

Nanaimo Historical Society fonds

Series 2. Sound recordings :Tape 92

Interview of Harold Thorneycroft, retired watchmaker, by Henry Poikonen, May 14 1978

Transcribed by: Glenys Wall, March/April 2003

Poikonen: This is Henry Poikonen speaking. Today is ..eh ..is it May 13? or 14th? 1978. I am visiting Mr. & Mrs. Harold Thorneycroft at their nice home on Metral Drive. I would just like to talk over some old times with you Mr. Thorneycroft. You were born in England?

Thorneycroft: Born in England, yes, in the North of England in 1887 and I came out to Canada in 1911.

Poikonen: Did you come right to Nanaimo?

Thorneycroft: No I came, eh, I was in Ireland for a year and then I moved to Victoria, came on the colonist trains in those days the colonists trains, and you had to pack your own blankets and you used to have to sleep on boards and get out here, and there was like a kitchen on every coach on the train with a fire and you had to do your own cooking to be able to eat and I came out to Victoria in 1911 and there was no work there so I got on the train and came up to Nanaimo.

Poikonen: Now did you know someone in Victoria or in Canada which [?].

Thorneycroft: Well, I had a brother in Victoria and I also had a sister in Nanaimo, a Mrs. W. J. Smith that I came up to.

Poikonen: I see, is she still here?

Thorneycroft: No they went back to England.

Poikonen: I see.

Thorneycroft: He, of course, Bill Smith was bandmaster of the Silver Cornet Band.

Poikonen: Is that so? Well that's very interesting being an ex-member myself.

Thorneycroft: So [?] and he had a son, you know, and he got to be the bandmaster too of the Silver Cornet Band. And then I worked for a jeweller in Nanaimo a man called Forcimer on Commercial Street. It was one door down from the corner where Grassick is now.

Poikonen: I see, near the Free Press.

Thorneycroft: Yes right opposite the Free Press and.. eh.. I worked for him for nine years before I started up on me own and then I started up on me own down in the Old Oddfellows Building, which was where Jean Burns' store is now.

Poikonen: I see.

Thorneycroft: In those days, there was no Kennedy Drug store, that was built while we were there, that was a new in store that was built by J.B. Hodgins the drug man and in that block at that time there was a man called Irvine used to run a battery shop and he was a diamond setter, a diamond driller, Mr. Irvine, which is a kind of an unusual occupation but that was what he used to do. He used to set diamonds in the drill and so forth.

Poikonen: Was that anything to do with coal mining then?

Thorneycroft: Drilling for rock, it would go through rock and that sort of thing. Then there was next door to me was Clark the confectionery store, ice-cream and confectioneries, a man called Clark, Clark's store; it was taken over by Jimmy Knight who was one of the great footballers of Nanaimo.

Poikonen: I remember him very well.

Thorneycroft: But it was Clark's and there's one incident that has always stuck in my mind while I was in that store a man called Bainbridge who ran a bakery and he had a horse and rig as usual, you know, and however, he was up [Harbour?] Street and his horse took away and it come rushing down [Harbour?] Street and the first thing we know it was in Mr. Clark's window (laughing) so that was quite a sensation at that time. There was other things happened there too; one Sunday I was sitting at home and the phone went and a policeman said you better come down here there's an automobile in your window. Another fellow had run wild down there and gone right in and broke the window of the jewellery store; he says we are leaving the car there until you get here so you can move all the jewellery. (laughing)

Poikonen: Would this be in the 1920's?

Thorneycroft: Yes, that would be in the '20's. Of course I started in '19 you see, it was in the old store and then I moved to the Hall Block that's where the paint shop is now, I moved in there. I was there until 1946.

Poikonen: I remember your being in that location.

Thorneycroft: Yeah, I was there until 1946 when I sold out and been retired ever since.

Poikonen: You said that you were a journeyman.

Thorneycroft: Journeyman watchmaker, yes.

Poikonen: You learned through [?]

Thorneycroft: I learned me trade in the Old Country of course.

Poikonen: You learned it in the Old Country?

Thorneycroft: I served 5 years. You had to serve 5 years you see.

Poikonen: Who did you work for there, did you worked for some large company?

Thorneycroft: Oh not it wasn't. There in the Old Country it was a fair size store, but they used to take apprentices and you used to get the large sum of 2 shillings to start with, 2 shilling a week.

Poikonen: That doesn't sound like very much.

Thorneycroft: Well, it isn't very much, (laughing) but that's what you used to get for a year and then for instance I got 2 shillings the first year, 3 the next, 4 the next, 5 the next, 6 the next, 6 when I was out of my time. I started when I was 13, I was out of my time when I was 18.

Poikonen: Were you living at home at the time?

Thorneycroft: At home, of course, naturally, you had to live at home.

Poikonen: You couldn't live on that?

Thorneycroft: No no, you couldn't live on that. But you see that's what I've often felt, meself, that a lot of the trouble today is that young men go to school now til they're 18 or 19. Now I was a journeyman when I was 18 and I feel there should be more free training.

