a farm near Eastwood where he grew strawberries. After a year or so, he had a milk route; got along that way but he decided that he didn't know enough about farming, so he attended the Agricultural College at Guelph. Then, he enlisted and went overseas. One of his greatest accomplishments overseas was to be a member of the Rugby Team.

After the war, he was on another farm in the bush at Parry Sound, where he got hurt. Then, went back to Woodstock and got a job with the town digging sewers. Knew the fellow who had the farm at Parry Sound - went up to look at the place, and when he found that the place was up for grabs without any down-payment, went to a lawyer and got it. His wife came up and they spent a couple of years there.

In Parry Sound, there was a Farmers' Association at that time - the old fellow who used to own his farm took him to a meeting. He was elected President and went to the annual meeting in Toronto. In Toronto, he dropped in on some of his old friends who were working for the Department of Veterans' Affairs - when they learned that he had been this far north before they sent him up here - actually, I've jumped the gun a bit here - he was offered a job by the Department, which he accepted. Was then sent to Ottawa, then to Elora in the Guelph area, where he lived on a small farm while working for the Dept. They promised him that if he would come up to New Liskeard area, he would not be transferred again. Figures now that they must have thought him a very capable man indeed - gave him half of Ontario for his territory, no office and no stenographer - learned to do all his own work.

Job conditions:

No roads connecting this area to North Bay - the existing roads in the district were very rough. He remembers when he first came up and was staying in one of the local hotels for a couple of days, he offered to drive a man that he had just met home - never forgot that trip - very swampy and slushy.

Got a house on the next street from where they live now; then a Mrs. Duke got in touch with them, and they arranged a trade for their present house and the farm they had in Elora.

When he came here, it was just after the fire of !22 - was so busy, he really couldn't remember his impressions. The place was very, very rough - no roads to speak of; the ones that did exist were very bad, with terrible ruts.

In the early days, just when the Depression really started - no-one had any money. His main duty was to collect for the farmers, or rather, from the farmers who had to pay the government a low rate of interest. However, when no-one could pay the rates, his collection records wouldn't look so good. However, he did keep up with the average record, largely from the sale of hay around Timmins, which was very active then. There was a great demand for the gold supplied by the Timmins' mines - price of gold was then about $33 an ounce. Gold mining was very profitable and prosperous - Lakeshore in Kirkland Lake was just starting then - he could have bought shares for $3 each and sold them for $70 each later!

Re selling of hay to feed the mine horses - would have to seize the hay in many cases from the farmers for non-payment of rates. Would hire a haypress, sell the hay and pay the rates. Sent hundreds of cars up to Timmins. His wife Agnes had the placing of the cars to look after; had to have a bale check. Each bale was weighed and a record kept. Would have to mix the good in with the poorer hay in order to sell it. Had a grocer that would take the hay; but then, sometimes, they would have to wait for the money. Once, they lost three cars of hay because the man went broke while he had the hay in.

Mr. Rawson also tried to sell potatoes - had been given instructions by the superintendent in Ottawa to do as much as he could for the settlers - he offered his services free to try to sell for them in order to help them meet their payments.

Land distribution:

A man could borrow up to $500 at a low rate of interest. The soldier could pick out the farm he wanted; if he qualified, the government bought the land and then sell it to the soldier, who would have to put up a small amount and then an annual payment.

The re-location of people during the Depression was called Relief Land Settlement, and Mr. Rawson was very involved in this. He has often thought that the decision to re-locate people was made in a Toronto office, where someone would simply look at a map of Crown Land on the wall and point at any area - thus the decision to send people who had probably never farmed before to some out-of-the way area. In many cases, there were no roads or communication facilities in these designated areas - ie. had settlers placed back of Moonbeam, near Kapuskasing - way back in the bush where nothing had been done. Not too far from Matheson, they did the same thing. Then, the government had to go in and build roads; although, the people didn't stay so they built roads for nothing - perhaps for future generations, he supposes.

Heart-breaking experience in many cases, as the people were totally unprepared for life and work in this kind of environment. People from Windsor, London, Hamilton and other parts of southern Ontario. Believes that people on relief were offered the choice of staying where they were or being re-located in the north where perhaps they could make a go of it. The scheme was that the Federal government put up a third, the province a third, and the town which was ridding itself of these people, the other third - cost about $1500 to re-locate them.

