

AGRICULTURE - Early East Richmond,  
Greenhousing

Mrs. Joseph (Dorothy) Lanoville  
364 No. 6 Road, Richmond.

Interviewed: May 31, 1973.

Born June 5, 1911 in Burnaby . . . at age of 2 weeks with mother Mrs. Ablitt, she joined rest of family on their Richmond land . . . then only R.R. 1 . . . now known as 338 No. 6 Road . . . house still there . . . lived outside all summer till framework of house completed Older sister Fern, older brother Leslie and father George Ablitt came to Richmond due to "call of the land".

1911 eight acres each were bought by:

Father

Grandfather, Sam Shepherd (for many years Municipal Clerk)

Two uncles - Mr. Paul and Mr. Hutton

Land in strips back from No. 6 Road . . . most needed clearing . . . back area which is bog left in bush for years . . . the land was "just out of Peat" and good pasture land, lush.

Dad handled the land . . . it was an investment for the others . . . herd of cows for beef . . . milk cows for family . . . pigs, chickens and ducks also raised. Horses just to work the land. Main interest, greenhousing . . . started in vegetables - tomatoes, lettuce . . . sold locally . . . later into bedding plants . . . not enough money to support family so worked daily in Vancouver as mechanic, in auto repair, 1st Avenue . . . brother Leslie as he grew up at home became interested in greenhousing . . . didn't go to high school instead helped Dad with plants.

Dorothy Ablitt married neighbor Joe Lanoville.

Before 1906 - three Lanoville sisters, Christine, Eulalia and Leontine, because there was no nearer school, went in rowboat across North Arm of Fraser from Lulu Island to Twigg Island, then walked to attend a little red school house located at the railway tracks (inter-urban) Marpole . . . this continued a short time . . . then switched to North Arm School, Fraser and Marine.

1907 - one-room Mitchell School built facing No. 5 Road and the Lanoville sisters attended it.

According to recent refinishing of Mitchell School walls, the original one-room school had lumber and studdings which dated from beginning and was different than parts added later . . . one room added to Mitchell School and it was moved on same site to face Cambie.

Small hall was built on grounds, used for dances . . . used as United Church, East Richmond, then became part of school . . . before this, when Dorothy was little, church services held in Mitchell School which had organ in it . . . minister lived down No.6 Road.

Dorothy walked 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  miles to Mitchell School . . . later to high school at Bridgeport . . . older Lanoville girls drove horse and buggy to Bridgeport High and tied horse there all day.

Childhood: Trees tunneled over Cambie Road (trees formed arch over road) . . . ditches either side walking to school in summer . . . trees even taller on River Road - no room to pass . . . in winter River Road impassable . . . in summer nothing but dust for years. One reason families built houses back from road was to avoid dust.

Washing clothes - Fraser River water hauled in barrels into wagon for homes . . . done at high tide, let sit in barrels to settle and then used for clothes.

Washing, Baths - - saved rainwater, warmed on stove.

Drinking water - came from Fraser Hill, creek ran down east of Fraser . . . brought in milk cans . . . Lanovilles did it earlier . . . mother only had to do it one year.

1929 - Dorothy married Joseph. Wedding in mother's house. Dad set up a battery operated light system to light the bride's path . . . electricity came in shortly . . . outhouses in use till Dorothy in Grade 7.

School - Public: Cambie - teachers were Miss Elder, Miss Hoey (Hoey Road is now Vulcan Way).

- High School: Bridgeport, teacher - Miss McNeeley. Three small buildings in the yard Dorothy's first year; second year attended first high school classes at Cambie - Mr. McNeil, principal.

Berry Picking - As a child picked strawberries, raspberries, black and red currants, loganberries - picked at Mr. Masters farm, corner No. 6 Road and River Road, east side - Masters was Sea Scout leader.

In bog picked wild blueberries, luscious and thick, Chinese came from Vancouver with big baskets on sticks supported across shoulders . . . picked all day . . . carried heavy baskets to streetcar stop at Fraser and Marine . . . took streetcars into Chinatown.

Life as a child: Summers - summers in the bog . . . remembers huge trees - fir, birch, cedar, climbed evergreens . . . collected wood at home for stove, carried wet wood outside to dry . . . readying winter supply was a job for children.

Family - Dad thrived on work as mechanic and farmer . . . mother worked in greenhouse plus making bread, scrubbing clothes . . . children worked in garden, herded cows . . . different pasture methods . . . some fields in hay for winter but often not enough for cows . . . 2 or 3 kids went out best part of day herding cows . . . cows allowed on road . . . ate plentiful grass along side of road . . . kept them out of people's yards . . . walked 3 to 4 miles then turned cows around and chased them home . . . did this weekends, holidays, summer holidays when fields let go to hay . . . big farmers with commercial herds didn't do this . . . only small family farmer . . . everyone had two cows to allow for one cow going dry . . . kids made butter with old barrel churn - later electric . . . then glass churn with paddle in that you turned the handle . . . tiring on first churn . . . weekend treat when Dad brought home bags of ice packed in salt . . . took turns turning handle of ice cream maker . . . never got to town unless needed shoes.