Poikonen: More concentration on to learn specifics.

Thorneycroft: On trades, yes I think. I've always felt that every young man should have a trade of some kind to look for otherwise he's at a dead end, you know. I don't care what it is whether it's a plumber, a carpenter or anything.

Poikonen: Something they can do with their hands.

Thorneycroft: Absolutely, he's got something to look for. If he hasn't got something definite, a trade what's he going to look for except digging ditches or something? And I've often felt that the schools are lacking in that way although I was a school trustee for 6 years you see but I always felt that there should be more of the trades taught in school.

Poikonen: I guess the concentration has been to get a university degree in recent years, but then those people have difficulty in finding employment then.

Thorneycroft: Well. I mean there isn't the jobs for them. I always found well now o.k. if I'm out of a job and well say I was a clock fixer or a watch maker I could go door to door and still make a living getting work. I've always felt that anybody that's got a trade could do the same thing no problem at all, an electrician I mean every house most likely needs something to repair or maybe a new light put in for an electrician or something.

Poikonen: Now the training that you got you had to be able to take a watch apart to pieces and put it back together again.

Thorneycroft: Oh yes. And replace it with new parts if you had to; you had to make a lot of the parts in those days. You see I gave my old time tools to the museum, they're in the museum,

by looking at them you'll see how ancient they were to the present day. The present day is altogether a different set up all together. Today they don't make nothing I don't think. They buy a new part or a new [?]. In it goes. We used to have to make them.

Poikonen: No pocket- watches were the thing.

Thorneycroft: There were pocket-watches and, of course, wristwatches came in at that time. The self-winders as we used to call them came in at that time too you see during those years that's the keyless, we used to call them the keyless watch, well there's nothing else today you see. There isn't such a thing as a key watch.

Poikonen: My father has 2 Burlington Bull Dog watches, railroad watches. He lives with us, he's 78 or will be and you have to take the face off and pull the lever before you can turn the hands to adjust it.

Thorneycroft: Oh yes, you couldn't be on the railroad unless you had that you see. They wouldn't let you have a watch that the stem pulled out to turn the hands because they were scared that an engine driver would accidentally pull it up and he'd be in trouble you see, the hands would move and he'd have the wrong time and there'd be an accident. That's the reason for that.

Poikonen: So you had a brother and a sister in Canada and did they write to you how things were out here?

Thorneycroft: Yes, that's right.

Poikonen: And you decided to come out and you say there was no work. You went to Victoria and you said your sister was living here at the time, so you decided to come up here, that would be on the E&N of course.

Thorneycroft: E&N in those days, yes. When I was on the school board we took all the children, the school children down to Victoria to see the Queen.

Poikonen: I was on that in 1939 I went down there at that time.

Thorneycroft: Yes I was on the school board at that time.

Poikonen: Mr. Barsby was the mayor at that time.

Thorneycroft: That's right.

Poikonen: I was in that group.

Thorneycroft: He was on the school board too of course. And I remember that and they put us a mile away from the Queen. (laughing)

Poikonen: They did yes, some of us luckier ones had not a stethoscope but a periscope.

Thorneycroft: A periscope yes that's right to look over people. You're right that was in the old

days that was something. Another highlight of course was the strike here in '13 that was bad, that was a bad one.

Poikonen: It went on for quite a while too didn't it?

Thorneycroft: Yes, oh yes. They brought the soldiers up you know.

Poikonen: Those were [?] I got this.. I mentioned it when I came in that I have a 1913 Daily Herald here so you were here when the Oscar blew up. What do you remember about that? Where were you?

Thorneycroft: I remember this I was sitting repairing a watch and things shook, everything seemed to shake and of course all glass started to fly out of the windows.

Poikonen: Was there a sudden jarring blast?

Thorneycroft: Yes and a shake, the building shook you know. Glass flew out of the windows across the road and we said "oh oh that's the gas works" We thought it was the gas works. There were gas works in those days, you know, you remember the gas works down at the Pearson Bridge there?

Poikonen: No I don't.

Thorneycroft: Well there were gas works. We thought it was the gas works. We went outside and people started to come to the drug store, J.B. Hodgins was next door to us you see and people would come bleeding you know with their face bleeding been sitting in front of the Windsor Hotel and the Court House and they all started to come to Hodgins to get patched up you see. They were bleeding and that and a funny thing about where I was, in the store I was at we thought had happened, our window was alright, we thought it was at least, and so after we kind of got settled and started looking around we had a shelf, a glass shelf in the middle of the window with a lot of stuff on, goods on display in the window, that had snapped right in the middle and everything gone on the window; but we never realized it.

Poikonen: Did you or anyone have insurance for that type of thing?

Thorneycroft: No I don't think so, I don't think they had any insurance for an explosion like that, you see. That was quite a thing was that explosion; of course that wasn't the only explosion we had.

Poikonen: No, Nanaimo's history has a lot of explosions.

