

Narrator: Brent Scollie (BS)

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Summary: Local historian Brent Scollie details his research into the early development of Thunder Bay's grain trade (1880s-1910s), from the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway's first western rail line to the construction of the first wooden, tile, steel, and concrete elevators. Scollie describes the main CPR players involved in this development (William Van Horne, Thomas Shaughnessy) and the various conflicts with local families, companies, and townships as the industry grew. Other topics discussed include Joseph Goodwin King's pioneering grain drying operation, changes to elevator construction methods, the development of grain inspection, and Goad Fire Insurance Maps.

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Time, Speaker, Narrative
NP: Hello. It's Nancy Perozzo interviewing Brent Scollie. Tracked him down in Ottawa. We're sitting in the Embassy Suites on November 16, 2010. And we were really keen on interviewing Brent because he has a particular interest in the early development of the grain trade in Thunder Bay. So, Brent, if you'd just say a little bit more about how you developed this interest, and we'll just let things unfold as they may.
BS: Thanks, Nancy. Yeah. My interest came primarily because I guess I'm a local historian, and I became interested in the King Elevator in Port Arthur with Joseph Goodwin King, who leased it in 1891 from the CPR. And I ended up writing a biography for the Dictionary of Canadian Biography. From there, to do that research, I had to look into the CPR records, in particular the Van

Horne and Shaughnessy letter books, which are on microfilm at the Library and Archives Canada. From there, at least, I have some knowledge primarily from the CPR's point of view.

NP: So, let's start right back at the beginning because in our previous discussions, you were saying that your area of particular interest is from the inception of the grain industry and its tie to the railway up to about 1900. So, which came first: the railway or the elevator?

BS: Well, the railway had to come first because if you don't have a railway, you can't get the grain from the West. And I suppose in a way, people at the time thought that Thunder Bay would be like Duluth, like Milwaukee, like Chicago, but they're not quite the same because in the case--. Duluth perhaps doesn't really have a hinterland either, but still, it's not that far away from the grain. Thunder Bay is quite far from the grain. The grain at that time, prior to 1900, we're talking strictly about Manitoba. There's very little grain grown anywhere else prior to that date.

How are you going to get the grain all the way from Manitoba to Thunder Bay? And it really wasn't feasible until the railway was built. So, although there was the occasional scheme talked about building at Thunder Bay prior to 1883, until the CPR syndicate took over from the Federal government, took over the railway and all its installations from the Federal government, you really couldn't transport anything. So they took it over, they took the line over from the Federal government in May 1883. They very quickly made the decision to build a grain elevator. So during that summer, Van Horne, who was the dynamo or the manager of the CPR, contacted—because he had come from Milwaukee—he contacted the superintendent of elevators in Milwaukee to design the grain elevator for him.

So they started construction on that in the fall of 1883, but it wasn't ready for the first crop. Some grain did come through that first year, in the fall of 1883—a relatively small amount—but it was handled in Fort William because that's where the facilities were. The Federal government facilities were at the Town Plot, Westfort, and so the grain was handled there. The CPR grain elevator wasn't open really for grain until early 1884, and from then on it served until they started building the Fort William ones.

NP: If we go back to a couple of points that you make. First of all, the Town Plot. Where exactly in 2010 Westfort was the Town Plot?

BS: Well, the town plot is actually quite big. It really ran from what's now Walsh Street right through to the river. So it included all along Syndicate Avenue, all along the river, right out to where the--. I forget how far it goes out. Maybe not as far as Montreal Road, but quite far out. Probably the heart of it from the point of view of the government—like where the round house was, the docks, the coal docks—they were all probably about the foot of Brown Street, where Brown Street would meet the river.

NP: Okay. Where the walkover bridge is, essentially?

[0:05:05]

BS: Probably around there, yeah. And of course, all of that was long dismantled because the CPR very quickly made the decision that they didn't want to be up there. They wanted to be down in the lower part of the Kaministiquia. They didn't want to be in the upper Kaministiquia. It's a long story as to why the Federal government built it in the Town Plot. I think it would be straying from - . That's a story in itself. I think the key thing is that Van Horne quickly realized that he wanted it on the lower Kaministiquia.

And this gets into the question of why were the grain elevators and the grain trade located where they were? The thing is, by the time the CPR came along in May 1883—really earlier because Van Horne took over as general manager, I think, at the end of 1882—so he was already thinking about the problem that early. But the fact of the matter is they were Johnny-come-lately as property owners in Thunder Bay. People like the McVickers and the McKellers were there before them, and all kinds of other people. So trying to find any land was the big problem. Where are you going to put this grain? In fact, where are they going to put their tracks was even a problem. So he was chiefly preoccupied with getting land.

What he did was he commissioned—he couldn't handle it, he was too busy with construction—so he hired one of the best lawyers in Ontario, the former Commissioner of Crown Lands, the honourable Richard Scott, who eventually became a senator and one of the great figures—the father of separate schools in Ontario. Very distinguished gentleman. A lawyer from Ottawa. He handled all the land transactions because, of course, having been Commissioner of Crown Lands, he knew everything there was to know about land in Ontario. Scott handled all the transactions in Thunder Bay with the McVicar family and the McKeller family.

NP: And along that stretch too, Hudson Bay Fort was still operating.

BS: That was the third big landowner. So you had the McVicar property. The McVickers had land in both Port Arthur and Fort William. That's what gave them the upper hand. McKellers had property only in Fort William, and, of course, Hudson's Bay Company had the mouth of the river. And so, dealing with the Hudson's Bay Company wasn't a problem because it's two companies dealing with a company and there's always a quid pro quo. So they sorted out what they wanted to do as long as both could make a profit. But then he wanted to get a track to run from the Town Plot—from Westfort, Brown Street—down to the river mouth, to the Hudson's Bay Company property, and that's where he had to deal with all these landowners.

He wanted to use the lower part for the coal handling, and so the coal handling went where the Hudson's Bay Company fort was. The elevators are located a bit upstream, and the only land they--. To get the McVicar land, the deal was--. The McVicars said, "You either put it on our property or we don't sell." And they did that in both Fort William and Port Arthur. So he got the agreement with the McVicars in 1883, but the price was that the grain elevator in Port Arthur had to go on McVicar property, and the grain elevators and the railway station in Fort William had to go on McVicar property.

NP: Now, why were they particularly interested in having it on their property?

BS: They figured it would increase the value, and that, in fact, then people would buy their land to put their houses and their businesses on.

NP: Close by the industry?

BS: That's right. Now, it did not work in Port Arthur. The CPR eventually--. The McVicar property was too far away. It was on the other side of McVicar's Creek. So that's why the grain elevator is on the other side, the north side of McVicar's Creek. It's just too far from this relatively small town that they just couldn't profit from it. And the CPR had other ways to make life difficult for them. So both the grain elevator and the Port Arthur railway station were on McVicar property north of McVicar's Creek.

In Fort William, the McVicars had a stronger hand because they owned everything from May Street down to the river, and they weren't able to sell it. They couldn't do anything. CPR did not have sufficient expropriation powers. So, the CPR ended up having to agree to put their railway station and the first grain elevator, CPR Elevator A—which they built in 1884—on the McVicar property. By then, of course, they owned it, and then the other ones just followed. They built CPR Elevator B, I think, what, about 1887? As the crops were starting to improve, they needed more. Then they built Elevator C, I think, about 1892, and then D they built in 1897 when, once again, there was a big jump in the grain trade. So that gave them their four grain elevators prior to 1900.

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NP: Did it work out for the McVicar family? They had the upper hand--. Let's just talk about the Fort William area. They had the upper hand. Did they end up making sufficient dollars as a result of it? Or could they have made a deal to sell the land and have come out of it just as well and more quickly with their dollars?

BS: Well, no, I think it did work out for them. It didn't work out in Port Arthur at all, but it definitely worked out in Fort William because, I mean, Victoria Avenue is named after Victoria McVicar. George Street is named after George McVicar. They got the

downtown. The McKeller property starts at May Street and runs up to Vickers. So they profited as well, but I'd say the McVicar had Simpson Street up to Dease, so this is really where the business section went. And if you know, CPR Elevator B was right at the foot of Victoria Avenue. When it eventually burned, it was a spectacular blaze. This wooden elevator burning up right at the foot of Victoria Avenue. So you could definitely see that they had a central location, so they profited by the fact that all the businesses had to buy the property from them.

The CPR, of course, had hoped with their deal with the Hudson's Bay Company developing the East End that the people would build there, but they didn't. Nobody wanted—even the CPR workers—they couldn't beg them to live in that area. I mean, no matter what the CPR tried, the Hudson's Bay Company property did not become valuable until maybe late 1890s, early 1900s. Only at that point.

NP: And why was that, do you think?

BS: Just too far away. The people wanted--. The stores started to locate right away on the McVicar property, and the schools were there. It was just too far away.

NP: And in those days, there weren't roads to speak of. There was the railway, and a lot of construction, delivery, whatever was done from the waterside as opposed to the landside. Is that correct?

BS: Yeah. Well, the CPR had to put their railway station on Hardisty Street, which is, once again, on the McVicar property. So that's close to Victoria Avenue. Well, yeah, it was still close. I mean, that's pretty close to delivering all the goods to the stores. But the municipality in Neebing was able to--. Because the CPR wanted some Municipality of Neebing property and also because John McKeller was the reeve of the municipality—he was the reeve of Neebing during this whole period—it's hard to separate the interests of the McKellers from the interests of Neebing. They just couldn't--. The CPR really didn't have many options. They had to do what they wanted. For example, Syndicate Avenue was a requirement of the agreement with the Municipality of Shuniah. They had to build Syndicate Avenue.

NP: Or the Municipality of Neebing?

BS: No, the CPR had to pay for it. They paid for the road.

NP: Yes, but you had mentioned Shuniah, but you meant Neebing?

BS: I meant Neebing, yeah. Because Shuniah is over, well, it's really irrelevant in this time period. Neebing had become a separate municipality in 1881. It was more or less synonymous with Fort William, but it wasn't called Fort William, it was called the Municipality of Neebing.

NP: So what were the boundaries of that, essentially? Do you know?

BS: It's quite big, actually, because it included what is now modern Fort William. So Neebing township, Papoonge township. Crooks, Pardee, and Blake were all part of the Municipality of--.

NP: So essentially until the border?

