

TAPE GUIDE (Mr. Mountney)

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Mr. Alex Mountney  
January 25, 1974

Case No 10  
I / I / H

N: Nancy Foster  
M: Mr. Mountney

N: Where did you come from orginally?

M: I came from <sup>Musclow</sup>~~Hudow~~ Ontario, east of Bird's Creek, first concession of Montregal Township is where I was born.

N: And your parents were farmers?

M: My parents, my Dad farmed for forty-seven years and then he sold it to my youngest brother and then he moved into Brancroft.

N: You said your father raised horses.

M: He raised horses and cattle, mixed farming. Very beautiful forses he raised a lot of registered horses, Clidesdales and French horses.

N: How did you get started in carpentry work rather than taking over the family farm?

M: Well I worked in the lumber camps for, started as a young man in the lumber camps and then I went from that, I started we worked in the mill, lumber camps in the winter time and mills in the summer time cutting up the logs and then I started building barns, that's how I got into the carpentry work. And we'd go into the woods ~~we~~ and cut the trees and the pine, hew them and frame the building for the

N: How exactly would you put the barn together?

M: The barn, it has to be all the logs have to be hewed, has to <sup>be</sup>~~hexy~~ hewed, they have to be morticed and tenant and

and put together and the holes bored ~~xx~~ through for the pins and then you take them apart and re-assemble them on the job.

N: Now you were talking about two different kinds of barns?

M: Well the plank barns, plank barns made out entirely the frame work all made out of plank instead of timbers. They were all put together like a pig trough spiked and then braced, counter-braced. There's two of them build, I built two of them out on the fifth of Th~~er~~low,

N: And are they still standing?

M: They're still standing.

N: And where did you go after you built barns?

M: I started then with Ed Rutherford.

N: What kind of work did you do with Rutherford's?

M: Renovation and ~~xxx~~ building houses, anything that we could get. It was pretty hard about then in the early thirties. The depression hit us and knocked us pretty near out of commission at one time.

N: Not too many people would have the money to start building a house.

M: They didn't have the money to spend because the depression hit everybody and everybody was in the same boat. They couldn't work because money wasn't there to work with.

N: Can you name any places you might have worked at while you

were with Rutherford's.

M: Yes we build a nice house ~~xxxx~~ for Joe Culver on MacDonald Avenue, all frame with stucco outside. Built Gus Freeman's house on the corner of Bridge Street and Bleeker Avenue. We build, remodeled McQueen's Drug Store on Fron Street.

N: That's not there any more is it?

M: No I don't know who is in there right now to tell you the truth. And Duffy's Drug store on Front Street which is not there now, is now, used to be under another name; and Diccken's Ice Cream Parlour we done that completely done that.

N: What years would this have been, that you were doing this work?

M: And Pappis's Pool Room we done that, on the corner... Pappis's Pool Room was on the corner of Front Street and Campbell Street. I have done that store twice. I done it for Sam Pappis and again with the furriers that's in there now.

N: Woodley's?

M: Woodley's, not Woodley's, what's his name again. I can't think of the name now but we done their store, done it twice. Earnie Dicken's I have done twice.

N: What years would this have been?

M: This was in, from the year about twenty-nine to about forty-five, forty six around there.

N: So you worked for Rutherfords for quite a few years.

M: And then we built gas stations we worked also on them with Ed Rutherford. We build gas stations up for the Imperial Oil, for Shell and for the Blue Sunoco. The locations do you want them, where they were?

N: If you can remember them.

M: One was where the Speedy Glass is now, it was Imperial Oil then and we done the new Sunoco station on Dundas Street once and the Imperial Oil station on Pinnacle, Pinnacle, and Bridge, no Pinnacle and Dundas. Ginger Stewart was the proprietor at the time.

N: Were cars ~~be~~ very ~~gi~~ big at that time?

M: Not like they are now but they were increasing in size quite a bit at that ~~ix~~ time.

N: So you had more and more gas stations coming in to accommodate them.

M: Yes there was more gas stations than there was at the beginning when I first started ~~out~~ out. I bought my first car in 1923. A Model T Ford touring. I was pretty proud of it too.

N: How much would a car have cost then?

M: I paid mind hundred and nine hundred and sixty I think sixty dollars for it at that time.

N: Which would have been a lot of money.

M: Yes when you were getting twenty-five cents an hour

N: Where did you work after Rutherfords?

M: After Rutherford I went with William Belch.

N: What kind of work did you do with them?

M: General renovation and building, the store fronts and people's houses, kitchens, cabinets,; Anything that was supposed to be done, jacking up houses and putting foundations down under them.

N: Can you name any specific locations?