Thorneycroft: You see the magazine went up at one time, the powder magazine on Protection Island. That blew up and then Northfield used to have an explosion every once in a while too, Northfield Powder Works. There used to be powder works at Northfield and then of course Nanoose used to have the odd one too at Nanoose Bay there, that was CIL, CIL was there. All the changes that have come to Nanaimo, there's hardly a thing now that was then.

Poikonen: Well the Bastion is one of course.

Thorneycroft: That's been moved of course a couple of times, you know, that used to be on the Rock.

Poikonen: But it's closer to where it originally was now is it not?

Thorneycroft: Well it's closer to where the pioneers landed. I think where it originally was of course the Rock's gone, they blew that away and of course built buildings now where the Bastion was, it was on the left hand side there on Bastion Street.

Poikonen: And the Court House, that was there in those days I think.

Thorneycroft: The Court House has always been there; part of the Court House, of course, there's been a lot put on since then. Of course the Post Office is in its original place and that's been of course rebuilt.

Poikonen: But the railing is still there, I noticed, I believe the railing is still there, the black iron railing.

Thorneycroft: The railing?

Poikonen: The railing.

Thorneycroft: Of course the Police Station used to be there beside the Post Office.

Poikonen: Was it?

Thorneycroft: Yeah.

Poikonen: I can recall it being where Skinner Street was.

Thorneycroft: It was moved to there, next to the City Hall. The City Hall used to be where that [intelligible] medical building is now, you know, and the Police Station used to be next door to it you see. When the First War started the Police Station was this side of the Post Office.

Poikonen: Was it?

Thorneycroft: Do you remember the ramp that used to go down to the boats?

Poikonen: I certainly do.

Thorneycroft: Well you see now the strike was on at that time, you know, and the strikers used to meet the boats to see if there was any extra police come on, you know. The Police Station was on the right hand side of that ramp.

Poikonen: I see. It was a good handy place for it then (laughing). So after the explosion, I suppose everyone came out on the street wondering what it was.

Thorneycroft: The explosion?

Poikonen: Yes.

Thorneycroft: Yes well of course everyone wondered until we found out what it was you know, and of course they found very little of the boat.

Poikonen: It's miraculous that no one was killed.

Thorneycroft: There was very little of the boat found, you know. I mean there was a few pieces of wood up at the top of trees and that sort of thing, but that's about all they found of it. You see it had called for coal being in the wharf there, you see, and they got out to sea and found they were on fire and they put back in and beached here on Protection Island and run and while they were running, of course, up she went. But it was a quite a thing that explosion.

Poikonen: Now a little about the business, people bought for cash in those days mainly or did some people do credit buying?

Thorneycroft: Oh yes in those days, of course, payday was once a month.

Poikonen: I see.

Thorneycroft: And now you've heard of the Hirst family, of course there one of the oldest families in here.

Poikonen: The undertakers is that the same Hirst?

Thorneycroft: No, no. They weren't undertakers.

Poikonen: Oh the Hirst store I guess?

Thorneycroft: Hirst store. He was a grocer. He was where Dakin is now, on that corner. And during the strike he gave a lot of credit which he never got, of course, paid for during the strike. But he was a gentleman just the same was Hirst, he was one of the real oldtimers, was Hirst.

Poikonen: So once a month people paid their bills then?

Thorneycroft: Oh yes. Of course and they used to come around to your house, they had somebody come around to take your order and they would deliver it and then you'd pay them once a month when you got your cheque, when you got your money. That's how they used to do business in those days, you see, and I don't think anybody lost very much.

Poikonen: You knew pretty well everybody pretty well knew each other I guess?

Thorneycroft: Oh absolutely. It was friendly, if you wanted a \$20 bill why all you had to open your mouth and you got one, you know. Everyone seemed to have a \$20 bill in those days. Now [?].

Poikonen: Was there service clubs like there is Kiwanis and Rotary?

Thorneycroft: Oh well they started up of course since, like Lodges have started up. I remember the Moose starting up, now the Eagles started up before I came here. I happen to be I think about the oldest Eagle member at the present time. I'm 59 years a member now of the Eagles.

Poikonen: Is that so? Let's go to something else now for a moment. Looking at this 1924 Jubilee Edition of the Free Press and I see an ad here, "Thorneycroft Practical Watchmakers, Jewellers and Optometrist 10 Commercial Street." And if I may read this ad:

"Have you ever been to our store? If not then you have missed seeing the biggest little jewellery store in town. This is a special invitation to you to visit our store and we guarantee to show you the most complete up to date and most moderately priced stock of beautiful things and jewellery and watches etc. that you can find in this city and we will show it to you cheerfully and courteously without making you feel that you have to buy just because you stepped in."

Now that's real personal, that's a real personal touch to it isn't it?

Thorneycroft: Yes, yes.

Poikonen: "We specialise in repair work"

Thorneycroft: I don't remember that one. (laughing)

Poikonen: Well that's going back a few years, 54 years ago!

Thorneycroft: Of course I used to do quite a little advertising.

Poikonen: See there it is right in there.