[0:15:00]

BS: So it wasn't until the town of Fort William was formed in 1892 that--. But by then, all the agreements had been signed with the Municipality of Neebing. All the population lived in either Westfort or East Fort. So, anyway, they insisted that the CPR build Syndicate Avenue. Of course, they had to move the cemetery. They had to buy the cemetery. They had to move all the bodies—pay for the moving of all the bodies—to Mountainview Cemetery. So there was a lot of problems during 1884 before they could get that track built to go from the town plot—where the Federal government installations were and the roundhouse was—to East Fort on the McVicar and Hudson's Bay Company property. And then they had to, of course, develop their railway yards. They had all their coaling operations they had to get going, and that took them probably three or four years. About three years, maybe, to get all of that going. They eventually built a new roundhouse about 1890 in the East End. And then, of course, once the round house was there, there was maybe a little bit more incentive for some of the CPR employees to live near the round house.

NP: The CPR's reason for not being happy with the locus of the government terminus, they wanted to be down closer to the mouth of the Kam, why was that?

BS: It could be--. It's hard to say whether one would be superior to the other. I don't really know to be honest. It could be that it just--. The dredging of the Kam might have been one of the factors, although I think most of the problem with the dredging was really the bar at the mouth of the river. But the CPR was pretty good at begging the Federal government and making the Federal government do the dredging for free, you know, claiming it was in the national interest. I think the Federal government paid for the next 100 years, paid for all the dredging. I don't think they ever would anymore, but in those days, they were prepared to pay for the dredging.

So, in Port Arthur, they did--. I think the other reason was, the Port Arthur elevator, there was no breakwater when they built the Port Arthur elevator in 1883. The breakwater wasn't built until 1885 to protect it, but by then they had already made up their mind. They were going to concentrate their operations in Fort William.

NP: Was it exclusively the lack of the breakwater? Which—correct me if I'm wrong—the breakwater was necessary so that the small ships that were scurrying into harbour to pick up the grain, they could get blown around pretty badly without the--?

BS: Yeah. I don't know whether--. I don't think Van Horne probably could care less what happened to the ships. That was their problem. He was worried about the foundations for the elevator because I know that he wanted the elevator--. Quite often in those days, they would locate the elevator farther out, but he decided he wanted that elevator located in shallow water, and that in fact they would run the dock farther out. And if you look at the early photographs, you'll see the dock extends way out farther into deeper water so that then the ships could come up and not have to get up quite close. But he wanted to make certain he had solid foundations.

That became a problem in Fort William too because, you know, you can have shifting banks. And they were always terribly worried. Well, there were two things they were always worried about with the grain elevators: the foundations, and the second thing was fire. They were always worried about fire.

NP: The early elevators—the ones along the, say, up to 1900—were there fires in those, before 1900?

BS: No, I can't say that I--. No, I think it was the fear of fire. They knew, I guess, from other places because, don't forget, both Van Horne and Shaughnessy came from Milwaukee. There were lots of grain elevators in Milwaukee, and they knew from their experience in the Midwest that grain elevators can blow up. But it never happened to the CPR elevators.

NP: From your research, was Van Horne a little surprised that two families from the hinterland could create so much trouble for him? I mean, he cut his teeth on some pretty big operations to be at the mercy of two little local families, seems--.

[0:20:17]

BS: Yeah, but he was at the mercy of a lot of people. I mean, although he had a lot of power and eventually was able to exercise it, the Federal government, in fact, was controlling everything. Sir John A MacDonal and his Railway Minister were, in fact, controlling everything because they were funding all of this construction. I mean, one of their conditions, for example, was that if you bought anything, it had to be Canadian. He couldn't buy anything American. So his first instinct, of course, was to go for the

cheapest product. He'd always been a businessman. And he would have bought--. If he had his way, he probably would have bought everything in Milwaukee, but he didn't have that choice. I mean, you could see his first instinct, "Oh, hire--. Who do I know in Milwaukee who knows anything about this? We'll let them design the first grain elevator."

But gradually he realized that the Federal government would never permit him to buy a stick of wood outside of Canada. Coal they couldn't control. You had to buy Pennsylvania coal. But anything else that could be bought in Canada—a pump, anything, a contractor—it had to be Canadian, and so he and Shaughnessy who--. Shaughnessy was, in fact, started off as the purchasing agent, and then just very quickly moved up to be vice-president. They quickly realized they have no choice. You've got to play by the Federal government's rules, so they became one of the biggest purchasers in Canada.

NP: Well, correct me if I'm wrong because I'm just going on my memory from doing some reading about the purpose of the railway in the first place, was to prevent north-south transportation of anything. Nation-building—to have a link from Eastern Canada through to Western Canada so that you have a strong nation rather than having the commerce go north and south, which is, you've just said, probably a more natural tendency at that time. Also, that the whole opening up of the West as a grain producer was in large part encouraged in order to provide Canadian markets for Eastern Canada goods.

BS: Yeah, I think if you--. That's the federal point of view. They wanted it through Thunder Bay. But, of course, from the point of view of Manitoba, or at least Manitoba farmers, they probably didn't care if it was Thunder Bay or Duluth. There was Manitoba grain being shipped prior to it ever going through Thunder Bay. I mean, prior to that, it went through Emerson down through Minnesota, and then I'm sure there was grain prior to 1883 going through Duluth, Manitoba grain. I don't know anything about that, but I'm sure there was grain going through Duluth. They had grain elevators.

There was a Canadian immigration agent at Duluth because none of the immigrants were going to travel on this pathetic Federal government railway between Thunder Bay and Winnipeg. They would take the boat to Duluth and get on an American railway and go up to Winnipeg. Really, it wasn't until the CPR syndicate came on the scene that they improved the service enough that people were willing then. Of course, Van Horne did have a vision. His vision was that they would have three boats, three CPR boats: the *Athabasca*, the—I forget the name of them—the *Alberta*, and there was a third one. That these three steamships would run through Owen Sound or Collingwood—I forget which—to Thunder Bay, and then they would get on the cars and go on to Winnipeg and the West, whatever was done.

The Eastern route wasn't really done until 1885, but I mean barely. I don't think they were really carrying passengers for practical purposes until 1886. If people had a choice, they still preferred to come by the lake. And certainly during the winter you had no choice, I mean, you had to go by the rail, of course. But during the season of navigation, the CPR still retained the revenue by

having the passengers get on at Owen Sound, coming up to Thunder Bay and then carrying on. So they didn't care whether they went by rail or went by ship, they were still getting the money. Although there was competition on the lake route. No competition on the rail, but lots of competition on the other.

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Now, as far as the grain trade, their policy was to encourage competition on the lakes. They didn't care whether they carried the grain or not. All they were happy with, as long as they got the traffic to carry it from Manitoba to Thunder Bay. And then, of course, where they made the money was all the manufactured goods would come from the East, arrive at Thunder Bay either by rail or by boat, get transshipped, get handled by the freight handlers, put on the cars, and then shipped out West. So it didn't matter whether it was coal going out to Winnipeg or whether it was barbed wire, whatever they were shipping West, they still got the traffic. It's not that there wasn't competition, because there's nothing to stop to people from going through Duluth, except the Federal government would impose a tariff on it, and they would punish them. Of course, the Federal government, the people in Ontario and Quebec were happy, but the farmers in Manitoba were not happy.

NP: That sounds rather familiar. [Laughing]

BS: It does, yes! And then you get the whole tariff question, but, you know.

NP: Yes, but that's another story.

BS: Another issue, that's right.

NP: Now, you said a couple of things that raised my interest and that was nobody was interested in taking that pathetic line from Thunder Bay through to Winnipeg.

BS: No.

NP: So what was pathetic about it?

BS: Well, number one, it took so long. It really wasn't--. It never did carry passengers. I mean, in theory it opened in June 1882. They drove the last spike and it was open for the summer of 1882 over the winter until the CPR took it over in May '83, but it really didn't really ever amount to anything as either a passenger or a freight. I mean, the Federal government was barely able to

construct it between 1875 and 1883. And I think it was with a sense of relief that the Department of Railways and Canals just turned it over lock, stock, and barrel, May 1, 1883, to Van Horne. And he just moved in like a dynamo and just upgraded everything. Fixed up the track and got paying passengers on it as quickly as he could, got freight on it. And as I said, by that fall, it was getting grain coming through even though they really weren't ready.

NP: So it would be a question of quality, the line reliability?

BS: Absolutely.

NP: You know, you'd have to get off every ten miles and have to reset the rails? [Laughs]

BS: I mean there were trestles, pathetic trestles that were just shaky. I mean, you've heard the famous stories about the trestles just disappearing in the muskeg. He spent the next probably five or six years, maybe longer, upgrading that whole route: filling in the muskeg, pouring endless amounts of gravel into it, replacing the wooden trestle bridges with iron bridges. So they had their hands full just upgrading that whole line between Winnipeg and Thunder Bay, not to mention the whole line to the East. I mean, that was another issue. But really, they didn't ship a whole lot of grain, I don't think, over the Eastern line between Thunder Bay and Sudbury. Only if they had to during the winter, like if it really became necessary. They preferred to store the grain in Thunder Bay and then move it during the shipping season.

NP: So there was a publicity piece for the turning of the sod in Thunder Bay at the city plot, is that the right term?

BS: The Town Plot.

NP: Town plot. So when was that? Like was that after Van Horne took over?

BS: No. No, that was in June 1875, where--.

NP: Van Horne was part of that?

BS: No.

NP: He was not?

BS: He wasn't on the scene, Van Horne. No. Don't forget, there's more than one CPR company. The original CPR company—or really you could call it the Canada Pacific Railway, would be perhaps a better way to describe it—. I forget who, to be honest, who's behind it. You better read Pierre Burton or something. He describes that early period. But essentially it was the Federal government had agreed to finance this, and it was initially built by the Department of Public Works. They drew up all the contracts. They let out the contracts in sections. So it would be known as Section A, Section B, et cetera, over the seven year period as money became available. But, of course, Canada was in a depression. Alexander Mackenzie came in as the Prime Minister 1873 between 1888. He had very little money at his disposal. He was a bit of a miser. I don't think he was a strong believer in this railway, so he sort of did what had to be done, but just barely.

[0:30:43]

So it kind of eked its way along for five years while he was Prime Minister until 1878. Sir John A. MacDonald then won the election. He came in. He created—. He hived off a new department, the Department of Railways and Canals, from the Department of Public Works so that they could focus then strictly on the railways and canals. And they took over the construction between 1879 and 1882. I don't know whether it went any faster or not. I don't know. I never looked at the construction pace. But anyway, they were glad to get rid of it in 1883.