Money - never saw money (as allowances) except on May Day in Richmond or if they went on a picnic . . . kids weren't paid for doing family jobs . . . picking berries on Masters farm they had some money for selves but some had to buy their clothes, etc. . . . started picking berries for money at age of 10 . . . mostly picked strawberries.

Threshing - as Dorothy got older helped neighbor Mrs. Lanoville at farm threshing time . . . Lanovilles didn't own thresher but shared use . . . farmers all contributed teams of horses . . . kids followed threshing gang . . . Lanoville farm was 60 acres, grew oats, North East corner of No. 6 Road and Cambie . . . now owned by May family . . . Mr. Lanoville earlier owned farm behind Mays and built

Mrs. Janoville

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Duncan May house . . . Mr. Janoville came from Quebec . . . Mrs. Janoville from Poland . . . they lived at Mission before Richmond.

Dorothy's mother, Mrs. Ablitt came from London, England . . . father from Toronto . . . mother at age of 7 moved with sisters to Yale, B.C. where grandfather (Mr. Shepherd) taught at the boy's school . . . mother terrified of Indians . . . grandfather walked from Yale to Westminster for supplies . . . family burned out . . . moved to Victoria . . . grandfather was teacher in Craigflower School for years . . . then moved to Burnaby and job in Richmond as City Clerk. More about childhood: Dorothy saw many Hindus and Chinese (latter brought in to build railroads) . . . no work for Hindus to do until they got work with trucks delivering wood, some as result of working in lumber mills . . . remembers "the bums" men on loose looking for work . . . always welcome at farms . . . slept in barn . . . never refused them a meal.

Dad's greenhouse work - contracted gardening for Lansdowne Track, handled Richmond gardens in later years . . . Long English cucumbers, tomatoes and bedding plants . . . six greenhouses, some quonset huts covered in plastic on the farm . . . son Leslie operates the business.

Happy childhood memories: concerts in Mitchell School . . . house parties held every Friday night at East Richmond homes . . . piano and fiddle . . . surprise parties . . . mother's house popular with crowd, fun . . . went to English Bay and Spanish Banks beaches and the big trip was Boundary Bay or White Rock . . . what is now East Richmond Community Hall was built c1920 . . . a farmer donated the land . . . used for dances so house parties broke up . . . St. Thomas hall built . . . United Church at River and Cambie was moved to Minoru Park.

One of carpenters who built the community hall on Mitchell School grounds was Bert Hall's father (Bert lives on Sea Island).

Re - Plank Roads: c1920 - Westminster Highway was planked and No. 5 Road was planked to Cambie. No. 6 Road planked half way to Cambie (stopped at Westminster Highway). No. 6 Road from Westminster Highway to South Arm of Fraser was a trail for years.

Along Westminster Highway sound of early Franklin car driving over planking could be heard . . . there were numerous turn-outs in the narrow road.

Richmond was complete country living . . . everyone waited for the mailman to arrive in his Model T, Mr. McGinnis who operated the post office at Eburne. He also brought the Vancouver daily newspaper (1 day late) . . . Dorothy remembers "the road was so quiet".

Birds in abundance . . . pheasants . . . hundreds of Vancouver people who came out to hunt in East Richmond used her father's hunting dog . . . still sees night flights . . . remembers many sloughs, undrained low areas . . . many humming birds, meadow larks . . . never had starlings until recently . . . rabbits in bog didn't taste good . . . also the deer hid in bog but both ate Hudson's Bay tea so meat tasted odd.

Cows ate branches off trees giving strange taste . . . regularly T.B. tested.

No regular ice in home . . . put stone crocks in ground covered by rag and lid on . . . kept butter hard . . . in very hot weather put milk in bottles set in pails of water with cloth over . . . kept meat with no refrigeration . . . ham, bacon bought and hung upstairs in house with cloth over to keep flies off . . . kept for months . . . today ham moulds in refrigerator.

Orchard - growing up had plum trees, Bing cherries, Bartlett pears, winter pears, apples (Gravenstein, Russet and Transparent) . . . sold excess fruit.

Family incident - recalls visiting grandmother in Burnaby at Kingsway and Nelson (now motel site) . . . parents drove horse and buggy . . . filled floor of the democrat with straw, then a blanket - kids slept on this throughout the "long trip" . . . another incident - mother drove horse and buggy to Fraser and Marine, tied it there, took streetcar to shop downtown Vancouver. When rid of horse and buggy and Dad bought a car the kids walked often to Fraser and Marine when they had to go to town for appointments . . . family had only one bike with 4 kids and brothers usually got that bike.

May Day in Richmond - Always on May 24 unless on Sunday . . . always a big sports day ending with dance at night at Brighthouse Race Track.

Chinese market farms - in area earlier . . . Dorothy recalls Yik, a market gardener living on corner . . . and visiting Chinese homes with school friends . . . the appealing Chinese babies slung on mother's backs . . . ability of Chinese mothers to pick up diapers with their toes . . . being given Chinese nuts in the homes. Incident - Dorothy and other kids asked to sing for Chinese New Year celebrations across the road . . . Dad piggy-backed her over because of snow . . . the kids were given Chinese cookies and nuts.

1920 - skated on the Fraser River, first tested by scoutmaster with a long pole.

1930 - horses and hay used Fraser River (frozen) to go to Mission.