Thorneycroft: Yes, Thorneycroft. (laughing)

Poikonen: Nanaimo Electric Light Power and Heating.

Thorneycroft: Yeah, that was Bill, Bill Bill, Bill [?]

Poikonen: And other ads. Wardill Brothers, says that they were "Soccer Headquarters".

Thorneycroft: Who?

Poikonen: Wardill Brothers?

Thorneycroft: Oh Wardills, yes, yes.

Poikonen: Mike Wardill and Dick.

Thorneycroft: Bicycles.

Poikonen: And here's a write up on the home of the Nanaimo Elks.

Thorneycroft: Oh yes of course they were there.

Poikonen: And Dakins of course they've been here for many years and there's a picture.

Thorneycroft: Charlie Dakin yes.

Poikonen: And the old Hospital that's up on Kennedy Street.

Thorneycroft: You have got something there haven't you?

Poikonen: Article on the Rotary Pioneer Service Club of Nanaimo.

Thorneycroft: Rotary?

Poikonen: Yes, organized in 1920.

Thorneycroft: There was something, the way the Rotary took over the building of the Malaspina Hotel you know?

Poikonen: Is that so?

Thorneycroft: They .. to raise the money, you know. They brought a man from Chicago to organize it and that was the best organized thing I have ever come across.

Poikonen: That was quite a big hotel for a relatively small town wasn't it?

Thorneycroft: At that time yes. You see the way that was done that man he tabulated every person in town, you know, give them a card, he put a card in a ..thing. He started away with about 10 of the Rotary that were interested in building the hotel you see. And he said to them now o.k., this is how he went about it, you people are interested in an hotel now how much money are you going to put into it? That was his theory you see. O.K. you say o.k. you'll put \$100 or you'll put a \$1000 whatever you want to put in, o.k. but it's no use you going out to sell shares in this thing unless you have got some in it. That was his theory. He said now o.k. you 10 are satisfied now go out and get 2 more people that's interested in it, that's prepared to work and sell shares in it and so forth. So they went out and they got 2 more people each and he talked to them and he said o.k. now before you can go out to sell you gotta buy some. See o.k. so they had to buy some and o.k now you can go out and then he said to them o.k. you go out and get another one, person that's interested.

Poikonen: And that's how the Malaspina Hotel was built?

Thorneycroft: That's how it was built up.

Poikonen: That's wonderful.

Thorneycroft: And then when he started the sale thing he had all these cards of everybody in town you see, if you were going out selling you went to this board and you took out a card you said well now I know Jimmy Jones you go and get Jimmy Jones' card and take it out nobody

else could touch him you see if you've got the card and you've got the card and you went and interviewed Mr. Jones you see, you didn't sell him; you wrote on the back why he wouldn't buy or the reason.

Poikonen: And other people then would know that he didn't [?]

Thorneycroft: Then you'd put the card back see now they would say o.k. we'll see Jimmy Jones' card's there and pick Jimmy's card and look at the back, oh o.k. I think I can sell him and they would take his card and go see him again.

Poikonen: What a system.

Thorneycroft: It was a marvellous system that's how it was built it would never have been built if it hadn't a system like that never, you know because, you see everybody that went out bought something, bought shares in it you see.

Poikonen: This was in the 1920's I guess mid '20's I suppose.

Thorneycroft: Yes, yes, yeah.

Poikonen: Well there was other hotels been and gone.

Thorneycroft: Well there was the Windsor was one you see was there but they figured they needed a modern hotel, you see, and the Malaspina was [?]. Of course to me that should never have been put where it was I mean, that should have been a public park that all along that water front there, you know.

Poikonen: It's certainly an ideal location that [?].

Thorneycroft: That's where all the band concerts used to be in those days there was a band stand on there where the Malaspina is .. was built on there.

Poikonen: I vaguely remember that.

Thorneycroft: And the bands used to play there you know. I mean it was an ideal place, I mean it was a wonderful place.

Poikonen: Being the boat, the dock right there it would be handy for tourists and the businessman coming to town.

Thorneycroft: Yeah the boat and the dock right there too you see; but it was an ideal place for a .. well, there is a little park there now of course the Georgia Park look at how nice that is, how nice it would be if it was right along that front.

Poikonen: It's a windy place to play in the band but [?].

Thorneycroft: .. you see, where it could handle a lot of people, you know, Georgia Hotel won't handle too much.

Poikonen: Remember Newcastle Island? All the huge crowds that would go there in the '30's? I remember the '30's anyway.

Thorneycroft: We used to go there, sure we used to go there and have our picnics you know.

Poikonen: Whole boat loads would come from Vancouver wouldn't they? there'd be two CPR boats tied up all day. Different lodges and boiler makers or someone or some store, they'd have their picnics there.

Thorneycroft: They used to come and have their picnic on Newcastle Island.

Poikonen: Of course, people didn't have cars not to the same extent or television. I think they had more fun in the old days.

Thorneycroft: I think so.

Poikonen: Doing things rather than passive, watching.