In the meantime, it was during that time period between 1879 and 1883, that the CPR syndicate was organized in Montreal. It was organized in 1881, and you had people like—. Van Horne still wasn't on the scene, Sir George Steven, the Montreal financier; Donald Smith, who became Lord Strathcona; the Winnipeg—. He was the biggest shareholder in Hudson's Bay Company; Duncan McIntyre. All of these people formed the CPR Syndicate in 1881. They formed an agreement with the Federal government, and then the Federal government agreed that they would finance the, I think, the BC section of the railway was the most difficult, most expensive, and then the other most expensive, which was the north shore of Lake Superior between Callendar and Thunder Bay, that they would pay for the construction.

NP: Now what was happening—you may not know this—but what was happening then on the Prairies? The Prairies didn't start off full-blown growing enough wheat to export, so between the time that the government had started to work on building the railway and Van Horne took it over, was it then becoming more apparent that there was actually some money to be made from grain?

BS: That's a good question. I mean, there's no doubt lots of farmers moved out west. I mean, they called it Manitoba fever, and there were all kinds of Ontario farmers who moved west in the 1870s, 1880s. But until that railway was completed, their only outlet was through Minnesota.

NP: And my reading of that—which again is very limited—was that there was grain going down, but it was limited, too. Up to a certain point, they were just feeding themselves.

BS: I don't know. I think so. I think it was pretty subsistence farming, absolutely. And I don't even know when the Minnesota railway was complete. I think some of it had to be. I mean, getting the road from Winnipeg down to Emerson, I think, was the first problem, but I don't know when that was completed. I must admit, I'm really not up on how--. On that part of the equation.

NP: No, that's fine.

BS: But there was no doubt that Manitoba farmers weren't in a very good position up until that point. I don't think they believed they were in a very good position even after that point because, of course, once the CPR got its monopoly, neither they or the Federal government were very interested in getting any routes to the south and providing competition. Of course, that was the big grievance of all the Manitoba governments was that they weren't getting any help from the Federal government or the CPR to end the CPR monopoly. So it wasn't really until the Canadian Northern Railway came in in 1901 that there was any competition. And that's where I kind of draw the point at that. Because the CPR had a monopoly on the grain traffic to Thunder Bay until the Canadian Northern came on the scene.

NP: Now--.

BS: And Port Arthur got its revenge finally on the CPR.

NP: So would you like to move onto that story at this point? [Laughing]

BS: Well, yeah because--.

NP: Because they moved--. You say "their revenge" in that they built one elevator on the Port Arthur waterfront and then proceeded to really--.

[0:35:15]

BS: That's right. They preferred the—for various reasons—the lower Kaministiquia. They preferred--. It could be any number of reasons. I think they probably assumed that the elevator foundations were maybe better protected along the Kaministiquia. They also, I think, felt that they got exemption from taxation from the Municipality of Neebing, which they couldn't achieve with Port

Arthur. Also they had this deal with Hudson's Bay Company, so those are these three reasons why the lower Kaministiquia was a better choice.

So, there's poor Port Arthur. It has the grain elevator. It thought it might have the grain trade and the coal trade, but they vanished. They were gone within a year or so. So then they thought, "Well, what can we do? We'll tax what they've got there." And the CPR was willing to pay nothing, since they'd already--. They knew they were going to get a tax exemption out of Neebing. It took them a while to get it. I don't think they really concluded it definitely until about 1889 with Neebing, but they knew they were going to get it.

Port Arthur wanted, desperately needed, money. They didn't have anything else. And so the famous tax dispute came to a head in 1889 where they seized a train in December 1889. The CPR had to pay up—not the taxes, but they had to pay to release the train. They sent the bailiff in and said, "You know, you owe us money, so pay." But Van Horne said, "I'm going to pull out every stick of wood out of this place." And he did.

Number one, he told all the CPR employees, anybody that was living there, to move over. Because at that time Fort William was so primitive that like the superintendent lived in Port Arthur, the grain inspector lived in Port Arthur. Everybody lived in Port Arthur! The Sellers, you name it, they all lived in Port Arthur. He said, "Every one of you, if you want to stay employed with the CPR, you're going to move to Fort William." So they all had to move over.

NP: Was that--?

BS: About 1890/91 probably.

NP: So was that just--. Was that written anywhere? Did he send out a memo to his employees?

BS: No. No, no. You don't have to.

NP: So this is just stories from families that had to make the move?

BS: That's right. And just by the fact that they're moving. I mean, they moved! People like the superintendent, yeah, you can force to move. The lower-level ones you couldn't, and, of course, until Port Arthur--. That's one of the reasons why Port Arthur built its street railway and opened it in 1892 because then the employees who were accustomed to Port Arthur could travel by--since all the stores were in Port Arthur--they could travel by the street railway back to Port Arthur and buy their goods.

But anyway, Port Arthur eventually got its revenge. As I said, they were abandoned by the CPR. But when Mackenzie and Mann, the railway contractors, came along, took over the Port Arthur, Duluth, and Western Railway, and also the Ontario and Rainy River Railway—they were really two connected companies. But they bought them out about 1897, I think, and then they used those as the Thunder Bay leg to tie up with other things that they were doing in Manitoba. Between 1897 and 1901, they constructed all the links that they needed to get to Manitoba. And then in 1901 they had the grand opening of the Canadian Northern. They started building a grain elevator, a huge grain elevator, in Port Arthur. In fact, really from then on, Port Arthur was on its way to overtaking Fort William in the grain trade.

They had the cheek. When they had the big banquet of opening the CNoR at the Northern Hotel, they sent an invitation to Van Horne to attend! [Laughs] Lovely invitation to--.

NP: Did he?

BS: Needless to say, no. [Laughing]

NP: So who were the movers and shakers with the Canadian Northern then?

BS: Well, Mackenzie and Mann. They were the two.

NP: Who were they?

BS: Well, they were two railway contractors from the Lindsey, Ontario, area. They built a lot of railways, I think, out west, like smaller branch lines. They were really visionaries on much less solid ground than the CPR. And, of course, eventually the Canadian Northern Railway went bankrupt. They had all these grand ideas, but it was bankrupt by the First World War, and the Canadian government had to take it over.

[0:40:23]

NP: And the Canadian government, I would imagine, would not have helped them out because they were still beholden to the CPR.

BS: No, they just let the shareholders go bankrupt. They didn't bail them out at all.

NP: But ended up with the assets anyway?

BS: Yeah. That's a good question. I must say, I never looked into that, but I presume one of the assets would have been--. No, I think the Canadian Northern had actually leased their big grain elevators in Port Arthur to the Peavey interests of Minneapolis. I think maybe about 1905 they decided they didn't want to handle the business of the grain elevators, and so they leased their elevators to the, I think the arm was called the British American Grain Company, something like that. And so they leased it. But it was controlled by the Peavey family of Minneapolis.

Now whether they actually owned them, I suspect not. I suspect the Canadian Northern retained ownership. But all the--. The elevator, in fact, was operated by this company. Now, I mean, the pioneer, of course, in leasing was King. Joseph Goodwin King, JG King. After they abandoned the Port Arthur elevator, the CPR, during the tax dispute, they decide, "All right, we'll just leave this sucker alone."

NP: Let it go for taxes?

BS: Let it go. No, well, they could have let it go for taxes, but they paid the taxes. They weren't going to let it go. And I'm sure that they would've eventually had a use for it, but at that particular point in 1890/1891, just in a fit of pique, Van Horne just said, "We won't use it!" Even though he could have used it, he said, "I won't use it!" just to punish them and put all the business in Fort William. And he transferred Port Arthur to the Eastern Division to make it even clearer. He said, "Port Arthur is now in the Eastern Division, at the end of the Eastern Division, and Fort William is the beginning of the Western Division."

NP: What practical effect would that make?

BS: Well, you would have had to pay shunting charges because they're in two different divisions. So to send anything back and forth between the two towns, two different divisions, you would pay excessive shunting charges. So it really punished Port Arthur economically. Anyway, King at this point had been the manager of the Lake of the Woods Milling Company. This would be of interest to Ernie Epp because he did work on Lake of the Woods Milling Company.

NP: Was that in Kenora?

BS: That was in Keewatin.

NP: Keewatin.

BS: And, actually, the CPR tended to favour Keewatin in many ways over Thunder Bay. Like it favoured--. I don't know why. Ernie Epp could probably tell you more why. But from reading the CPR correspondence, the CPR favoured Keewatin for the flour milling trade over Thunder Bay. They wanted it there and they didn't want it in Thunder Bay. They tended to discourage anything happening in Thunder Bay on that line.

NP: And why would they even--. Why Keewatin?

BS: Well, it had waterpower.

NP: Because like--.

BS: It had waterpower for one thing. It had the cheap power to run the mill. There could have been other advantages. Maybe it's cheaper to transport the grain there than all the way to Thunder Bay. It could be a number of reasons. As I said, Ernie Epp might know better why that would've been a superior location to mill flour at.

NP: And I imagine that there were provincial issues too. That perhaps something in Keewatin, which is the first major town within the Ontario border might have had some advantages for Ontario markets. Well, it'll be interesting to follow.

BS: Hard to say. I don't know. I don't know. But in any event. So King had been aware of what was happening in Thunder Bay. His brother had been the manager of the town's only bank, the Ontario Bank, in the 1880s, so he had kind of a double connection. King had also tried to become the grain inspector of Port Arthur in 1885 and had failed. So he had some familiarity of what was happening in Thunder Bay. I'll come back to the grain inspector in a bit.

[0:45:08]

NP: I don't know if you said this, I may have just missed it: where was King living at that time?

BS: Well, King had been a grain elevator and a flour mill producer in Port Hope, Ontario, on Lake Ontario, but at that time his business was failing for a whole number of reasons that I won't go into. I explain it in my biography in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography. Port Hope was failing like all the towns on Lake Ontario. The grain trade was starting to fail because you're getting consolidation within the industry, and the railways wanted to run the elevators even there. You had the Midland Railway, you had the Grand Trunk, and they were squeezing all the little guys out. So he was squeezed out, and he was looking around for

somewhere to go. He tried to be the grain inspector, that didn't [inaudible]. Then he did get to be the manager of the Lake of the Woods Mill, but he had a falling out with them and left.

He went back to the East, became a grain buyer out of Toronto. He's still living in Port Hope, but he was a grain buyer. He'd probably go around to the farmers and buy all the grain up along Lake Ontario and sell it through dealers in Toronto. Anyway, he saw an opening. He saw this grain elevator just sitting there, empty, and he realized that damp grain, wet grain from Manitoba, was a serious problem. Nobody wanted this wet grain. Also smut became a really serious problem at the end of the 1880s, early 1890s. They had wet crops, and it would just get covered with this horrible green smut. He said, "I can have a cleaning elevator." He was an expert in barley, and barley is a very difficult commodity to handle. It can mould very quickly, and he said, "I can clean this and make a profit."

