

SCHOLES, David

From an Interview by Mary Jackson, Nov. 2, 4-6, 1987

My name is David....it was the second name....they changed it due to a church which (the family) went to in Manchester. My other name is Scholes. (Father) was the son of a man who had a bank which went broke. Father had been going to a school where they had been teaching electricity and electrical work. He had seven sisters and one brother. I was born in Hamilton (Ontario). Father had come there from Manchester, England, and I was his first born. I was born on April 6, 1910.

Q. Your father came to Canada to work for the Westinghouse Company, I understand?

A. Yes, he did. I knew for some time that he had lived here in 1907, but I found out more recently that he was here to work in 1902 or 1903. He had come out here (Canada) to work for the Westinghouse Company. He was told by the Westinghouse people in Manchester, or a place just maybe on the outskirts of it, that he could get a good job because the Westinghouse business was just beginning to work. Westinghouse was the name of the man who owned the company. He did quite a lot of things. One was making a type of stopping gear on trains – the Westinghouse brake – he invented that. At first, Father didn't like it too much because of the American speech and the Canadian speech (being similar because they were next door to each other.) His job required him to go from headquarters (Hamilton), to as far as Nova Scotia looking after electrical machines and motors, which were being used in the cities and in Northern Ontario. In the meantime, I found he had been to B.C. as early as 1902 or 1903. So, he knew what he was doing. After the war was over (1914-1918) when there was hardly any work, except for those working at Westinghouse on Army contracts, he came to Victoria. Many lost their jobs.

Father came to Victoria where he had a sister. She was married to a locksmith named Wates. Wates and Knight was the name of the firm, and it was located on Dove (a street between Johnson and Yates.) He lived on Grant Street and this is where Father and Mother lived when they first came to Victoria. But he couldn't find any work here. Eventually he went to work for a contractor doing electrical work.

Q. How did you like Victoria?

A. I liked it pretty well, being a child.

Q. Did you find the people very different?

A. Yes, I did in some ways but not too many. Most of the people in Victoria were English, and they spoke the English language. In Vancouver they took all kinds of languages, and they had their customs and ways, nevertheless. The people had made money in the gold fields. They had the money, and could come down here and do well...that one family (McKenzie) owned a farm that stretched all the way from Mount Douglas...it was bought with money from the gold rush. I have pictures of them harvesting wheat there with machinery.

Q. The first school you attended was...Margaret Jenkins?

A. Yes it was Margaret Jenkins She was a woman that everyone liked because she was a woman who was trying to put proper schools up here, and built in the proper way. Not only that but they should go to a number of different places where people could go on later. The fact that the war happened turned things down quite a bit. Margaret Jenkins School went in 1914. There was another school on Moss Street with a man's name.

Q. What kind of subjects did you have at school?

A. Reading, writing, speech. Not much to begin with, but by Grade 4 you got a book about the world, and what the world was like. Later on still, British Columbia, and the states in the United States and the provinces of Canada.

Q. Was it quite disciplined at school?

A. Yes, each class had its teacher, and you did what was said there. We were punished if we needed it.

Q. Did you ever get the strap?

A. No, I never did. Some people did. At high school you wouldn't get the strap, you'd be told to go home or something.

Q. Was that Vic. High?

A. Yes, Vic. High. When I went there the school had 1500 students and it was only built for 900.

Q. When you were at school were you taught skills that would enable you to get a job afterwards or was the curriculum more geared toward University?

A. In Grades 6,7 and 8 we were taught woodwork. Once a week we went to Central (the first public school built in Victoria.) It was sex segregated.

Q. How old were you when you left Vic. High?

A. In 1925, no, I was 18 years. I've forgotten. See you quit school at the age of 14, grade 11, and you went to the high school for 3 years, there's 17. If you had parents who could pay, you had to pay something in the high school there because only a certain age was allowed after you placed. You see, my place came in April so there's April, May, June had to be paid for.

Q. Did you start work right after you left school?

A. No, I had no idea of work. We had been taught, to give you an idea of how big the high school was, in the first place I went to Central, they had two places there. One taught woodwork. The other, metalwork, one day a week. First they taught how to make an umbrella holder (oak) so that it could be used. If you wanted it, you had to pay for it. But if you didn't want it, they'd take it and sell it in a store. I made a table, one yard by eighteen inches wide. You had to put curves and legs on it. Then varnish and polish it. My brother made one too.