M: Yes, up on the Stony Settlement, that's now called Hillcrest Stony-Lonesome, we build one house, just a minute till I see, one house on Bettess Street, one on Stanley Street, one on South John Street, the blind end, you know where the blind end is, on John there down in there. A doctor owns it now. I think Dr. Williamson. And we ~~built~~ built one for Sam Hibbert on Bridge Street, Bridge Street and John. That at the front of the old Dr. Faulkner house. You know where that, a great house at the back. Then we built two houses ~~from~~ for Sam Hebbert of Bridge Street next to the museum. There's a doctor in one of them and Mrs. Sam Hebbert lives in the big bungalow. Paul Kelley's Drug store, on Bridge Street we completely renovated that and built an addition to it. On Front Street, Walkers's Hardwar, Kelley's Drug, Bridge, Belmont Restaurant, George Polley's Drug Store, the old Parceville Store, that now in where the, down just below the old number two fire hall used to be on Front Street. Geen's Drug Store. I've modelled

it twice, Geen's Drug Store. Once with Geen's and once with, what's his name, I can't ~~xxxx~~ think of his name now, he's something to go with the Belleville Hospital (Frank Dummimicle). And the Tip Top Tailor's on the corner of Bridge and Front, I've done that completely. It was all new steel, we put new steel underneath the front of it, and <sup>fixed</sup> used it all up <sup>for them</sup>. The James Text we remodelled that store completely. Eddie Thomas's store on Front Street we done that. Garn Dobb's store on Victoria Avenue, that was burned down and the new bank went up there you know. The Capital Lunch we've done that twice.

N: Whereabouts is that?

M: Right along side the Park Theatre. I believe it's a Greek family that bought it out and is running it now, some name. And that just about coversup all that I can remember.

M: Is it on? it is?

N: You were talking yesterday about a couple of quite interesting homes you've helped build, the one they built from the John Street church, that they salvaged.

M: That's, that house is, Ed Rutherford and us tore it down in the early thirties. And we made the big stone house, tore the John Street church down, and we made the big stone house on the corner out of the materials taken from the old church.

N: What sort of things did you salvage from the old church?

M: Old plank and stone, practically everything that's in the house is salvaged from the, there's very little stuff bought other than trim to put on hardwood flooring.

N: And you also mentioned a home that was built without nails.

M: That's at twenty-five Yeoman Street down here wjð where Mrs. Joe Delaney lived, the furriers in Belleville, They used to have a furrier on, furrier headquarters store on Victoria Avenue. (should be Campbell Street)

N: How would they build it, what techniques would they use if they didn't use nails.

M: They bored holes and put wooden pins in them instead of nails. There's just the main part of that house, that's got it, the old part of the house that was originally built years ago. It was the first house put on to, I understand, on this hill and it's still standing and in very good shape.

N: What were the tools like when you started out?

M: Well we didn't have the tools that we have today cause we didn't have the ceramic stuff to work with that we have



M: today, like plastics and one thing and another, like that We just had, all we had was more or less was chisels and some bits, brace, framing square, hand saw, rib saw, key hole saw,\*that just about covered our tools that we had, other Than our shops. In our shop we had all wooden planes for to make moulds out of, wooden moulding planes. (\*level)

N: How have they changed since you started?

M: Well the change has been terriffic. Today you've got to have about three thousand dollars worth of tools to have every thing to work with because you've got so much plastics and stuff to work with and things that we never dreamt of in the early days, could possibly be. For instance, they got woods now, panelling now that you put on to walls, you can glue them on the wall without any nails and they're absolutely out of this world.

N: How have building materials changed.

M: Well building materials from the early days is really, we could get, years ago we could get good pine for five dollars for five cents a foot, fifty dollars a thousand.

N: How much would it run you now?

M: about twelve or fourteen hundred dollars a thousand, for number one pine.

N: We were also talking about things like cement, and making, or motor and making your own.

M: Well we used to when we first, when I first started in the carpentry we didn't do anything in the winter time. We didn't have no compensation for winter, unemployed insurance like they have today, where by you can sign up and have money

- M: through the slack months of the year. We had to provide in the summer time with our wages to carry us through the winter. The wages wasn't very much in the early days, twenty to twenty-five cents an hour. The cement jobs that you speak of, wasn't cement at all, it was lime that we used. They dug a hole in the fall of the year and a man would slack the stone lime and pile it into the pit and then when he got the pit full, cover it up and that was our mortar for the next year for to build our stone walls with.
- N: Could you explain slacking?
- M: I bet you pardon.
- N: Could you explain slacking?
- M: Well the slacking, you piled the limestone after it's burnt into a big box and cover it with water and let it boil and let it boil until it uses up all the water and then in the morning it will be nothing but just a whole bed of cream in the bottom of the box. And that's shoveled from there into the pit and then for to make our mortar for our plaster that had to be mixed with sand and then take hair and mix it in it for a bond before it was plaster, use it for plaster. Now we used the pure lime for the putty coat (also plaster of Paris) to put on the white coat on the walls. And also we had no steel lath or nothing, it was all wood lath at that time when I first started out.
- M: When you were getting started was there any sort of apprenticeship how did you learn?
- M: No apprenticeship, you just went into the work and you learnt as you went which is the best, it's the best training you can

