INTERVIEWER: Dianne Zieman

DATE: May 3, 1972

TIME: 1½ hours.

INTERVIEW:

Mrs. S. G. Eplett, 181 Farah Avenue, New Liskeard, Ontario, phone 647-4468, is the widow of Sam Eplett, the son of the original owner of the creamery and dairy.

Origin:

Mrs. Eplett was born in a village near Toronto, and came to New Liskeard with her family at the age of eight. Her father, Mr. Miller, had a lumber mill at Thornloe. He located his family here because there were schools here. They came here in 1905, the first year the railway went through.

Arrival impressions:

Quite depressing. They came down Whitewood Avenue from the station by the coach, and there was mud up the hubs of the wheels. There also was a sidewalk which ran down from the station - it was quite high above the street level, and the boards were fairly wide apart.

Town facilities:

There were not too many plastered houses at first. They rented a home and then built. The Post Office was across the river then; there was an old bridge across the Wabi then - the water seemed higher in the old days.

Mr. Miller was at Thornloe all week and would come home by train on the weekends. Communication was very difficult, it took some time before hydro and phones got really started.

Education:

The public school was located on the site of the present public library; they had continuation classes (high school) at that stage. The pupils sat in double seats, and had to purchase their own supplies. There were mixed classes, and strong disciplinary measures at school as well as at home. Pupils were strapped when they did not observe the "on your honour" system

when the teacher was either absent from the room or otherwise occupied.

The principal at that time was Mr. Hogarth. She remembers a Miss Fraser, who is now Mrs. Bedeau and living in Kirkland Lake. The teachers didn't stay too long at the school.

Churches:

The United Church was located across the river; there were also Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, and Catholic churches. Great differences between the Catholic and Protestant religions.

Employment:

Women would probably have found positions as stenographers, clerks teachers and so on when they completed their training.

Industries:

There was a creamery on Whitewood, which had been started by the Ontario Government, but was then bought out by Eplett's Dairy, which made ice cream and butter.

A bakery made the bread in town. There was a feed mill in town, past the station on the right-hand side, and there's still a sign, "Flour and Feed".

They received a daily newspaper - the Daily News from Toronto, which came up on the overnight train. It may have come in the post office box, as she doesn't remember a delivery boy nor a newspaper vendor. The Nugget began in Cobalt.

Transportation:

Train, walking mostly as they had no bicycles then; and the streetcar which ran to Cobalt. Apparently, there would be a late car on the line for the benefit of those who went to the dances in the Masonic Temple in Cobalt. These were either I.O.D.E. or Rose Ball dances in Cobalt.

Entertainment:

Sounds like the Miller girls had a very lively social life when they were growing up in New Liskeard. As children, they went to the roller skating rink in town, not too far from the present new arena.

There were snowshoe parties, and she remembers skating, sleigh-riding and so on. At Hallowe'en, the kids would play pranks, such as knocking over woodpiles.

There was a certain stratification of society based on a combination of money and length of settlement in the area; but generally everyone mixed with no discrimination. She remembered an incident at a snowshoe party, which Dr. MacNaughton attended - he was called away to attend a patient across the lake.

There were various events for which formal attire was a requisite - the first time she was allowed to attend one of these adult parties, she remembers wearing elbowlength gloves.

Excursions - on the 24th of May weekend, there would be a boat trip down the lake. It was a nice boat, brought up here when water transportation was the only way to get in or out. They would go to the mouth of the Montreal River or once or twice, to the Narrows. At that time at the Narrows, the old fort buildings were still there and Mrs. Eplett thought that there were also some on the Ontario site of the Old Mission. There was a cabin on the boat, and an orchestra on board for the moonlight excursions. The boat docked at Haileybury then.

Fashions:

Formal wear for certain occasions. There were travellers who would come in and display their goods. A dress shop and milliner's shop in town - her sister, Mrs. Robinson, owned a dress shop. When they were growing up, usually they had their clothes made by a dressmaker who came in during the spring and fall, and there were no ready-made things for children then.

Fire of '22:

It turned dark, they needed the car lights on. A great feeling of panic was over the town, Some people planned to evacuate into the lake; many took refugees from Haileybury. The fire seemed to be coming over the hill, but it changed direction. There was no organization - people didn't bother to lock their houses, as they were sure they would all burn anyway. She and her husband loaded their car with people and went out the East Road.

It turned very cold the next day, and the money and clothing that were sent in were very welcome. There was an organization to distribute the goods, and there were drives for used clothing in the community.

Epletts:

Sam Eplett was born in Coldwater, and came up here with his family earlier than she did. They attended school together. The Eplett house was on Wellington Street - a three-storey building on the left hand side past Northern Telephone. Sam's father started a hardware store; made money in a mining venture and went back to Coldwater. He came here again and started to make ice cream in the basement of the present Canadian Tire building, with the help of his oldest son, Gordon.

The only Eplett still living in New Liskeard in Mrs. Eplett - her children are in other towns, and other occupations.

HIGHLIGHTS:

As a child, her father took her and her sisters over to Cobalt on the train to hear Sir Wilfrid Laurier speak to a group. He thought they should have the chance to hear the "silver-tongued orator" so they could tell their children, and that it was an experience they would remember. She remembers going, but not very much about Laurier - she was quite young then.