Thorneycroft: That's right. Now you take your 24th May now I was on that for years. Now we used to have to go out and collect from all the merchants to run the 24th of May.

Poikonen: Is that where they got the money to build floats and that then?

Thorneycroft: No, no. The merchants used to build their own floats but we used to put up a certain amount of money we would go round collecting prizes for sports, children's sports and adult sports; collect round all the merchants and then, of course, the Parade was prizes, the school-children used to be a big part of the Parade the teachers used to be interested in it, you know. And they used to get a bunch of children and the parents would dress them up and they were the main part of the Parade was the children. And then the sports in the afternoon, we always had sports in the afternoon; on the cricket ground at that time it used to be called, that's on the Five Acres. What do they call that now?

Poikonen: Well is that what was also called the Daisy Field? I know where you mean.

Thorneycroft: They've got I think a different name for it now than the Cricket Field it used to be, the cricket field. That was on Fifth Street or Fourth Street.

Poikonen: I know I'm not sure what they call it, I know where you mean.

Thorneycroft: Of course it used to cost, we used to charge 25 cents to get in.

Poikonen: A silver collection was it? In the '30s it was silver collection anyway down on the Central Sports Ground.

Thorneycroft: Well I mean of course that was later on the Central Sports Ground. Was a long time after that you see; the bowling green was moved you see, there was a bowling green on the flat there and that took fire and they had to move it and move it up on the hill there you see; of course the mine did that, the Western Fuel Company, they foot the bill for all of that and of course in those days you had to be an employee of the Western Fuel

Company [?]

SIDE 2 OF THE TAPE

Poikonen: OK we're beginning Side 2 Mr. Thorneycroft, I was just going to ask you where you lived way back then.

Thorneycroft: Well when I came to Nanaimo on the train my sister lived on Howard Avenue, the second house from the cemetery on the east side, the second house on Howard Avenue. I bought a lot in the same block, in those days I think it was 1912 when I bought the lot. I built a home there and lived there until 1975. In those days, of course, the lots were stumps, nothing but stumps. It was logged off bush.

Poikonen: Who did you buy the lot from?

Thorneycroft: Reynolds, a man called, some people called Reynolds.

Poikonen: Were they a real estate firm?

Thorneycroft: Real estate people, yes, at that time. The lot was expensive, \$125 in those days for the lot (laughing). But we had to clear it, all kinds of stumps on it; we used to spend our evenings burning stumps. In due course we got it all cleared and all that land on Fairview from Howard Avenue to Pine Street was all stumps between the cemetery and Second Street, all that was logged off.

Poikonen: So yours was one of the new houses to be built in that [?].

Thorneycroft: Yes, my house of course is 50 years old now, of course. One of the old-timers.

Poikonen: Who built the house?

Thorneycroft: A man called, wait a minute, Chase River, eh what do they call him?

Poikonen: He was a house builder by trade?

Thorneycroft: He was a carpenter, yes. He gave me a price for it and built me a 24 x 30.. ooh he's got a street called after him in Chase River, Maxi, Maki yes Maki. And he had a partner he had. They built it 24 x 30 first contract I had for building the house.

Poikonen: You told him what style of house you wanted?

Thorneycroft: Wanted and so forth yes..yes and he built it .. but in those days of course, you got your lumber from the Ladysmith Lumber Company and the people, the Teamster lived next door to me and he was building at the same time and he was the driver for the truck for the lumber company and of course in those days if they sent you any lumber with knots in it you used to send it back, you know, and they'd bring you some more.

Poikonen: Did they have a truck or horse and wagon?

Thorneycroft: Horses, two horses and a dray; they used to deliver it for you but it was very expensive \$14. a 1000 in those days.

Poikonen: \$14 a 1000.

Thorneycroft: Yeah, for lumber.

Poikonen: That type of wood you probably couldn't get today.

Thorneycroft: You can't get it; as I see it we got it without any knots in it and it was clear lumber and of course nowadays that's all shipped out now I think, all that lumber that's not knotty.

Poikonen: How long did it take them to build it?

Thorneycroft: Oh, not too long, it didn't take too long to put the house up. And then I rented it for the first because I wasn't married I was single; I rented it for quite a while to a man called Phillips. He was an organist in one of the churches, a Mr. Phillips.

Poikonen: So did you marry a local girl?

Thorneycroft: No it was one of me [?], a girl I knew in the Old Country.

Poikonen: I know your daughter is Jim Hurford's wife.

Thorneycroft: Mrs. Hurford, yes she's me eldest daughter.

Poikonen: How many children do you have?

Thorneycroft: Well, I have 1 boy and 3 girls. The boy's an engineer for the Crown Zellerbach people in Vancouver.

Poikonen: Is that so? I worked for Crown Zellerbach for eight and half years, '55 to '64 in the office in Ladysmith.

Thorneycroft: Oh yeah, well he seems to be, I don't know, they sent him to Holland they were having trouble in Holland the paper outfits they sent him to Holland as a troubleshooter, he was there for about 3 or 4 months, you know, in Holland.