Q. What did you do for recreation? Did you fish? Hunt?

A. You could do what you liked, playing around in the street there. One thing, you got some wheels off a baby buggy and you made a gocart...Some people, whose parents had money, got roller skates. Some skates were made to lengthen and shorten, and so we took them right off and used two wheels on the back on a piece of wood...and put two wheels on the front. The only way to get a handle on was to get flour from a store, and turn that handle. It was pushed along with your foot. Better going down a hill.

Q. Did you ever go around Swan Lake or Elk Lake areas?

A. We couldn't do that. We didn't go out that way. I'm speaking of children 12 or 14 or something like that.

Q. What about with your parents? Did your parents ever take you to these areas for picnics?

A. Yes, we – I don't really think they did. I can't really remember any.

Q. Were those places considered too far out of town?

A. No...there were several farms out there. What they might do is go down on the beach. I can remember having a picture of Father's cousin down on the beach there. Generally speaking, they went there in the afternoon, and have something to eat on the beach.

Q. You told me earlier that your father kept bees, is that how you became interested in beekeeping?

A. Yes, it was. He decided to keep bees. He caught the ones that flew around Beacon Hill, and made homes for them. He had a friend who was a musician. He (the musician) was also in one of those clubs (beekeeping) all over the States and Canada. My father was a musician too, and he helped this man with some of the things he couldn't do himself. My father could pretty well do everything in the music end of it.

This man said he was going to City Hall for a meeting, and he asked about beekeeping. Father thought he liked it, and he thought...well yes, he could do that, he could see how he liked it. That started me off, and that was in 1936. Anyway, we got this started. One of the men in the club was working in a mill. He drove a truck, and transported wood and bark, and stuff like that away from the mill. He said he had seen bees out there and that he was going to get some. The next year he bought ten hives of bees. You bought bees from the United States because they started much earlier in the year than they did here. They put the bees in cages, and sold them by the pound.

Q. Whereabouts in the United States did the bees come from?

A. Around the middle. California and south of that. Not too far away because they have to be transported, and it got hot in the trains. They put them in freight cars. They sold in those times for something like a \$1.25 a pound. A usual amount would be 2-3 pounds. That would be a good start, and you couldn't get a cage much longer than that, and you had to take them down. Every one was stuck together, and you'd take these in a large truck which had open air. They are also

put on planks so that one box is put on top of the other one – there's a space in between each for the air to blow through. In some areas they'd stop and turn the hose on them because, you know, it's hot in California and further south, so they had to ship the bees as quickly as possible to Seattle, and from Seattle here. We didn't have to pay anything for them, so Father got the musician ten of them, and they got to work O.K. He was going to get 30 or 40 more but he couldn't look after them because he had to work during the daytime, and so he said if you put these things (hives) together, I'll pay you for them. So that suited me very much. The hives are made with locked ends fitted together with nails in the side. They have to fit properly. The sides were plain but the ends have a little ledge in there so it could drop down. The combs were put in a frame and every frame was the same. They're narrow on the top at the ends, so you could put your fingers between them.

Q. How long did it take you to make a hive?

A. Ontario made them and you put them together. A piece of tin was put in. It looked like a hook. It sat on the ledge so that the bees wouldn't stick in there. No he was getting 40 boxes, and we had to figure that each one was going to have at least 4 hives.

Q. Where did you keep your bees?

A. In a garden in a space between our house and another house..

Q. The neighbours never minded?

A. There was a big space there. Enough for 2 more houses. It was owned by someone. It had rocks on it. Father began to make money by growing tulips and other flowers. He got them all lined up ready for the bees arriving from the U.S. He got stung a little bit but he didn't seem to bother. After I'd been beekeeping quite a while...they didn't bother me as much as they used to. I could withstand it.

Q. What did your neighbours think about you keeping bees? Did they object at all?

A. Well, they were in the middle space, and we had an offer from the man at the back of us...so the bees were kept in a sort of open triangle space.

Q. Whereabouts in Victoria was this?

A. On Davie Street. Davie Street begins the other side of Oak Bay Avenue and ended beside the Jubilee Hospital on Fort Street.