So he came up with a proposition to the CPR. The CPR unlikely--. They usually were very difficult people to deal with. King didn't have enough capital, so what he did was he formed a partnership with the wealthiest people in Thunder Bay, who were the Marks family. So he formed the Marks, King & Company on a five-year agreement that ran from 1891 to 1896. And they cleaned grain. It was so successful, even with the CPR driving a hard bargain. It was still so successful. Maybe it was only making a cent a bushel or something, who knows, but it was enough that it was profitable, and the CPR was willing to carry on the agreement. He pushed the Marks out, though, at the end of the five years. He didn't want them as partners. I guess the CPR trusted him. He had the expertise. The Marks might have had the money, but King had the expertise, so he just continued on his own from then on until he died in 1910.

So he had the lease on that grain elevator from 1891 to 1910. He turned it into, really, the first hospital elevator. In, I think it was about 1904, they built that first big concrete addition. It was a wooden elevator up until then. Then they built this huge annex, which is I think it was the first concrete elevator. There were tile elevators before that, built of tile, but it was the first concrete. That's still standing. The concrete part, I think, is still standing. The wooden part was demolished in 1923, but the concrete part is still there. So, that's what's left of the Manitoba one. So anyway--.

NP: So did Mr. King live in Thunder Bay then?

BS: Oh, sure. Oh, yeah, yeah. He moved there, and as I said, 1891 to 1910. It suited the CPR not to do cleaning at the Fort William elevators, so they didn't mind because during the 1890s the--. The cleaning and scouring of wheat was very controversial in 1890s, in the farming community. They were very skeptical about it. They thought they were being cheated by everybody. Didn't matter who it was, the farmers were convinced everybody was cheating them at every stage of the game. They were very suspicious of the scouring business, but if you look at it from the big point of view, there was no doubt that--.

The wheat would have been useless just sitting on the ground mouldering and getting smutty and filthy, so King cleaned it. He would remove the smut, he would scour it, he would dry it. I mean, huge energy. You can imagine the amount of wood he must have gone through in a winter drying out all this grain. He made a profit, and the wheat became saleable. I don't know what grade it sold at, but I think he just rescued it, and it became very profitable. Eventually, I guess the farmers came around to that, and I guess over the years drying became a much more sophisticated operation. So he was the pioneer on that. I don't think the CPR really ever went into the drying business on a large scale. They let him handle it. They sort of had a symbiotic relationship as long as they had the monopoly.

[0:50:50]

NP: So, I'm just wondering about the logistics of having the hospital elevator there, and this goes back to an earlier point you made where Van Horne said he was going to tear up every stick. Was that every piece of rail that went as far as that initial elevator? And if so, how did the shipments actually get to the King elevator to be remediated?

BS: Yeah. Van Horne wasn't stupid enough to tear up anything that would lose him money, so he would only do things like remove the ticket office or refuse to let the CPR boats land in Port Arthur—land any passengers in Port Arthur. They had to come over to the Kam River to land their passengers. Stuff like that. But he's not going to tear up any track, no.

NP: So it would be railcars coming through loaded with smutty grain?

BS: The railcars would have to come to Fort William, and he would make King pay a shunting charge. I seem to recollect that he made him pay a shunting charge to get from Fort William over to Port Arthur in the Eastern Division.

NP: From the West to the East, yeah.

BS: But it was presumably enough that King had turned a profit. I'm sure he had to open his books to Shaughnessy. I don't think Van Horne ever dealt with that kind of detail. He would've turned it over to Shaughnessy at that point.

NP: And by this point, would the Canadian Northern also be shipping into--?

BS: No. Well, that changed the whole game. Once the Canadian Northern, of course, came in and built their grain elevator, the whole scheme was blown apart. Everything changed.

NP: Was the CNoR elevator a hospital elevator? Was it capable of doing the hospital as well?

BS: Yeah. Yeah. It was a huge elevator. Absolutely huge, that one that they built. Wasn't that the one that was just blown up I think a few years ago? It was massive, and they kept adding additions onto it too. That elevator, yeah, I'm sure it would have had to have cleaning facilities in it, yeah. And then, of course, very shortly after that the Empire Elevator, which was the first private elevator—non-railway elevator—came in at the mouth of the Kam River.

NP: So King always rented the elevator then?

BS: Always.

NP: Always rented. And then when he died, reverted back to--?

BS: Well, it never--. It was just a case his lease was null and void upon death, so they leased it to David Horn who was in the grain trade in Winnipeg. I don't know how long Horn had it. At some point it got sold to the Gillespie Grain Elevators company. The CPR pretty well got out of the grain business, what, about 1912? Something like that. I think pretty well all the--. I mean, the CNoR had abandoned their elevators really, like they leased them out to the Peaveys by 1905 I would say. And then the CPR got rid of A, B, C, and D by 1912, 1911/1912. Once they had lost the monopoly, I guess there was just no profit in it for them. When all the private companies started coming in, it just was no longer economic. Plus, they were dealing with ageing properties. I mean, the CPR Elevators A, B, C, and D were wooden. Well, D wasn't, but A, B, and C were wooden elevators, and they just weren't economic. It wasn't the latest technology.

NP: This is beyond the 1900 mark--.

BS: It is.

NP: So I'm just going to ask you a question that you may not be able to answer. So when the CPR got out of the elevator business, did they just close down A, B, and C, or did they rent those out too?

[0:55:06]

BS: They may have leased them for a while. That's possible. I just can't remember to be honest.

NP: Yeah, and I can't recall either.

BS: But certainly, I think, Elevator B, which was at the foot of Victoria Avenue, I mentioned it burned up in a spectacular fire. I think that was about 1904. I can't recall what happened with A, whether it was just eventually dismantled. C, it seemed to be something happened to it too and it was rebuilt. Elevator D was a way down. It was at the curve in the river, and it was nothing but a catastrophe from beginning to end. They had built it, I think, as the first tile elevator if I remember. No, it was steel, actually! It was the first steel elevator. They had nothing but trouble. I think it collapsed. I can't recall the reasons now. It collapsed, they had to rebuild it. It just seemed to be a bottomless pit at Elevator D. I think they eventually replaced it with tile, maybe even concrete at some later point, but certainly tile. And then Elevator E was built near A, B, and C as an annex, and I suspect it was probably tile. But eventually all of those, they simply became antiquated. And I think the only one that really survived was the D, which was at the bend of the river. You know just as you're kind of turning up towards Westfort. So D I think survived quite late as a useful elevator, but I don't know whether the CPR ran it or if they had leased it to somebody. I don't know.

NP: That's a study in itself. Who took over? Because the elevators tended to--. They certainly didn't move, but ownership moved.

BS: It got very complicated, the ownership. Once the railways decided to get out of it, they might have retained ownership because they didn't want to lose that land, if nothing else. Whether or not they were interested in the building, they didn't want to lose the land. And so it's quite possible that they did lease it to other elevator companies. But as you know, there were just all kinds of other companies. The Grand Trunk, I mean, they came in, they had their huge grain elevator. You had, what, the Sellers family built the Northwest Elevator way, way up by the turning basin. So there are all kinds of other ones in the later period.

NP: Searle.

BS: Searle. Yeah.

NP: Western Grain. Consolidated.

BS: Meanwhile--. But then really the action was moving over to--. By the First World War, the action was really moving over to Port Arthur. You were starting--. Because the breakwater kept improving and improving, so you were getting all the Pool elevators were building in Port Arthur rather than Fort William. So you could see everything was switching. Whereas Fort William was the centre of grain handling up to a certain point—and I don't know what that point was—it shifted over gradually to Port Arthur. And probably after the First World War, I think, the bulk was shifting, had shifted to Port Arthur.

NP: Well, the first government elevator, lobbied for by the farmers, was about 1912 when C.D. Howe came in.

BS: Yes.

NP: And then he was responsible for building just about every elevator along the waterfront on the Port Arthur side. And the others--.

BS: And they're huge. I mean just in terms of size, they're so much bigger than any of the grain elevators in Fort William.

NP: With the exception, perhaps, of Searle—which is now Mission Terminal—and Cargill.

BS: Right.

NP: But that's relative too because those two are big elevators, but you've got Pool 7, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, Richardson's, growing bigger and bigger.

BS: Yeah, I mean, even in the very early period, even though the CPR had two grain elevators—they had the Port Arthur one, it was only what, 200 and--. The figures vary whether it was 200,000 or 250,000 bushels. I mean, but that's just tiny. And then whatever the one was in Fort William, I think it was 500,000 bushels, Elevator A. But it wasn't enough to cope with the grain crop in, what 1887, so they had to build huge grain warehouses on the river, the Kaministiquia River, to handle the crop that year. They had that big increase, but then by the 1890s, Canada had entered that terrible depression. Well, all of North America entered a terrible depression. I mean, the CPR was in serious, serious economic trouble in 1894. Van Horne wondered whether the company would survive. There was just no traffic. So I don't know what impact it had on grain, how low grain shipments were, but the CPR was almost on life-support 1894/1895. And then just boom! Everything just perked up again. Once the depression was over, you had a boom, 1896, and after that, that whole Western wheat boom started.

[1:00:48]

NP: The McVicar family sold out all their land to the CPR?

BS: No.

NP: All of their land along the river's edge?

BS: Well, yes, the CPR didn't want it all. All Van Horne wanted was what he needed for his right-of-way, and that's normally, what, about 100 feet you need for a railway right-of-way? And what he might need for the railway station and the grain elevators. He did want to control, if he could, the waterfront, but he really couldn't because it was, generally speaking, Ontario government policy not to give up waterfronts very easily. It had always been Ontario Crown Lands policy to have a road allowance along the waterfront, and they didn't very easily give up a Crown patent to that. If they had already given it up to somebody like, say, the McKellers and McVicars, that's different. But if they hadn't given up the Crown patent, they were very reluctant to ever give that up.

NP: The reason I ask that question is I wonder about Ogilvie's, which, again from my limited knowledge and memory, would have been building their elevator around the turn of the century. So wondering where they got their land from?

BS: Well, there's two possibilities there. They either--. The McKeller farm, as far as I know, it might have included the--. I don't know whether the McKeller farm ended at Duncan Street or not. If it went past Duncan, then the Ogilvie elevator is on McKeller property. But if the McKeller property stopped at Duncan, it might have been owned by George Graeme because he had his lumber mill there. Graham and Horne.

NP: Graham and Horne, a different Horn? Or the same Horn?

BS: Well, there were two. There was George Graham and Thomas Horne.

NP: But not of the--. Okay, it was Van Horne.