Poikonen: And you have 2 other daughters beside Mrs. Hurford?

Thorneycroft: Yes beside Mrs. Hurford yes, there's Elsie Holliday [Halliday?] she lives down here just below me here and then I have a daughter in Kelowna, Dorothy. She's me youngest daughter.

Poikonen: They all went to school in Nanaimo I suppose.

Thorneycroft: They all went to school in Nanaimo, they were all educated in Nanaimo, yes. They were of course. In those days there was a little school in Fairview there, you know, a

little school on Manning Street.

Poikonen: Was there? Not far from Thomas Hodgson School.

Thorneycroft: And in those days the teachers used to be well paid they used to get \$50 a month.

Poikonen: \$50 a month.

Thorneycroft: For teachers. They took that school to Harewood and they combined with Harewood and then they used to have to go to Harewood.

Poikonen: I see this is the Harewood's School's 60th Anniversary, 1918 it was built.

Thorneycroft: Harewood? Harewood must be must be, yes, that old yes.

Poikonen: I read that in a history of Harewood which someone gave me just recently.

Thorneycroft: They used to go to Harewood and then of course they used to go to John Shaw too, John Shaw. But I see that they've torn down the one school there haven't they, they've torn down the wooden school?

Poikonen: Yes they tore that down in I suppose in 1952 when they built the new senior secondary school but the Quennell Building is still there and the other annex.

Thorneycroft: Yes but the John Shaw part is gone. See the Quennell part is still there; and the old gym is still there.

Poikonen: Yes, and Thomas Hodgson's School was torn down many years ago.

Thorneycroft: That's where the playground is now, where the baseball football field is now.

Poikonen: North Ward School is where Pauline Haarer's School is now. That's another one. But Thomas Hodgson used to be the high school I believe many years ago.

Thorneycroft: Yes, yes, of course that was turned into a barracks you see when the war was on, the First War. All that used to be horses and I don't know what all and there used to be a lot of small buildings on that Thomas Hodgson School and they used to have horses there, keep horses and that was the first barracks during the 1914 war.

Poikonen: Was it? Also used during the Second World War, the army [?] in the buildings beside it.

Thorneycroft: I don't think .. not the Thomas Hodgson.

Poikonen: Well beside it. I remember during World War 2 in the next lot there was a training centre, seems to me a [Mr.McCready] used to teach us young soldiers seems to me the army came in during the war not into the Thomas Hodgson school but in the yard beside it on the Campbell Street end of it.

Thorneycroft: Was there?

Poikonen: Yes there was. Perhaps it wasn't there for very long but [?].

Thorneycroft: Of course then they built all that barracks out at the Five Acres in the Second World War and brought all the soldiers in from the East.

Poikonen: There were fine homes in the Fairview area there still on Wentworth Street there's some nice homes.

Thorneycroft: Well I'm lost now when I go out on Harewood up there now I mean you've got me beat, there's so much building gone on up there, you know, what with the college and it used to be the farm of course, that was a farm you know by the Western Fuel Company's farm.

Poikonen: Well they had the horses that were used in the mines.

Thorneycroft: (laughing) That's the farm where the Western Fuel Company used to keep their horses yes, the pit horses and that sort of thing. That was quite a thing too.

Poikonen: Who were some of the other members of the School Board when you were on the School Board do you remember?

Thorneycroft: Muir, Muir was one, Westwood.

Poikonen: George Muir?

Thorneycroft: Westwood, George yes, George Muir, he died the other month. Westwood was on, Barsby, and myself.

Poikonen: Was Mr.[Plenderleith?] on the Board in those days or maybe he came later?

Thorneycroft: [Litch] was the principal of course, at that time.

Poikonen: Harry Martin was a teacher.

Thorneycroft: And Harry Martin yes, Harry was one too, Harry was one of the semi-principals. Let's see who else was on the School Board, oh yes Radcliffe was another member of the School Board. And Hopper not Hopper, eh who did he marry now? what do they call him?

Poikonen: Was he one of the jewellers?

Thorneycroft: His wife yes, Hopper's wife, she was a what?

Poikonen: Sheppard?

Thorneycroft: No.. no ..no.

Poikonen: I'm not sure if I know.

Thorneycroft: Anyway, I just forget his name. He's passed on too.

Poikonen: Did you know, you must have known Mr. Irvine who also repaired watches?

Thorneycroft: Oh I knew of him, I didn't know much of him though, he used to repair watches in his home.

Poikonen: Yes on Kennedy Street right by the railroad tracks.

Thorneycroft: [unintelligible] used to repair watches too [unintelligible] polish the engine room at the Western Fuel Company too.

Poikonen: There was a man named Hebden I think, wasn't there also, that was in the '30s I think.

Thorneycroft: Hebden, he went broke you mean. He had to close up, E. W. Harding took it over. [unintelligible] took over Harding's.

Poikonen: I guess he did, yes.