- M: get. Twenty-five years ago I would have give anything to have the technique that some of these young fellows get from their school to go along with what knowledge I had myself. It would have been wonderful, but I didn't get it.
- N: How long would it take to build a house?
- M: We only could average about one house a year when we were building houses. That was about the average, one house a year. And then it gradually got so that you could, the skill saws started to come in so you could cut faster, cut wood faster and then table saws and then planers. When we first made our sash we used to cut the sash out by, we had a saw and the saw run by hand power. And the, we moulded our sash and stuff by hand. Now hand morticing machines, to mortice for the sash and doors, and this, the machine was like a U with chisels and when you shoved it down through the wood it cut out a layer each time and then the chisel pulled back up, the wood stayed into the V. And when you shoved it back down again it shoved, the next cut would shove it out. They worked very good, they were, done a quite nice job.
- N: How many men would you have working on a house?
- M: Oh, six, seven maybe eight.
- N: And did you specialize at all or did everybody just work at what ever stage you were on?
- M: Some worked as just as labourers but I kind of struck out on a different angle. I went out for to do everything brickwork and cement finishing, fitting the forms for myself and doing curbs and sidewalks. Bill Britton and us I used to put in a lot, we put in alot of sidewalks around here and in Deseronto

M: Napanee. Bill's gone too. I guess that's about all that I can tell you at the moment. Well Frank Dimmicle was the one that I couldn't remember before but Frank Dimmicle was the one that remodeled Geen's Drug store the first time. Eaton's had a, there was an Eaton's, Eaton's grocery store before that and we remodelled it over again for him. That's the only one.

N: When you were remodeling, what would this consist of?

M: Tearing wout all the old walls out putting all, re-strapping different kind of them and putting all-new stuff on and taking the fronts out and putting new frame work in and glass, jams. Both times, they were all wooden jams to begin with and then they came out with aluminum. Put the wood jams in and then the aluminum casings went in for to, for the glass to set against.

N: How long have you lived in Belleville?

M: Since the, I got married in nineteen twenty nine and I've lived pretty well continuously until. I came to Belleville in nineteen and twenty and this has been my home since. I boarded at at fifty two North Front Street, Mrs. Wes Huffman, they're both gone now.

N: How would you describe Belleville <sup>what was is like</sup> when you first came here?

M: When I came here the population of Belleville was about twelve thousand. You're looking at the boarder on the west right here. (Yeoman Street) Bleeker Avenue was the boarder on the east when I came to Belleville, that's how far it has advanced east.

N: Can you think of any othere way Belleville might have changed? Other than in it's size?

M: Well I've drove cars on Front street just about every way they could be drove, I've drove up and down it. I've parked on angle parking. There's one time we had angle parking and then we had parked the line of the sidewalk, back to angle parking. Now they're back to the angle, to the line of the sidewalk. And then they changed Front Street and put one way traffic, down Front Street and up Pinnacle Street.

N: I don't imagine that you would have had as much to do with the shopping and that sort of thing, but do you remember any stores that really stand out in your mind when you first came to Belleville?

M: Yes I can remember quite a few stores, but I can't remember the people's names. There was Wallbridge and Clarke's and Earl and Cook's stores, that's where that builing burnt down where you go into the parking lot behing Walker's Hardware now, that's where they used to be. And Wallbridge and Clarke's used to be over on Bridge Street where the, where that big builing burnt out of Safe's. Black's used to be in there too, the butcher store.

N: Were there any small stores in this area, sort of a small corner grogery set store?

M: In this area here? I guess the one down on Bridge Street, where Thompson's next to Bush's Funeral Home is about the only one there and the other one is over at the top of Catherine, of West Moira hill were the only two grocerry stores. When I first came to Belleville this was all commons. There was no schools there or nothing at all. There's where, you can see the houses

M: That house right there and that red house up there was the only house, house that was on this street out from Catherine Street here north until you got a way up past the school grounds (Prince Charles School) I can remember them pasturing cattle on this and goats on this field out here.

N: Did you build this house yourself?

M: I did.

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side two

N: Would you like to tell us a little bit about your clock collection?