BS: Yeah, they were cousins, I think. But they were originally from the St. Catherine's area. So it could be that if it isn't McKeller property, it could have been Graham & Horne sold it to them. I know when they built the CPR station, the Union Station, they had to get that--. That was where the McKeller homestead was. So the McKellers never gave that up until, what, about 1908/1909. They still were living there on the waterfront. It wasn't until that point that they sold it to the CPR.

NP: Was that the original CPR station?

BS: No.

NP: The one that's there now?

BS: No. Not the one on Hardisty, but the one that's there now—the Union Station as it's called—we call it the CPR station, but in fact it was called the Union Station. It was supposed to be for all the railways. So when that was built, what, 1910, then probably in the two years prior to that, the CPR acquired that property from the McKellers. But on the other side of Duncan, I don't really know, because I forget when the Ogilvie Elevator was built. Probably around, what, 1906 or thereabouts?

NP: 1903, I think. Just very shortly after the concrete structure on the original CPR elevator.

BS: Yes, because the first one fell into the water. It slipped into the water, the first Ogilvie Elevator, it slipped in.

NP: But I think they salvaged it.

BS: Then they had to rebuild. Well, yeah, and then they had to do some--. Which goes to say how important elevator foundations are, that's why--. [Laughing]

[1:05:03]

NP: There are a number of them that slipped in, I understand. [Laughs]

BS: I think it was as much a problem— I mean, it didn't kill people as much, but--. Like there were explosions later were a problem, but I think, from what I can see, certainly the CPR did nothing but worry about the elevator foundation.

NP: Yeah. And rightfully so. It wasn't unheard of for the foundations to give out.

BS: And even if it didn't, it just cost you a lot of money to maintain it. Like they would have to by and look at the pilings and constantly inspect. And I'm sure the insurance companies were on their back because the insurance companies would be the ones who would get hit if the pilings were not firm. Anyway, the one area I did want to go back to was the grain inspection.

NP: Oh, right! For sure.

BS: Because that's another issue where the Federal government is involved.

NP: You know, before we go there, I just want to finish up with the pilings because it fascinated me in reading the Lady Lumberjack.

BS: Oh, yeah.

NP: And she was--. One of her stories was about supplying pilings for the elevators being constructed. And I was amazed at the number of pilings that went into those elevators. The building of those elevators must have supported the lumber industry big time.

BS: Absolutely. Big time! And that was always the case even in Port Arthur. For example, I'm sure the Vigars, the Vigars family—they're quite a famous Port Arthur Family. Richard Vigars was the mayor of Port Arthur 1905, but the two brothers Richard and William Vigars had come to Port Arthur in the 1880s. They were Cornishmen. They'd been miners, actually, Bruce Mines. Like a lot of people, they'd come from the Bruce Mines and moved to Port Arthur with the Marks and all those people. Anyway, the Vigars, once--. They did a lot of pilings in the 1880s for the first primitive docks, and then they did the grain elevators, and eventually that company turned into the Thunder Bay Improvement Company. That was the origin behind it, the Vigars behind that. I think they eventually sold it to Colonel Little, the famous Colonel Little. He's quite a legendary figure in Port Arthur for a number of reasons. He was one of the Tory timber barons of the 1910s and 20s.

But anyway, the Vigars were big suppliers, and Graham and Horne, all of these people. You're right. As far as the local market, supplying pilings for the grain elevators was--. And ties. That was another big thing. Ties for the railway. Endless numbers of ties.

NP: Right because they would have to be replaced.

BS: Constantly.

NP: The pilings would pretty much be there until something happened.

BS: Yeah, until something happened. That's right. But there was just an endless need for ties. That was the other symbiotic relationship with the railway.

NP: Yeah. They worked hand in glove.

BS: And, like you mentioned Mitchell, but I'm sure people like Charlie Cox, too, probably supplied all kinds of pilings for the grain elevators.

NP: Okay. Onto the grain inspection. Now, from your knowledge then, where did the government--. The government inspectors existed in Eastern Canada.

BS: Yeah.

NP: Because there was a grain industry there that supplied the United Kingdom, I would guess.

BS: Well, just for even the Canadian market, naturally, or whatever the export market was, either to the States or elsewhere. It was pretty primitive. I think the grain standards—they're documented in Duncan McKibbon's book—how it got started under the Province of Canada. But they're very primitive standards. The inspection system was pretty well a real--. Talk about a patronage output. Because the government didn't pay these people a salary. The grain inspectors, right up until quite late—I don't know how late, into the 1890s—were paid by the people who got inspected. Had to pay for it. The government wasn't out one cent!

NP: No chance of [laughs] nefarious dealings there!

BS: They were charged whatever, you know? I'm just going to invent a figure here. They'd charge like one cent a bushel to inspect your grain. So the user or producer had to pay, not the government.

NP: The producer had to pay, or the grain elevator companies had to pay?

[1:10:00]

BS: Well, whoever, but the government didn't have to pay. They didn't have any salary. So as a result, these could be potentially lucrative posts if you had a large volume. If you had a small volume, then it wasn't very lucrative, but if you had a large volume, say in a place like Toronto, then the grain inspectorship was a pretty lucrative patronage appointment. And the government didn't give these out very easily.

Anyway, you had this inspection system in place and then along comes this thing in Western Canada, "Well, what are we going to do? Blah, blah, blah. We don't know!" So, anyway, the CPR started lobbying very quickly, and no doubt other people. I'm sure they weren't the only ones. I'm sure Ogilvie, for example, in Montreal started lobbying the Federal government, too, to appoint a grain inspector. But where? Well, should it be in Winnipeg? Should it be in Port Arthur? And I don't really know how that played out. I never really followed it. [Telephone rings]

[... *recording pauses*]

NP: And I will remember to turn it on so that we don't have--. [Laughs] Okay. So we were interrupted by the telephone and in the midst of the decisions about where the grain inspectors would be for the western crops.

BS: Now I must admit, I don't know what happened from the Winnipeg point of view. Probably if I'd read the Winnipeg newspapers I'd know more. All I know is the outcome of it, that I think Van Horne seemed to favour it at Port Arthur, and I forget his reasons. Maybe he figured that that's where the grain is and it's easier to inspect it there. Or maybe it could be inspected at both places. Anyway, I don't know how that played out. All I know is that Van Horne initially, being an American, was naïve enough to think that the CPR could actually appoint its own grain inspector. And in fact, practically that's what they had to do for the first while because typically the government couldn't get its act together fast enough. So in 1883 and 1884, the CPR had to inspect its own grain. There wasn't any alternative. They had to hire capable people. Well, Van Horne didn't know who. He couldn't bring in Americans because, you know, the agreement with this government was, "Keep it Canadian!"

So he turned to his Eastern superintendent, William White, who was at that point the superintendent of the--. What was it called? The railway that they took over in Eastern Ontario. I forget the name of it. Anyway. John Egan was the western superintendent. William White was the superintendent in Toronto. So, he asked White, "Who do you know?" Well, White had a grain elevator that was part of his empire that had been taken over by the CPR because they had an elevator in Toronto called the Northern Elevator. The superintendent of the Northern Elevator was Matthew Sellers. So they brought up Matthew Sellers to run the Port Arthur elevator that they just built. And he brought up his son Harry Sellers. So the two of them came up with the whole family. And Matthew Sellers—being completely familiar with the eastern grain trade—he just applied the standards to the western wheat, and off they went for a while.

But in the meantime, the government got its act together. Of course, it has to pass through an Act of Parliament, an amendment to the General Inspection Act as it's called. There wasn't even a grain act at this time, it was just a general inspection act, and they created an inspectorship at Port Arthur. Once again, Van Horne thought, "Oh, well, Sellers will get the job. Well, if he doesn't get it, then the grain inspector in Toronto, Joseph Harris, will get it." Well. Didn't work out that way.

They held a board with Ogilvie and Van Horne and others, and the winning candidate was none other than J.G. King of Port Hope. And J.G. King thought he'd get it, too, because he was a real Conservative partisan, but he didn't get it, even though he was the leading candidate on the board in terms of marks and looking at the samples and getting the best results. Sir John A. Macdonald, in fact, picked Frank Edgerton Gibbs, who was the son of a former minister of his. Now Frank Gibbs was in the grain trade, but his

father was a senator and had been a cabinet minister of Sir John A. Macdonald. And as King sort of leanly wrote in a letter to Van Horne, “Mr. Gibbs had greater claims on the government than I do.” [Laughs]

[1:15:15]

So, typical Sir John A Macdonald patronage appointment, Frank Gibbs got the job. Now, it is a good patronage job because if you’re collecting one cent or whatever it is on each bushel you inspect, that’s fine. You sort of jog along in it. But by the 1890s as the volume of grain increased, Gibbs is just raking in the money, and it actually eventually came to the notice of people.

NP: Where was Mr. Gibbs from?

BS: He was from Oshawa, and his father, the Senator Thomas Nicholson Gibbs was from Oshawa as well. So anyway, up he comes. Matthew Sellers stayed in the grain elevator as superintendent of the CPR elevators, didn’t get the job. Gibbs has the job. He goes to Port Arthur. He inspects the grain, but by the 1890s the volume has increased to the point where people noticed that he’s raking in the money, and it becomes, actually, a matter of parliamentary concern. They send up-- There’s an inquiry by the Commissioner of Inland Revenue. It seems to me that they actually changed the law, and they put the grain inspector on salary, which is kind of a loss for poor Mr. Gibbs. Then after that, between that period—whenever that was done and probably between 1900—they eventually put in a much better and more regulated inspectorship where they actually created, I think, a chief inspector in Winnipeg. The thing became more-- There started being more rules and regulations. So it was pretty wild west, really, prior to 1900 as far as grain inspection.

NP: Did Mr. Gibbs stay on after the act?

BS: Absolutely. He stayed right on. He became the chief grain inspector in Port Arthur and eventually became the chief grain inspector in Winnipeg. I think he moved to Winnipeg, I don’t know, maybe around 1911. Yeah, about 1911, I think he went to Winnipeg as the chief grain inspector, about the time they created the Board of Grain Commissioners. Then he retired from the office in Winnipeg, and then I think he came back to Thunder Bay and died there not long after.

NP: So, he wasn’t completely in it for the money because his salary would have been cut back. Or his income would’ve been cut back substantially.

BS: Yeah. Because civil service salaries, even for senior positions, are not large. Yeah, it would have been, but maybe by then he made his money. I suppose he probably invested in property in Thunder Bay and maybe made money in other ways. I don’t think

he was poor. But certainly, I think the lucrative side of it probably went. I'm sure he wasn't the only one affected. They probably put all the inspectors on salary at that point, except maybe the real minor ones. It was becoming--. Even during his term, he had to hire assistants. So he was already hiring assistants. And once again, they had to go through the civil service. They were still civil service appointments even though they weren't on salary, but then, as I said, sometime in the mid-1890s—maybe around 1894/95—they put them on salary.