Q. Was Victoria a good place for keeping bees?

A. I don't see why not. They never had any weather that they couldn't stand. All they needed to do is blow them up with honey. They lived on pollen, and on their honey.

Q. You must have been very successful at keeping bees. How did you get from being a beekeeper to being Provincial Apiary Inspector?

A. Well, they had to have an inspector over here. He used to come every year, and he worked on the mainland – Vancouver and further out at the same time. He was paid to inspect Vancouver Island. He had about 15 or 20 sheets of paper, each with about 30 lines on it, listing alphabetically the names of people on Vancouver Island who kept bees. They were spread out all over the place. Right out to Sooke, Nanaimo and Chemainus, Sidney and all over. Now, how can you do all that in 2 weeks? So, the man in the office there (a Minister) noticed this. This Minister had a few bees himself. He lived near Salmon Arm, B.C. but he stayed down here... (when the legislature was in session.) He got a man to contact me who lived in the Okanagan. His business was looking after all of B.C.! One man! So he had to have help somewhere. He did have a man who worked there for a while, and he sent that man to a northerly part of B.C. but he hadn't been there very long when he moved away. Before he left, however, he was told that David Scholes would be a good man...so I was asked if I would like to become an inspector, and I said O.K., sure! Well, he said, I've got to go in a short time, and if you want, I'll give you the job. A few days later he told me to come around and he would show me some bees, and how to look after them...see if they've got disease or not...things like that. Then he said goodbye and off he went.

Q. What year was this?

A. Well, I can't remember. Well, let's see. I was beekeeping for 15 years, and when I quit I was also out of pay with the Government...14 years approximately...I'm not sure.

Q. You worked as an inspector then, for approximately 14 years?

A. Yes, that gave me the range for the lower part of Vancouver Island and everyone down there, the other islands – Salt Spring Island – and any other ones, to Nanaimo.

Q. Do you remember any funny stories in all those 14 years?

A. Oh, yes, I do. There is one about my father's friend who liked music. He was a man who did the laying out of properties and measuring – a surveyor. Here in B.C. there was a railway which belonged to Canadian Northern (it came to be the Canadian National); they were in competition with the C.P.R. but their business was nearly all freight but they had a car which you'd find on, a streetcar, which was driven by a gasoline motor. The motor took it up the track there...it was a good length, about the size of a streetcar – the driver was in front, freight in the middle, and in the back there was a place for people to sit down and eat. A division was put in between with a doorway across for people who wanted to smoke. Well, he'd been working up at Cowichan somewhere, and he had found a bees' nest hanging in a tree, and he thought that it would be nice to have because he didn't have to pay for it. So he borrowed a bucket from somebody, he must have gone back to return it, I suppose, and then he borrowed a sack and put it over the top of it. The bees wouldn't go out, of course, because it's not light – it's dark – but they could breathe and smell. Well, he took that onto the carriage with him, went into the smoking compartment, drew out his newspaper, put this thing on the floor, lighted his pipe, then began to read his paper. There were

about six other men in there. After awhile, these people kept looking to see what (the package) was. Finally, one person asked "What's buzzing and making all that noise?" "Oh, that's just a bees' nest" he said. "They're OK; they won't come and do anything." In five minutes, he said, the place was empty.

Q. You've lived in Victoria number of years Mr. Scholes, and have seen a lot of changes come about. Can you tell us something of how Victoria used to be?

A. Well, the Crash came and everything went bad, then the war started in 1939. So that was ten years of doing nothing. The only people who had automobiles were people who had businesses to it. I remember one woman who drove one of the biggest cars in the city, she did quite well, but at any rate there was hardly anything grown, and hardly any houses were put up in those years.

Q. Those were the Depression years?

A. Yes, it was, and lots of people would have to go away. For example, in the summer they went to Alberta or Saskatchewan for pulling in the crops. They had to work from daylight to night – 10 hours a day, to the end of summer. They got work there, and would come back here with their pay, and it would last them for a while. There were other ways too, but I never did anything like that – I knew nothing about it, and I was never a very strong guy, always quite small. One thing I did was work at a radio station – the only radio station in the city. It was located on the 9th-from-the-top floor of the Toronto Building. Originally, there were 2 poles on the top of the roof. From those we brought down lines to the radio. By the time I went there, that particular radio station had gone out of business.

(Transcript ends)