Thorneycroft: And then Harding had to take it back again. That was E.W. that was the grandfather of [Ace Burns] now. He was in business when I first came to town was E.W. Harding. They were just the same where they are now. Of course there was a fire there, quite a fire there.

Poikonen: Yes I remember that in the '30s I guess.

Thorneycroft: It cleaned that out. There've been quite some fires, you know I remember the bakery that burned down too on Selby Street? Opposite the station depot.

Poikonen: I know where you mean. I remember there used to be a bakery there.

Thorneycroft: Shelley's and Canadian Bakeries they were burnt out there.

Poikonen: The roller rink?

Thorneycroft: That was quite a fire there.

Poikonen: I remember the old fire bells that with a sound that really chilled my bones was to hear the fire bell ringing.

Thorneycroft: Oh yeah the Old Firehall? Yes

Poikonen: I'll just stop this for a minute Mr.Thorneycroft.

STOP TAPE

RESTART TAPE:

Poikonen: ...you were saying where the Royal Bank used to be the Vendome.

Thorneycroft: Yes the Vendome was a rooming house, you know, and there was stores underneath there, there was a plumber.

Poikonen: The Frontier Building was the Bank of Commerce if I remember right many years ago.

Thorneycroft: The Bank of Commerce of course was the real estate, it were the real estate building. That's a nice building; I was surprised at the Commerce getting out of there because it's really a nice building there.

Poikonen: Here's some pictures of the old Silver Cornet Band which I belonged to in the early '40s.

Thorneycroft: You belonged to the Silver Cornet Band?

Poikonen: In the early 40's I did.

Thorneycroft: You did?

Poikonen: '43 to [?]. '44 to '46.

Thorneycroft: You were..were you when Spruston was the band master for a while and Lewis was the band master for a while.

Poikonen: Well Lewis old Mr. Lewis was around the 1920s well his son is the leader now. Dr. John Lewis.

Thorneycroft: Yes yes.

Poikonen: I played with the band until '71 from '64 to '71 I played with them again. But also in the '40s I played with them.

Thorneycroft: Oh, oh. Who was the band master then?

Poikonen: Frank Carroll was in the '40s.

Thorneycroft: Oh Frankie, well he was a student of Billy Smith's. That's where he learned to play the cornet off Billy Smith. You see he was my brother-in-law was Billy you know, and he of course come from a [unintelligible] temperance one of the prize bands of England, you know the Old Country. And he brought out Charlie, Charlie, Charlie [?] A trombone player with him.

Poikonen: Oh yes, I was just reading in this history about the band going to the 1911 period about this time a Mr. W. J. Smith was appointed leader.

Thorneycroft: Yeah that's him, William James yeah.

Poikonen: Here's his picture.

Thorneycroft: Yeah sure that's Billy, that's Billy Smith.

Poikonen: The champion band of the Province at one time.

Thorneycroft: You bet it was, they were a good band.

Poikonen: It said "the band was kept fairly busy playing outdoor concerts on the water-front"

Thorneycroft: Yeah that's where the Malaspina Hotel is.

Poikonen: " And Mr. Smith left to take up a position in Victoria in 1912"

Thorneycroft: Yes he went to be Band Master of the artillery band in Victoria.

Poikonen: Is that so? "The band carried on very successfully until 1916 when they were partly disorganized owing to the leader Mr. H. Allan and the majority of the bandsmen going overseas with the 143rd Battalion to serve in the Great War."

Thorneycroft: Yes they did yeah.

Poikonen: This is what happened in World War II when I joined, I guess they were real desperate for trumpet players (laughing) no, but that was a problem then too that the young players were away at war.

Thorneycroft: The second war yes but this was the first war. Docherty was in the War, a lot of them went.

Poikonen: "And in 1917 Mr. J. Lewis succeeded to the leadership and carried on until 1919 when Mr. J. Smith returned from Victoria and resumed charge. And then they decided to raise money to buy new instruments." Anyway it goes on to talk about the other years of the band.

Thorneycroft: No they had, of course, the finest band in the country in those days when Billy was [?] there's no question about that. As a brass band, as a straight brass band, I like a straight brass band.

Poikonen: No reeds at all, no reed instruments at all.

Thorneycroft: No reeds, no no.

Poikonen: It means the trumpets have to be able to play quite high and very sweetly, don't they?

Thorneycroft: There was the high cornet and the B flat cornets, you know. A fellow called Chicken used to play the high cornet and Harry Smith used to play [?].

Poikonen: It was cornets not trumpets in those days I guess was it.

Thorneycroft: Trumpets, there were no trumpets there were cornets that's what they called them and of course there's the euphonium of course and there was a French horn, double B.

Poikonen: This George A. Fletcher music gala of 1924 this Edison here we've got one of those, this exactly like it we still have it in our entrance hall. It were \$395 for that model compared to \$200 something for these others. But ours says it's an official laboratory model, We still have many records, Edison records about that thick, almost 1/2" thick, well not 1/2" but almost.

Thorneycroft: You mean the old time records? Was that the disk record?

Poikonen: Disk record yes. We also have the [Ambrole] the cylinder type which [?].