NP: And what happened to the Sellers?

BS: Well, the Sellers went on to become a big grain company, or family, I guess, really. Almost a grain dynasty in their own way. I don't know that much about them. Matthew Sellers stayed in Fort William and Port Arthur as superintendent. At some point he had a falling out with the CPR. It's hard to say why, but they let him go. Maybe just too old. They wanted somebody younger. Who knows? So they let him go, but in the meantime, his children were forging their own career.

His son, Harry Sellers, left the CPR to become the superintendent of the Canadian Northern grain elevator in Port Arthur in 1901. Then his other son Harry moved to Winnipeg and became involved with the grain trade. I don't know which company, whether it was the Richardsons or who, but he became involved with one of the big--. Maybe it was the Searles in Winnipeg. Then they--.

NP: It was.

[1:20:04]

BS: Was it the Searles? Yeah. And then they, by the First World War, they decided to go into the grain elevator business themselves, and they built the Northwestern grain elevator, I think, about 1916/1917 on the turning basin at Fort William on the Kam River. So they had their own grain business until, I guess, they sold it at some point to some other company. And then I think Harry Sellers went on to have a big career with the Searles and whatever in Winnipeg.

NP: He's a famous Winnipeg name.

BS: A famous Winnipeg name, yeah. I can't think of anybody else who did that other than the Sellers. I'm just trying to think. Did anybody else? No, I don't think so. No, I think that was about the only family that went in reverse, went where the real money was. The real money was always in Winnipeg. There was never any money in Thunder Bay. They were just lowly employees, I think, after that in Thunder Bay.

NP: And why was that do you think?

BS: Well, the capital was in Winnipeg. The grain market was in Winnipeg, and the control of the companies was in Winnipeg. It didn't matter whether it was the railway or whether it was a private company. Prior to 1901, you had the railways; after 1901 you had private companies as well, but it didn't matter. To move a stick of wood, you had to contact head office in Winnipeg. Thunder Bay was marginal.

NP: Do the Richardsons factor into the early grain trade years? Or were they--.

BS: Well, they were shippers. I mean, with the Ogilvies, they were obviously, they had their country elevators or their sources of grain anyway. Whether they actually--. In some cases, they had grain elevators. In other cases, they just had grain buyers who would buy the grain from the farmers and then ship it from whatever the siding was, anywhere out to Thunder Bay. So they were private shippers. They were always involved in the trade.

They were, I guess, what you would call consignees. In railway terms, they had consigned their shipment, but it's quite complicated. I can't say that I ever understood it, how they mix all this grain and keep track of it. I have no idea. I think they would decide it's one grain, and then after a certain point it all gets mixed together. Once they've decided everything is Grade 1, No. 1 grade, whatever No. 1 Northern, and it gets mixed together, the grain elevator--. It doesn't matter whose grain it is anymore other than they know you shipped 400 bushels. So maybe by the time it gets to the miller in Toronto, nobody knows which 400 bushels is your 400 bushels, but as long as the buyer at the other end, the miller, thinks it's--.

NP: What he ordered!

BS: No. 1 Northern, he doesn't care.

NP: Well, you'll have to listen to some of the other tapes because they have tons of information about what happens to get it to the elevators here. That's the wonderful thing about this project is that, to me, it is this great big jigsaw puzzle, and everybody has their piece.

BS: Yes.

NP: There are times that my mind just goes into spasms trying to keep all the pieces, see how all the pieces fit together because it is a fascinating, fascinating industry.

BS: I mean, I must admit, even in the early days when a railcar came from Manitoba to Thunder Bay, even in the 1880s, it must have had more than one farmer's grain on the car. Now I know in the very early days, quite often the grain would have been sacked. Really early days it was sacked grain, and then eventually it became free-flowing grain. But whether its one or the other really doesn't matter, it still eventually at some point got all mixed together. At what point--. Did the mixing start in Winnipeg? Or did the mixing--? I don't know. In the very early days, I don't know. In the later days, I don't think there was any doubt because you're dealing with huge, huge quantities.

NP: No, and that is another story that the railways play a big part in. You'd mentioned earlier about the farmers were not very trusting of just about anybody that dealt with their grain, and there was a big fight about whether they had to go through companies in order to get their crop onto the railways. And there was legislation passed that there had to be flat car accessibility for farmers who wanted to deliver straight from their farm. Load their own cars. Producer cars.

[1:25:24]

BS: Right, right.

NP: And those producer cars are making a comeback with the disappearance of the small country elevators, because rather than hauling grain from long distances—because that's where the nearest, now big, country elevators are—they are calling upon that act, which is still in existence, that allowed for producer cars—so that some of the cars that would be coming through Thunder Bay could actually be traced right back to the particular farmer.

BS: Whereas they always say in anything, "There's nothing new under the sun." When I go back and I look at the CPR correspondence—1880s, 1890s—Van Horne, based on his American experience, was absolutely opposed to flat cars. He was a definite believer in having small grain elevators, country elevators, and having the farmers get their grain to the thing and get rid of these flat cars and this whole business. And, of course, I think even he had probably lost that battle, probably by the late 1890s. I think that's when--. The farmers, didn't they win by about the 1890s to get the flat cars in? Something like that. About that time. So there was probably, I think--. He didn't win all his battles.

NP: No, and at some point—and this was something that was new to me when I started this project—the grain portfolio, actually there was a grain unit in the Federal government that lasted for quite some time—a separate grain unit. And a large part of that was the number of farmers that by then existed. They had a lot of political clout, so that all of these royal commissions that we were

talking about, they translated into keeping a large number of voters happy. And other industries did not have that same political clout.

BS: Yes, and that's probably the reason why they eventually—railway companies like the CPR—abandoned the grain business. Just got out of it. I presume it just was no longer profitable. Although I think, as I said, I think obsolescence was also a factor. Just by the time grain elevators were 20 years old, I just think that they were obsolescent.

NP: That brings up another question I have for you that goes back to early on when you were talking about things that happen to grain elevators—that fire was always an issue, slipping into the water was another. Are you familiar at all with those insurance plans that were drawn up? The magnificent, almost artwork?

BS: Yes. They're the Goad Insurance Maps. They're quite famous, of course, for any work on the earlier period. I mean, if you're doing any urban history, the Goad Fire Insurance Plans are just a gold mine.

NP: Tell me about them. I don't know anything other than I've seen a couple of them.

BS: I can't say that I know a lot. I know that there is a publication that somebody did maybe 30 years ago that listed all the known Goad Fire Insurance Plans at that time.

NP: How's Goad spelt?

BS: G-O-A-D.

Np: Ok.

BS: G-O-A-D. And it's a—I was going to call it—it's a cartography, I guess you'd have to call it.

NP: Ok.

BS: A carto-bibliography might be the better word. Carto-bibliography. That was done I can't say by whom. I just forget now. But it's easily findable in library catalogues. And quite a few of these are at the National Archives here in Ottawa, although they're scattered all over the place. For all I know, I know Thunder Bay Archives has some, but for a much later period. There's also the Toronto Public Library has quite a good one for Port Arthur, dated about 1910 or thereabouts.

[1:30:00]

Now sometimes sheets are missing. Sometimes the sheets you want. Like they have general ones that sort of show the general part of the town, and they show the actual building. The maps have a specific purpose. They want to tell you, “What is this building made out of?” That’s all they’re interested in. Is it made out of wood? What part of the building is made out of wood? What part is made out of stone? What part is made out of whatever fireproof material? That’s all they’re interested in. So, that’s why they’re so interesting, is that if they do--. And then you’ll have individual sheets that will do some of the more significant buildings, like the grain elevators or a hotel or whatever. And it actually shows these wonderful drawings.

And there is a wonderful one that’s reproduced in one of the early *Papers & Records* of the Thunder Bay Historical Society because I wrote something on it called “Grain Elevator Maps of Thunder Bay.” It reproduces in black and white—unfortunately, because they are colour—it’s in black and white showing the King Elevator about, I don’t know, 1905, with the original wooden grain elevator and then the new concrete addition. And it’s a wonderful thing. I mean if you could reproduce it and blow it up in colour, this would be fantastic. It shows all the spouts, and it tells you what each section is made of, and it shows the old and the new. Like the old technology—the wooden grain elevator of the 1880s—versus the new concrete slip elevator of 1905. And if you could find the same--. I’m sure there are other ones that exist that might show the tile elevators or the steel elevator. Eventually, of course, in the--. I mean, I don’t think anybody has still written a book on the history of grain elevator construction. They’re still waiting for their historian. They eventually gave up on steel, they gave up on tile, and they settled on concrete eventually, I think. Aren’t they all built of concrete now? If they’re even building any anymore.

NP: They’re building them out west on the West Coast.

BS: And what are they being built out of? Are they concrete still?

NP: I’m not sure. I was looking at one—the Prince Rupert one—just last night. Mr. Halter, Syd Halter, gave us a little promotional package for the Prince Rupert grain elevator that Howe was involved in.

BS: It’s interesting that ones are still being built in Canada. Yeah. But I’m sure even in the United States. And, of course, that’s where usually most of the technical ideas came out of the United States.

NP: Well, and they’re also building what we would call the mini elevators. A lot bigger than the original primary elevators in the Prairies. So now they’ve got ones that are mostly, I would suspect, concrete construction almost exclusively on the Prairies so that

they are consolidating their businesses into a more central elevator. Smaller than what you have on the Thunder Bay waterfront, but much larger than the primary elevators.

BS: But it's like all engineering. It was trial and error until they found what seemed to be the most effective.

NP: Or what was available. What kind of construction materials were either available or designed.

BS: Yeah. Certainly wood. I mean, number one, I guess wood was cheap. It was an available material. But concrete technology hadn't been perfected certainly in the 1880s when they were building them. And there just wasn't any doubt that they were going to build it out of wood. All the American ones were built out of wood. I don't--. As I said, the CPR did build a steel one. That was their first one in 1897. They built that in Fort William. Elevator D, the steel grain elevator with steel bins. That was built by the Steel Grain Elevator Company or something, of Buffalo. It wasn't a success.

NP: Well, there were portions of Ogilvie that are steel. The original pieces of it.

BS: Mmhm. Yeah. And then tile, of course. It seems to be the Canadian Northern may have been of tile, grain elevator.

NP: And one of the--. Now what would have been Elevator E, I think, was tile.

BS: Tile, yeah.

NP: And still standing.

