

I: I'm Sharon Walker at the Sidney library.

H: I'm Sharon Hope, patron of the Sidney library.

I: Go ahead Sharon.

H: OK. My story is about the [Eslan?] family. 2 parents and 5 children. The father, J.P. Eslan, went bankrupt in his brickyard business in Burnham-on-the-Sea and they left pretty rapidly, having made a fairly uninformed decision about whether they were going to Canada or whether they were going to New Zealand. And I think they read a booklet which suggested that there was a fabulous climate for fruit growing which might take place in the southern part of Manitoba. And since they were very keen on fruit growing, I think they thought this was going to be an ideal place for them to come. They went up to Liverpool and stayed overnight and looked at the sights of a large dock-related city, which they'd never seen before, including street lights, which were blue, and they had never seen them before. So then they got on a boat the next day, which was the Sardinian. And the Sardinian didn't have control for rolling and so they had a very rough voyage because they had storms throughout the time that they were traveling across. So the women in the family were seasick most of the trip and despite the fact that waves were coming up over the top of the stateroom where the women were staying, and there was a lot of water in the cabin, they didn't really need it because they were in bed most of the time. So, the men endured this very well. They got off I believe in Montreal. And went through customs where somebody came along and tried to steal my great-grandmother's earrings right off her ears during the course of standing in line. They then got onto a train, and of course they were not accustomed to the trains in Canada which looked very rough compared to the ones that they had in England, so they complained about their passage. And my great-grandfather was steadily getting more sick. And so they got to a transfer point, at Point Edward, which is near Sarnia, and he got off and couldn't go any further. So they holed up in a log hotel, which was there and he promptly died, leaving the children and my great-grandmother stranded because they had virtually no money and he, my grandfather, great-grandfather had all the plans for going further west. So most of the family managed to rent a small bungalow. There was no money to bury my great-grandfather so the Masons fortunately stepped up and took care of the bill for his interment, for which we are eternally grateful. And about 5 or 6 years ago, we replaced his stone and we had the Masons come and be part of that ceremony in celebration for the fact that they had done us a great good turn. The 2 boys who were part of the children, the oldest boy was 19, the next one that was there was 16, and they decided they would forward out and go to southern Manitoba. Fortunately they met a couple of men who were willing to sort of act as mentors. So they got on a train and went to Emerson, which was the stopping point for just about everyone who was going west by wagon. When they got to Emerson in 1881, it was the time of the flood and they spent 3 months in the upper part of a men's clothing store, because they couldn't go anywhere. So they employed themselves making a boat, in which they rode around rescuing various things, some of which they returned to people and some of which they saved because they were very handy and they were going west and they needed these things. So they accumulated a whole assortment of motley things that would help them along their way. They bought a yoke of oxen and had a brief introduction to farming and there's amusing incidents about how they managed to train them, train these oxen. They'd never done anything about farming before. And the younger boy was apparently seen on the main street of Emerson holding one of the oxen by its ears, trying to direct it. So

anyway, they had lots of adventures. When the water receded, they proceeded west which took 23 days, going across numerous little creeks as they headed west. And in fact one of the times they lost their wagon in a creek and had to put everything back in and upright the wagon. They finally reached the Souris River and they inquired about land the whole time, but they had not been able to find any land. So that was a problem and they were very depressed. So they parted company with the other 9 people who were with their in quotes "wagon train" and they decided to turn back and they settled on a piece of railway land. Now they were not supposed to squat on railway land. The railway officials did not approve of that and it wasn't sanctioned but they were desperate and they needed a piece of land. So they settled there and the first thing they had to do was plough and seed and then the 2 boys had to prepare a homestead, put up a house and do all of those things and they had to do it in about 2 and a 1/2 months. And so that's the start of their adventures. They had many more. They made a lifelong friend in the son of an Indian chief who happened to be in the Turtle Mountains near them and they were still friendly in 1935 when the oldest boy, Alfred and the person involved, a young fellow went fishing and we have pictures of that. And that's my story. There's a lot more adventures but this is a short introduction to that story. Thank you.