The town here was well-established. There was no road south of Cobalt, although there was a trail from Cobalt to Temagami - and a very rough one at that. When they got the Ferguson Highway through, it took a good day to drive to North Bay, the road was so crooked and hilly. Where John Clark Enterprises are now, it was pretty well vacant (curious about this point - have heard that Hill, Clark,Francis were quite large and located where Clark Jr. now has his firm - Hill-Clark-Francis would have been there in the '20's). Stumps around the streets when they got here - the town has developed normally. No paved roads or anything like that - just gravel and mud, very sticky mud. They bought the ten acres back of their present home for taxes. When his sons lost their lives, he lost interest in things, and when the superintendent asked him to sell the land, he did for $1500 - now you could get that much for one acre! The town got a grant from the government to put in streets and sewers on the land he sold - the grant was for $80,000 but they didn't offer him any more.

Entertainment: Might have been a few travelling companies, school concerts. Mostly what people made for themselves for one occasion or another.

In answer to a question about early shopping facilities directed to Mrs. Rawson, "Less said, soonest mended!" Eaton's and Simpson's started to send catalogues so that people could get things as cheaply. The small stores could not afford to let you run into debt.

Medical facilities: Not particularly his problem, although in most places there was the ordinary medical facilities like here in New Liskeard; the hospital up on the hill was available, although the Department didn't like to have anything to do with that aspect. They didn't pay hospitalization. They remember when Little died out of town, Dr. Farlinger wanted to know who was going to pay him to go out - quite a lot of unpleasantness about it. When they first came up here, the Drs. McCullough would go anyplace anytime. Wasn't easy for them and they didn't stick about the money either. They were here to cure people - real old type of family doctor - charged about $1.

Education: They were supposed to settle people in places where there were schools and in many cases, they were too far to possibly get ready access to schools; but they were under the same handicap as the settlers around them. Established in most cases amongst other farmers.

Didn't have a list of settlers available; not too many left but some of the children would still be around. Many of the people from the Windsor area had building skills, and they went back south to find work, better schools for their kids - here, at that time, not as good an educational system as now - then there were one-room schools.

Changes: Normal growth - everything is built up. Majority of changes are in the values - land values and others. The cost of things, regulations where now you have to have a permit to do almost everything, like opening a store or starting any business - these things have changed. In the earlier times, there were very little regulations - if you wanted to open a store, you simply went ahead and opened a store. Another example is driving a bus - you drove the bus withough a permit.

Couldn't think of any other outstanding changes, other than roads and communications which are the biggest changes. Mr. Rawson seems to keep ahead of the good roads quite a bit - when he went to Ottawa, the roads weren't good; when they moved him up here, the roads were improved in Ottawa and no roads up here!

HIGHLIGHTS:

Mr. Rawson enjoyed his work and for the most part, found it interesting and rewarding. At times, their home was a real half-way house with newcomers sleeping on the floor of their living-room. No compensation for that - was all part of the job. He got the enormous salary of $1,000 a year when he first started. Mentioned something about their superannuation system, which I didn't understand - whatever it was, it lowered his pension income.

He went to a conference in Toronto one year, and remembers a board on the wall depicting the number of hours, number of miles travelled, number of calls made, and number of problems handled by certain of the Re-settlement officers, although no names were listed. Heard two men discussing the chart - rather in disbelief "Who would do that kind of work!" Mr. Rawson was doing that much, as were the others in his kind of work.

Mentioned that if he had all his old reports and clippings organized, it would be quite a story. Read me one copy of a report which he had sent in, describing a trip north - about 300 miles. The Trans-Canada Highway between Cochrane and Hearst was simply a bog hole, and he got stuck. Something snapped on the car; got a towtruck from a garage - that truck got stuck too. The whole mess took nearly a day to sort out. Further north, at one point the water over the road was so high, that he had to sit on the back of the seat and put his feet up on the window to keep them out of the water; in another instance of having the car towed out by a team of horses (had been warned by local residents that with the rising water, there was no way out.) An engineer had been stuck too - they put the front of his car up on a wagon, but not for Mr. Rawson. In places, the water was so deep, it came halfway up the door. Had to drive 300 miles on the battery as the generator shorted. At Kapuskasing, got stuck (again!) in another bog hole. There was no one around - the only man within two miles with a team was drunk. Eventually, some boot-leggers came along - they were just drunk enough to be friendly - they stuck it out from midnight to 3:00 a.m. and helped him to extricate the car.

On that trip, he completely wrecked a blue serge suit from crawling about in the mud - couldn't tell the colour when he got home. The Department asked him why he didn't use the train, since the roads were in such dire shape, but he had work to do along the road and so, the train would not have sufficed.

He had a huge territory to cover, north of North Bay and from Sault Ste. Marie in the west to Belle Coeur in Quebec. Travelled by all existing means of transportation, even took a steamer to Manitoulin Island.