BS: Now, whether--. You know, I don't know why they gave up. What were the engineering reasons for moving to the concrete? You'd have to ask an engineer. There's probably good reasons. I know I have seen--. Like, there were very early--. The names of all the builders of these elevators are pretty well known. If you look through the early issues of the, I think it's *The Society of Canadian Engineers*, there's lots of papers—they turn up in library catalogues—where people are doing papers on grain bin pressure. They're really worried in the wooden bins, what would happen? Just from a purely mathematical point of view, the engineering. If you get all this grain coming in there, what's it doing? What's the stresses and strains that engineers are interested in on the wood? And so you get papers on that. And I think it came out of that they realized, "Well, should it be square? Should it be round?" All the kinds of questions an engineer asks. And I guess they finally decided round is better than square for engineering reasons and physics reasons.

[1:35:45]

And so they eventually came up to a certain design: It should be this way rather than some other way. But I think initially, a lot of the bins were square. They weren't round. I presume that they were probably square in the original CPR ones too, but I don't know. I've never seen a picture of the interior. If you ever find one, I think it would be great. [Laughs]

NP: A new one, yeah.

BS: But, of course, taking inside photographs in those days was very difficult.

NP: Yes.

BS: There are a few really poor photographs of King's apparatus in the *Windsor Magazine* published in London, England. It's listed in the bibliography of my DCB. It's a British one. The British sent a writer over and he took photographs. Or got somebody probably in Thunder Bay, actually, to take the photographs for him. And you can see these tiny little photographs are reproduced in the magazine, but they're not of enough quality that you could ever really blow them up. But they're the first inside pictures I've ever seen.

NP: Of a wooden elevator?

BS: Well, of a Thunder Bay--. Yes. It would have been--. Well, that's a good question. I think--. I can't remember when the article appeared, what year. I think they're of the wooden one. And they show the drying equipment. Like you can actually see the metal driers that he used. Those are the only interior pictures that I've ever seen, but it could be that some American ones exist in the 19th century. That if anybody ever scoured American sources, you might find pictures of what grain elevators were like in the inside. But I've never seen any.

NP: Well, and as part of our project, the Friends of Grain Elevators project, that's really one of the things that we wanted to do for the broader project, which is trying to get a grain elevator centre, was to pull together all of this information that exists on grain elevators starting right back to--.

BS: Like go to places like Duluth, Minneapolis, Chicago, Milwaukee.

NP: Buffalo.

BS: Buffalo. Well, Buffalo is so early, but I would concentrate more in the later ones to see if anybody ever took any photographs, say, during the 1880s or 1890s of the insides of grain elevators. Because that would be great. Lots of pictures showing them outside, and they all look the same. I mean, you've seen one, you've seen them all. You see this kind of square wooden sides, the little peaky roof, and the cupola. They've got a cupola on the top. They all look the same.

NP: And I bet they all look the same on the inside too.

[Laughing]

BS: Exactly! Now, I have seen drawings of the inside. And I'll bet there are lots of architectural drawings that have survived, particularly in the States. I bet there are architectural drawings. But I don't think any have survived in Canada.

NP: The--.

BS: The most likely place would be Montreal. If any have survived, if somebody scoured--. Ask McGill or the archives in Quebec whether by any chance any engineer--.

NP: Early Ogilvie elevators in the east.

BS: Montreal, like a Montreal City Archives or the Quebec --. The Montreal District Archives, but it's the National Archives of Quebec, whether any architects just might have donated their architectural drawings, and you just might be lucky or you might not. Because the CPR, don't forget, also built grain elevators in Montreal because they had to get--. Once they got the grain out of Thunder Bay--. I mean, this is another part of the missing picture. They also had a grain elevator in Owen Sound that they built. Or was it Collingwood? I never can remember. It's either Collingwood or Owen Sound. Then they had what are called the transfer elevators. And they had eventually one in Prescott, and then they had their two in Montreal. And that's, of course, where they handled the grain to ship it overseas. So they had two grain elevators that they built in Montreal in the 1880s. And in fact, by then they'd built up enough expertise that after that they designed their own grain elevators. They didn't have to go outside to design them.

[1:40:26]

NP: When you were looking at the correspondence and such for the CPR--.

BS: But there's virtually nothing about Montreal because, of course, they didn't have to write any letters in Montreal.

NP: Ah!

BS: You just--.

NP: Handshake and you did it?

BS: Well, you called the guy into your office, and you told him verbally. So there's no written record of the stuff in Montreal.

NP: Did they have diagrams of some of their structures from what you recall? Or that wasn't something you were looking for?

BS: Oh, yeah. Obviously, the CPR had fabulous archives. When I talk about what's on microfilm, you're only seeing the correspondence out. You're not seeing the correspondence in. They have all the correspondence in, in the CPR archives, but I don't know how accessible it is. They're willing to give you access to their correspondence in. Okay? So, in other words, when William White wrote Van Horne, they kept William White's letter and put it on file. All I've read is what's on the microfilm, Van Horne's letter books. What he wrote back to White or asked, "Would you do such and such for me?" And then maybe two days later White would write back. That's sitting in a file probably somewhere in Montreal. I know it's sitting in a file in Montreal.

In a lot of cases, he said, "Please put these plans on file," but I'm sure that stuff has disappeared. They kept the president's correspondence at Windsor Station, but if he said, "Put it on file in the engineer's office," those records are long thrown-out. The western division stuff is long ago destroyed. Everything in Winnipeg was destroyed. Don't have it. So none of William White's correspondence has survived, other than what he sent to head office. None of that has been kept. And I don't know that--. I think they kept Shaughnessy's. Whether anything was kept after Shaughnessy, but it doesn't really matter because from a grain elevator point of view, it really is of no significance after 1911 really.

NP: That still happens today. You were talking earlier about a time in the grain industry when there was really quite a bit of turmoil, and companies were amalgamating. Or perhaps you were talking about the railway industry. And that's something that the grain industry has gone through over the last decade. Much to my dismay, in doing these interviews we hear that when one company bought out another, their records were just shredded.

BS: Absolutely. Yeah. I don't think there's very many records at all.

NP: Yes, which is, in this day and age, such a shame.

BS: It's just whatever happens to turn up, I think, with regulatory bodies, and you have no guarantee they'll hang onto them. Like if they had to go--. If there's some interaction with government, let's say they have to write the government and correspondence on an issue. If you're lucky, that will survive. But the volume of government records now is so huge that even they end up shredding most of the stuff after a time. So unless you kind of get in with them and speak to the archivist, "Are you going to hang onto this stuff?" it won't get saved. So you actually have to speak to the archivist responsible for--. Say whoever at the National Archives is responsible for the Canadian Grain Commission. Unless you talk to them and say, "What are you actually hanging onto? What's your mandate? What are you allowed to hang onto?" Because they're under pressure not to expand their records anymore. What's sitting in the National Archives? They have a storage centre in Winnipeg for Federal government records with probably a fairly low-level records manager there, and they just store. Like when the Canadian Grain Commission gets tired of records, they send them to this Federal—or supposed to send it—to this Federal storage depot in Winnipeg. Are they? Or are they in fact shredding them before they even get to the Federal depot?

NP: Yeah, and the Grain Commission has its own library. So it might control a little bit of that.

BS: But I'm not talking about the library. I'm talking about the records manager. You've got to talk to the records manager.

[1:45:04]

NP: Ok.

BS: If there is one. You hope that there's a records manager. There'd be somebody designated to be the records manager. The law says that they're supposed to send all Federal records to the Library and Archives, and they're supposed to have a disposal schedule that they're drawn up with the National Archives. Have they? Do they have a disposal schedule? Because the records manager is in charge of implementing the record schedule. That's what the law says. And then, I said, that's sort of at the one end. The other end is here in Ottawa, what actually survives making the transition to get from Winnipeg finally and into the national collection here? At each stage, there's a sieve at work because they're only willing to take here, probably, the correspondence of the executive. Like what are the executive decisions affecting the Canadian Grain Commission? Are they interested in routine correspondence with a grain company? I doubt it. They don't want that. They'd say, "No. Destroy it."

NP: Yeah, because the Grain Commission is responsible for licencing elevators, so the correspondence there. Back and forth about licencing.

BS: Yeah, and what you might call routine correspondence, I'm sure the disposal schedule says, you can destroy it after five years, ten years. Personnel records you can destroy after five years. Financial records you can destroy after so many years. So the question is, what's making it? Are the executive decisions and the correspondence of the very highest officer in the Grain Commission, is it in fact making it to Ottawa? Or is it too--? Because that would be pretty sad if it were destroyed because that's really the policy decisions. Where the head of the Grain Commission is writing the head of a grain company. That I don't know.

NP: Good questions to ask, but when I get the answer, what am I going to do with it in the absence of having it? [Laughs]

BS: It just becomes useful. Maybe it could be useful to some future researcher. They know that, in fact. Well, as you might expect, probably 90 percent of most material will in fact be destroyed. I mean, it makes sense.

NP: Mmhmm.

BS: You can't hang onto everything.

NP: No.

BS: And there are frequently other sources.

NP: Yeah.

BS: Like trade magazines, trade industry journals.

NP: Right. Yeah.

BS: Horrible stuff to go through, but it's there. [NP laughs]

NP: If we go back to these--. We're getting near the end of our time you might be pleased to hear. [BS laughs] the Goad insurance maps.

BS: Oh, yeah.

NP: Does the Goad Insurance Company—I'm assuming that's the name of the group—do they still exist?

BS: That I don't know. I don't think so.

NP: Yeah.

BS: I'm sure there's some other method now that the insurance companies use. That was the--. The other thing that's tricky with those Goad Maps, I should point out, is that they're frequently--. They would do a map and then they would issue all these little updates. Little paper--. You know like little paper things that you put on dolls? And you would kind of paste it on?

NP: Little dresses over top? Yeah.

BS: Little dresses over top. Well, that's how these Goad Insurance Maps--. They would issue little amendments that you would paste over top of the original map if something happened to it. And so they'd get really complicated. But if you just take it as a point in time, a frozen point in time: This is what it looked as of October the 10th, 1910, who cares from a historical point of view?

NP: Well, and I can imagine--. I can't imagine them doing those maps every year. I'm just thinking of the one I saw at the Thunder Bay Archives, and it was quite large. And it would have information such as they would have two security—not security guards—but the fellows who went through the elevators, night watchmen. I guess in a sense they were sort of security guards. So they would have that type of information in the margins of these maps. So you got more than just an idea of the structure, you also got an idea of how it worked and how it was staffed and so on.