M: Well I've got sixty-eight of them altogether in the house. I've got clocks from two hundred years old to seventy years old, large and small. I've got one clock that came from England from...it was made over two hundred years ago. I've got one clock in the basement was brought here eighty years ago: solid marble. Black marble and it's a horseman on top of a stallion with knight's robes on. And its hands and its face has gold-leaf plate on. The pillars and the horse is solid bronze which is very pretty. It runs about twenty-two days on one wind. I have one clock down there that Jack Scott's father...here in Belleville, the cattle header...his father's...was his father's clock I got a hold of. It wouldn't run. The gears were stripped in it. It took me four years to find a gear that had the same ratio and the same amount of cogs in it. I took a piece out of the gear and soldered it on the side to carry it over and it's gone ever since. That's that there English...Westminster chimes. I have also a music box; tin music box. And an Edison Record Player, about eighty records which play very nice which you'll hear later on. There's an Ensonia Clock down cellar that was brought in Kingston, 1877 "Armen and Barlow" on King Street. They staff it right on the inside if anyone wants to see it. I have a radio, RCA Victor radio down cellar that's over forty-five years old, which will operate yet.

N: Can you tell me what kind of radio shows you listened to on it?

M: Well when we first started out our...Amos Mandy was our...Mrs. Wiggs in the Cabbage Patch, that's when we first started. These were our programmes. And then there was the Carry On Sargent which was very interesting. There was the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and his dog and his dog was a wolf. His lead dog that he tamed...found it when it was a pup and tamed it. And

he called it "Cane", and he used to driving all the time on his rounds to the Eskimos in the Northwest Territory. It was very interesting; we used to enjoy it as young folks.

N: Was there any local broadcasting or...?

M: No. Toronto was our main broadcasting station at that time. Practically the only one: CFRB was practically the only one we could get. But the first radios that we got ... I didn't have one but Mrs...the wife's aunt on James Street had it, and it was made by Stuart Warner and it was a earphone. You could only have two people listen at once. We used to take old newspapers up. Make a tube-like thing. Put the thing your ear and hold out in the air and three or four of us would listen through the tubes. The music you know. You couldn't hear anything out of them unless you had the earphones on. It was very hard to get the stations. You had three dials instead of one dial, and you had to set the three dials for to get the frequency to come properly on the radio. But it was good music. You never was without company in those days when you got a radio. All the neighbours would come in to listen to it.

(in basement)

M: (indicates he will set clock to chime)

This is going to strike...Is it on?...this is going to strike now a quarter to twelve.

(clock strikes)

Now it will strike sixteen times at twelve o'clock, then strike the hour, just the same as Big Ben.

(clock strikes)

Now it's striking the hour.

(clock strikes)



It strikes four on the quarter hour; on the half hour eight; on the three-quarter hour twelve and sixteen on the hour.

(winds up and ~~transcribes~~ plays phonograph)

This is Harry Lauder's pieces.

(the piece is on tape)

N: How long would one of those run?

M: About five minutes.

END OF RECORDING

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**MOUNTNEY, WILLIAM CHARLES**

**ALEXANDER "ALEC"** recently of Hastings Manor, Belleville, at the Hastings Manor on Monday, December 15, 1997 in his 94th year. Beloved son of the late Cornelious and Christie Mountney. Beloved husband of the late Elizabeth (Bradford) Mountney. Loving father of Sylvia Mountney of Toronto and Audrey Wager of Kingston. Dear brother of Rosetta Reid of Marysville, Joseph Mountney of Bancroft and the late Velma Godmere, Gerald, Hubert and Ernest Mountney. Lovingly remembered by Dorothy Timbrell and family of Stirling. Friends are invited to call at the **BURKE FUNERAL HOME, (968-6968)** 150 Church St., Belleville from Wednesday 2-4 and 7-9 p.m. and Thursday from 9:30 - 11:00 a.m. Funeral Service will be held in the Funeral Home Chapel on Thursday, December 18, 1997 at 11:00 a.m. Captain Rick Sheasby officiating. At the request of the family there will be no Graveside Service. Reception to follow in the Burke Funeral Home Reception Room. Interment in Belleville Cemetery at a later time. Memorial donations to the charity of your choice would be appreciated by the family.

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**Obituaries**

**(ALEX) MOUNTNEY**  
Belleville, Ont.

Funeral was Dec. 18 for William (Alex) Mountney of Hastings Manor, Belleville who died Dec. 15, 1997 at his residence. He was 83 years, 10 months of age. Service was held in the Chapel of Burke Funeral Home with Captain Rick Sheasby officiating. Interment Belleville Cemetery. Predeceased by wife Elizabeth Bradford. Dear father of Sylvia Mountney of Toronto and Audrey Wager of Kingston. Brother of Rosetta Reid of Marysville and Joseph Mountney of Bancroft. Predeceased by Velma Godmere, Gerald, Hubert and Ernest Mountney. Remembered by Dorothy Timbrell and family of Stirling.

**Funeral Home**

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*The Intelligencer Jan. 21, 1998, p. 2*