Under the Relief Land Settlement, the settlers were given a grant of $500 which had to supply them with groceries, but was limited to $10. a month; that's all they could buy, but of course, they could go out and earn all they could. However, no work so they couldn't earn. He was to supply them with anything they needed - ie. clothing and a house. He drew up the plans for building the houses and got the materials.

In Klute Township near Cochrane, they tore down some old buildings and cleaned up the site; got the materials free but had to get them transported down to Cochrane. Then the D.O.H. supplied trucks to take the stuff out to the farms. Got some of the material moved; very little of the houses cost more than $100.

He was quite impressed with the British Empire Settlers - a fine selection of people. Got the Shanklin family from Scotland - had eight children, brought their own household goods - Tom Shanklin was put on a farm up in Hanbury - quite an active man yet. Mrs. Rawson remembers loading up some tubs and bathing the whole Shanklin family -with the exception of Tom! They were clean people, but had no bathing facilities. That family has really done well - all of them have good jobs and good families. Says it was really rough for awhile - a group of British Empire Settlers that all came over on the same boat were established in Sault, North Bay and around here - and he had to take care of them all!

He got Mr. Newton-White a job in Ottawa as an writer. Mentioned a Senator Crow who was very interested in the Relief Land Settlement - came up to Kapuskasing at a particularly bad time and seemed to blame Mr. Rawson for all the problems.

In Kapuskasing, at the Experimental Farm, there was a Mr. Smith-Ballantyne who was very co-operative. Mr. Rawson sent for a carload of seed potatoes and got the settlers together to cut and plant them. Mr. Smith-Ballantyne told them that they could have an area at the experimental farm. The "doggone farmers" did not even come in to hoe them - the experimental farm had the men and the equipment. Couldn't get the settlers to come in on a Saturday to bag the potatoes once the men at the farms had collected them. Mr. Rawson was furious - the farmers did nothing to help themselves. He personally delivered the bags of potatoes to the settlers - so many bags a farm. When he got back to town, he was faced with the information that the settlers had brought the potatoes into town as soon as he had delivered them - to peddle them. They used the money for groceries or booze, or whatever they wanted to spend it on. Mr. Rawson quoted some lines that summed up human weakness:

"Many hands are tired .....

...

And so we sigh a weeping human sigh."

Sometimes, he would do the best he could and still get no co-operation from the settlers. Wrong class of people to fend for themselves up here. The British Empire Settlers were different entirely - they were carefully selected. The Relief Land Settlers were agitators and the towns would be glad to get rid of them. Mr. Huff at Matheson did not go near the settlers without an O.P.P. officer to protect him - nothing happened to Mr. Rawson except abusive language.

Mr. Nixon bought cattle in Southern Ontario and Mr. Rawson was given the task of distributing the cattle to the settlers. "Boy, that was a job!" When he got to Cochrane, some of the cows were pretty frightened and quite wild - had to put a halter around their necks and lead them out to the farms. At one point, some of the cattle got loose on the way out to Klute Township. Found one cow off the road, laying on her head which was twisted under her. Had

to turn her over. When they got the cow up, she started right off agian. The cows were intended as milk cows; however, people were fond of beef and it was pretty scarce most of the time. Many of the cows wound up as dinner. Of course, the people who did that were the worst complainers about not having milk for their children, and so on.

He tried to make the $10 a month food voucher work - went to the wholesalers in Cochrane who agreed to put up an order for that amount. Then, Mr. Rawson went around to the women and got their order for what they would need for a month, and then cut it down to fit the budget. Bought in bulk, such things as were available in bulk - no individually packaged things. Had to listen to complaints that bulk supplies were not sanitary, as he would distribute portions of the bulk to each farmer. At one stage, he got a request from the Department to make up a menu that could be fit into the $10 voucher - he and his wife worked on it.

Some of the relief land settlers held the same attitude as people on welfare and unemployment do today - "They are late with our payment this month!" Will bring up generation after generation on relief - their right to live off the government.

Another assignment was to value the Indian Reserves for the Federal Indian Department. Had done an evaluation in '36 of the County of Pontiac, Temiskaming District. Had to go over the area and make a map of soils, and anything else that was required. Since he was the only Federal field man in the area, he was asked to value the Nedelec Indian Reserve in Quebec, when the governement considered putting up a 10,000 acre parcel of land up for sale for agricultural usage. Feels that we should have made the Indians self-supporting in the beginning - now they have little choice but to take government handouts.

Mr. Rawson was retired on March 1st, 1958 - enjoyed his job and found it interesting, in spite of the times he was so mad and disgusted with some of the people he tried to help.