BS: Yeah, absolutely. And you mention the influence of insurance companies. I mean Goad is one example, but even in the early Shaughnessy correspondence—because he handled the more practical matters—the insurance companies were ruthless with the railway. They just said you have to move. The powerhouse has to be so many feet away from the elevator. And they would make them take down the building and move it. “Or we won't give you any insurance.” Coal oil. They would tell them if you leave a barrel of oil anywhere around that place, no insurance or we'll just jack up your premium sky-high. There's all kinds of petty little correspondence in the Shaughnessy papers over things like where the coal oil barrels were put and how many feet the powerhouse was from the actual wooden elevator. All that kind of stuff. So insurance was a big factor. These people were worried if a fire were to break out.

[1:50:57]

Yeah, the Goad Maps are fabulous. I mean, if you ever had to display them for museum purposes, I would head for those right away. Like these are just a gold mine. You just blow them up, and in a lot of cases they're self-explanatory. Huge captions down at the bottom that explain everything about these things.

NP: And where did you say, again, that your treasure trove of them was located?

BS: Well, these are at the National Archives. They're not the easiest people to deal with, and they're certainly quite expensive to get any kind of reproduction out of them.

NP: But you can go and look at them?

BS: You can look at them. Scanning technology is available now. That wasn't available years ago. You can get them scanned, get a good TIF file in colour. I presume they'll--. I don't know what their terms are in terms of an exhibit, but I'm sure you can reproduce them. I don't know whether you have to pay them a royalty or what. I don't know. Copyright would have expired on these, I'm sure. Anyway, they're excellent.

NP: And they would've been copyrighted?

BS: But to me they're a gold mine. I mean, if you're looking for something visual, they're a gold mine.

NP: Ah! [Laughs] Just a couple of questions then that relate specifically to our project. As I mentioned earlier on, the Friends of Grain Elevators has this vision of our own that we would like to actually preserve and celebrate the part that Thunder Bay played in the development of the international grain trade. We're focusing on Thunder Bay's role because we really feel as far as the producers are concerned and the farm growth and so on on the Prairies, that story is their story and been told. But we really don't feel that the story about Canada becoming an international grain trader of significance has been told, so we're looking at Thunder Bay's part in that. So if we ever are successful in managing to have this happen, what do you think would be worth preserving to tell that story?

BS: Worth preserving in terms of what?

NP: That would be of interest to Canadians that come through Thunder Bay.

BS: Well, that's always a good question. There's always what's left physically, which isn't much. I mean, in theory, of course, that Manitoba Pool is a historic site, but if you can't interest somebody like Parks Canada, or don't realize the historical significance of that grain elevator as the first concrete elevator in Canada, then I don't think that you can do anything. I think it's a--. It either is of national significance or it isn't.

NP: Would you say--.

BS: I think the fact that they put up a plaque suggests that they accepted that in theory at least 30 or 40 years ago when they put up the plaque. Whether they've changed their minds since, I don't know. But whoever--. I think it's nationally significant. So just a matter of convincing them to designate it as such. Now, I know it's owned privately now. Unless the ownership changes, what can they do? So that's worth preserving physically. I don't know that anything else is, but I guess if that fails, then you go to whatever is the next best.

In terms of documentation, what aspects of the story are most interesting? Probably people are always interesting to most museum goers. So focusing on key people would make it interesting. I think the mechanics of the trade is really only of interest to certain segments of the population, mainly male. I don't think women are much interested in the mechanics of the grain trade. If you can find some dramatic aspect of it, I guess that makes it more interesting. But I don't know that the technical aspects of the grain trade would be a big draw. I could be wrong. Maybe you could, but generally speaking, I don't think women would be interested. I think males tend to be more interested in technological things.

[1:55:38]

NP: The science centre aspect was also something that we were looking at because early on with the consultants who were helping us put together a feasibility study of whether this was feasible, they very wisely recognized that it's increasingly difficult to pry money out of anybody for historical purposes. So to tie the history part of it to the present-day value of the industry in some form. We've been looking at a bioscience approach, where it'd be food and drink related to the industry and also, in a sense, geographical. Where the tentacles of the industry ended up throughout the world from the little port, initially, of Thunder Bay, pre-1900 to the world's largest grain port through most of the 1900s. So looking at that to deal with your issue, which I agree. Although, the number of women getting into the engineering field is ever increasing, so that may change over time as well. But recognizing that if this were to work, it has to be more than just the physical building.

BS: Yeah, and I mean the story can be told independent of a building, of course. You're never tied to the original building. You can still reproduce everything that a grain elevator does with a model, you know? You can have somebody build a complete model of

an 1884 elevator or a 1910 grain elevator. People are capable of building models of these. I'm sure it's already been done. I bet somebody has. If you checked around with enough museums, there's probably such a thing exists. I mean that's always a fallback. If you can't do a big scale, then you do it on the smaller scale.

I guess the only other thing that would interest me is if you can't--. You just scale back accordingly to form synergies. I mean one problem, I think, in Thunder Bay now is that there's an awful splintering of the museum community. You have the Thunder Bay Museum trying to do everything on very little money. You have the Multicultural Museum out of the old Port Arthur—Multicultural Society of Ontario, whatever it is—trying to do its thing out of the Port Arthur Fire Hall on Court Street. So you've hived off the ethnic. You've got the Finnish Canadian hived off by itself trying to do their thing. No synergies. Thunder Bay just isn't a big enough community, I don't think, to support all of these museums. If somebody can't get some synergy going, it's just splintering the forces. So I don't know. I think you always have to have a fallback position, you know, Plan A, Plan B, Plan C, Plan D.

NP: Well, actually when we did the consulting contract, we said we want Plan A and Plan B.

BS: Yeah. And even if you don't, you can always--. If you can work downwards, you can also work upwards. If you have to initially settle for Plan D, that doesn't rule out Plan A eventually again. You can still build yourself eventually up again towards that in another period of time. I don't know. I always think things are scalable. I think maybe because I worked for the government. You realize that things are scalable. So if you can't achieve your original thing, you divide it up. What can you achieve? And if you have to settle for less, it doesn't rule out those other aspects of the plan that you could still build up to eventually again. And still achieve the goal in the long run.

NP: And thus the *Voices of the Grain Trade* project that we're working on here, which is part of that, preserving what we can.

BS: That's right.

NP: While we're still able to.

BS: Now one thing that I would want to warn, even though I given you all this information, I wouldn't want what I've given you suddenly to turn up in a publication without my authorization. To me that would be a no-no because I did all the research on this.

NP: Yes!

[2:00:10]

BS: So although it can be there for use for museum purposes, it certainly is not available for publication purposes. So if somebody were to transcribe it, and suddenly it appears in a publication, I wouldn't consider that a legitimate goal.

NP: No. Yeah, just to let you know at this point, [laughs] our intention is just to get the stories while people are around to tell us the stories and have them safely stored so that--. Right now they're permanent storage at Lakehead University on their major computer because we just have a small little hard drive, and very limited use outlined in the--.

BS: But the--. Here I go again! I understand that, but right away you see this is part of this fragmentation. Why are they not being deposited in the Lakehead University Archives? Some agreement should be reached with the Lakehead University Archives. In theory that is the repository for the university and there are just too many things that are going astray because they're staying in individual faculties. And when the key players leave in those faculties, the stuff vanishes.

NP: Actually--.

BS: I've seen it happen. I know it happens at the university.

NP: Yes. The only reason that they aren't is that I wasn't aware such things existed, and this is in their hard drive as opposed to--.

BS: Yeah. Well, I'm not saying that that's not a safe place for it. I'm not arguing that. But I think that some formal arrangement should be reached where the--. They only have a parttime archivist, so you should probably discuss it with the chief librarian.

NP: Oh, sure. I have no problem with that.

BS: Because I think the part time archivist who also works for the City Archives of Thunder Bay is a double duty. Only works there part time.

NP: Yeah.

BS: I don't think that they've had much experience with digital records at the university. If any in the archives.

NP: This is probably the first.

BS: You're probably the first. So maybe this is the time for them to get their feet wet.

NP: That's right.

BS: On the library's side, they're used to dealing with digital records. I mean, all libraries now have digital books. They don't even buy, in a lot of cases, print books anymore. You buy a digital book. So why shouldn't it be in the university archives? I don't think it should be under the control of any one faculty. I think it should be there. That's personal opinion.

NP: Yeah. Valid personal opinion. As is your comment about the fragmentation. Thinking about--.

BS: There's too much fragmentation in Thunder Bay going on with all of these because the Thunder Bay Archives has the best photographic archives. It may not be for your purposes--.

NP: The Thunder Bay Archives or the Thunder Bay Historical Museum?

BS: Well, I shouldn't say that, sorry. Yeah. The Thunder Bay Historical Museum has the best archives for all kinds of reasons. The city of course is interested in city records. That's their primary focus. If they happen to have any, say, grain elevator photographs or correspondence, it's only insofar as it affects some city matter. You know, taxation or environment or something like that. That would be their only interest. Whereas the Museum's interest is more broad. In terms of a pictorial record, they have, without any doubt, the finest collection. And I don't even know what other records might have wandered in, you know? They would be hit and miss as far as documentary records, but one thing they do tend to collect is people will come in and just drop off photographs. They keep petering in. Every time I go, somebody's dropped off one more and another one. They just keep wandering in. I just wish that there was more synergy. In some cases, you may be rebuffed. I know that from--. People are so overwhelmed they get rebuffed.

NP: And that's been my experience. It's not so much the rebuffing as the fact that people are so overwhelmed, so understaffed that-. I just received a few pieces of paper from one of the people that we interviewed. He was going to toss them out and gave them to us instead. Well, three hours last night for me to improperly catalogue about 20 pieces of paper. [Laughing] I thought, "No wonder they can't keep up with those photographs of things that are just sort of dropping in!" But anyway. Perhaps we should--. We're coming near the end of our tape here, so maybe we should officially end the interview and continue our discussion.

BS: Absolutely. Yes.

[2:04:57]

NP: So, thank you very much. This has been wonderful. And as I suspected, very few people have done the research that you have done, and I'm so grateful that you've taken the time to share that for the project because if nothing else, it shortens up the amount of effort to gather that information. And also points us in directions for deeper research into areas that we probably would have perhaps never stumbled across.

BS: My pleasure.

NP: So, thank you very much.

BS: Good!

NP: Now, I should have given this to you to sign beforehand, but it doesn't matter because I usually tell people not to fill that in until after the interview.

BS: Yeah, I'll just say--. Yeah. Because I do want to put restrictions on it.

NP: That's good.

BS: So, am I the narrator? Or you're--.

NP: You are.

BS: Yes, you're the interviewer.

NP: I can fill that part in if you'd like. All right. We're stopped here.

End of Interview.