

From the Vancouver Oral History Project Interview Transcript No. 13

Interview with Mrs. Beaudoin Proulx

This excerpt has been edited for clarity

Cheryl Pierson: Describe the Company houses that were down where you lived.

Mrs. Beaudoin Proulx: Well, they were just ... nothing much to them. They were a four room thing. There was no plumbing in them. The bathrooms were outside. The houses ... outhouse or whatever you want to call them. And there was nothing fancy about them. It was just board. If it had real cold winter you'd have freezed, I guess. It was just board ... they was little square things, you know ... four rooms.

Miss Pierson: How much rent did your father pay for them ... a month.

Mrs. Proulx: I don't know ... that I don't know ... we didn't stay there very long. So they built something. They building, like, away up the hill. We were on the next street.

Miss Pierson: If you came out ... if you were in 1900, and you came out here in 1909, you would be nine when you came ... ?

Mrs. Proulx: That was right, yeah.

Miss Pierson: Did you start school ... ?

Mrs. Proulx: Oh yes, we had school on top ... it was the Fraser Mills Company Store ... they called it ... on top of their store. There was two Sisters came from New Westminster.

Miss Pierson: Do you know their names?

Mrs. Proulx: Sister Abbey and Sister ... what was her name? ... Felice and there was one lay teacher ... a Miss Blanchour. And they had to walk from Sapperton to Fraser Mills, there was no tram-, there was no street car, no nothing.

Miss Pierson: Describe their walk every morning, if you can.

Mrs. Proulx: Well, they'd have to come from Sapperton ... that would be three miles, wouldn't it ... through the bush?

Miss Pierson: Through the bush.

Mrs. Proulx: Oh yes.

Miss Pierson: Did they have a path or anything like that?

Mrs. Proulx: Well if you had to go downtown with the roads to get your groceries, but if you wanted shoes or anything ... you wanted to go downtown, you had to take the CPR, go someplace. And then, if you missed it back, you walked back.

Miss Pierson: For heavens sakes.

Mrs. Proulx: Oh no.

Miss Pierson: When you were in Quebec going to school, was your education completely in French?

Mrs. Proulx: Yes, it was here too.

Miss Pierson: Really, tell me about the ...

Mrs. Proulx: When we ... out here ... we were ... it was nothing else but French. Up to grade ... was it grade 8? ... French. And after you get to grade 8, they put you into an English class. There wasn't a word of French. And you can imagine us dummies, we didn't know a word in English. Arithmetic and that, well, we could do it out right, alright, because she sent us to the board to make, you know, you counted French ... count to yourself ... they didn't know what you ... you know, but the reading was kind of hard at first, you know. There were so many good people going to school. And they called us "dummy" and lots of things ... lots of fun we had. There was a few of us and others, we stopped behind ... hide behind a log one day coming from school ... we caught two people ... we scared them ... we beat them up. And they said they would tell the teacher. So we told them, "Ya, you tell the teacher and we'll do it again next time."

Miss Pierson: Did they tell the teacher?

Mrs. Proulx: Huh?

Miss Pierson: Did they tell the teacher?

Mrs. Proulx: (laughter) Well, we were bad.

Miss Pierson: It was after grade 8 that you got ...

Mrs. Proulx: Any English.

Miss Pierson: After grade 8 in English.

Mrs. Proulx: Yeah, we had the ... well, grade 8, that's when we started in English. Before that it was all French.