Thorneycroft: Oh yes you got the cylinder type?

Poikonen: Which for some stupid reason we threw it away when we moved years ago.

Thorneycroft: Well now, Mabel, my daughter she has one, one of those cylinder ones she got it from me. It was a Wardill's, I got it from Wardill's you see. She wanted it so she got it.

Poikonen: This had a diamond needle not a phony diamond like they have now, it was a real one you never have to change it.

Thorneycroft: You never have to change it, no. (laughing).

Poikonen: That was a real chore to play the other type of records in the old days, wasn't it, where you had to change the needle every time.

Thorneycroft: You had to change the needle nearly every other record you played. I've got some real old time records you know. I've put them on tape most of them. Of course I've got three records here of the world champion brass bands from London. My son he went to England on a tour and he bought me three records by the World Champion Band.

Poikonen: We have a number of band records too, the Grenadier Guards and it's nice to hear band music, you don't hear it on the radio much these days.

Thorneycroft: No, I love a band, I love a brass band it's got to be brass I don't like reeds. I don't like reeds.

Poikonen: The Salvation Army had nice bands too.

Thorneycroft: You bet your life they had a nice band.

Poikonen: They had a nice tone to it. Mr. Thorneycroft is looking through his record collection here. He's got a stack of ..a pile about a foot high there, or fifteen inches high. Oh boy. [..band..]

Tape is stopped and restarted.

Thorneycroft: ..great United States, if they want anything special they go to England, they go to London. There's something about the Old Country, that's just a little more tradition. No question. You pick up your paper and you see where all these actresses and so forth they've been to London. And these bands of course, they're just the same, they go after perfection you know.

Poikonen: Well you know in 1971 that's the last year I played with the concert band, they had this festival and they had band competitions in British Columbia and I think the Nanaimo Silver Cornet Band was one of the winners from the Island, and we went to Vancouver and played in a competition at U.B.C. They never told us, they just said what the winning band was but they didn't say what our position was in the other top ten or twenty. But we played for the Queen at that time too, Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip in the Coliseum and it was quite a thrill.

Thorneycroft: Yes that's right. You see when Smith was band master there used to be, eh.. Ladysmith used to have a quite a band and there used to be competitions between ♦.

Poikonen: That would be the Colliery Band I suppose?

Thorneycroft: Ladysmith and Nanaimo. Of course, Nanaimo was the Colliery Band. Now when Billy Smith came out from the Old Country, you see, he came here and Ed. Gibson he was the head of the band, and as soon as he heard that Billy Smith of course was a cornet player why he went to him and said o.k. this was the day before the 24th of May and Billy Smith was playing in the band on the 24th of May. And Billy played in the band and he gave him a job in the Western Fuel Company in the car shops and that's how they used to get [?].

Poikonen: Soccer players and band members I suppose got brought in and were given jobs in the mines then.

Thorneycroft: That's right. Soccer players.. of course that was a company team too when we had a good soccer team, you know, we used to get players out from the Old Country and give them a job in the mine. Of course it was quite easy because the money out here was so great to what it was in the Old Country.

Poikonen: And more than miners got I think back East and down in the States.

Thorneycroft: See you give them a nice easy job here as far as the mine was concerned, they give them a job on the top, you know, in the car shops or something, just messing around with the cars. But they never went down below, they weren't miners none of them were ever miners. But the wages you see, I mean they used to get [?]. Oh in the Old Country, you see, a pound was about in those days about \$5.00 a week was the top wages, you see. Well when they got out here and got \$3.00 a day why it was big money, you see. That's why people were anxious to come out here, you see. Of course the pound used to be \$4.85 you know in those days, of course today it's \$2.00 now. (laughing)

Poikonen: Yes I see our Canadian dollar has come up a little bit in the last [?].

Thorneycroft: Yes 90 cents now, 90 cents to the American dollar.

Poikonen: Have you ever gone back to England Mr. Thorneycroft?

Thorneycroft: Yes I've been back to England, I went back as ..on a lawn bowling tour. What is it twelve years or thirteen years ago. We travelled all over Scotland, England and Wales, we bowled in 26 different places.

Poikonen: Oh I see, not just a group going?

Thorneycroft: No no B.C. We went as a B.C. team, 30 of us.

Poikonen: I'm sure that was very enjoyable.

Thorneycroft: It was, because every town we went to the Mayor met us, you know and entertained us, and we had a whale of a time. We were there for five weeks, you know, and as I say we saw most of Scotland and we had a special bus and everything was arranged for us and as I say every place we went to the Mayor met us and entertained us at night.

Poikonen: Well I should be going, Mr. Thorneycroft, I've just got a little bit of space left on the tape. Is that someone come to visit you?

Thorneycroft: Or is it a grocer?

Poikonen: Shall we stop now then?

Thorneycroft: I think so, yeah.

Poikonen: Well thank you very much, Mr. Thorneycroft, I've really enjoyed this.

Thorneycroft: Oh well you're welcome.

End of tape.