

Jimmy LaRoque, Guy Blondeau, Sherry Farrell-Racette
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11.40.05 Sherry Farrell Racette: Do you remember women making things to supplement the family income, like manufacturing things through their craft production?

Jimmy LaRocque: Well, I remember the Métis women, they can braided rugs or hooked rugs. The braided rugs were the ones they made years ago, and as time progressed they made hooked rugs and so on, eh. And cheap—two dollars a piece. And it takes hours and hours to make one of those rugs. But they would, well, the, they'd do that for bazaars and for this and that, and also sell to people who wanted to buy them.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Do you remember anyone in particular who, doing or did pretty much everyone do it?

Jimmy LaRocque: I'd have to think of that. Mrs., Mrs. Parisien, I think, did it. Mrs. Celina Poitras her name was, but she was a Parisien. She made hooked, braided rugs and it was. I can't think of it.

Sherry Farrell Racette: But it was quite common?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, that's why they were two dollars a piece, eh. Everybody wanted five dollars for one, but if everybody's got a rug for sale, nobody gets paid five dollars. Two dollars and sometimes less than that. It was not too good a shape or not too fancy, so they had to be fancy like a horse, or this or that, or rose or something. It had to be nice to, to, not just and, of course, later years now, they put they put stencils on them, eh? So you just have to follow that, but the one time they had to make their own designs, and they like to put this on. That's why there was horses always on it and stuff like that.

11.42.18 Guy Blondeau: My mom used to crochet an awful lot. I can remember when I was a kid she would make everything from little doilies to, you know, six foot round table cloths, you know. And square or round of those, and she used to, for a few years there, she used to advertise. I think it had to be the *Western Producer*, would have been, or maybe the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Whatever, you know, weekly papers there were out at the time. And she'd take orders from all over them, mail orders, you see. And she would do these things. I remember one thing she used to make—you remember these tall vigil lights they used to be? You know, round tall round glasses like this, you know, for candles in there, and she used to use those as a mould and crochet things that would fit on that. And the cylinder coming up and then a large flat surface and a handle, and then she would starch these things, you see. And if you turned it upside down, okay, then the, then the edge of the, the horizontal part is flat on the table, and the other part is up around this glass vigil light container, and then she would attach, you know, starch the handle separately, and then attach it later. It made all kinds of shapes and forms and stuff. I remember that, and she would keep exercise books of all her, you know, all her customers from her dealings, and I have one of those books somewhere.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, really?

Guy Blondeau: Tucked away in the house.

Sherry Farrell Racette: That would be really neat to see because, you know, it seems like a lot of women really supplemented their family's incomes with, with their talent, you know, with their artistic talent and their creativity. And I, women did, like, there's Louis Riel's wife did crocheting. So I mean, Métis women have been crocheting for quite a, quite a long time. Do you remember the colours?

Guy Blondeau: It was mostly...

Sherry Farrell Racette: Now see, this is the artist asking you the questions.

Guy Blondeau: Is ecru a colour?

Sherry Farrell Racette: A sort of a beige.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah. Yeah, okay, that's, that's mostly that, or sometimes white.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Sort of like the colour of the natural. Did she do it with wool or with like...

Guy Blondeau: A crochet cotton.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Crochet cotton?

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: That'd be nice. Do you have any of her work? Did you keep any of it?

Guy Blondeau: I may have some around the house. I'm sure we have some tucked away in the in the trunk somewhere, yeah.

Sherry Farrell Racette: But she kept, you know, she really did it in a business-like way...

Guy Blondeau: Yep.

Guy Blondeau: ...and kept track of everything.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, and orders came from a long way off, you know, and, okay, the, the, these papers have a large circulation area, eh? The *Western Producer* and the whatever, whatever, you know, else these, Winnipeg was the, where they came from.

Jimmy LaRocque: Manitoba, the *Free Press*.

Guy Blondeau: *Free Press*, yeah, yeah.

11.4456 Sherry Farrell Racette: I know that I was talking to one woman, and she, what did they used to buy? Sacks. You know...

Jimmy LaRocque: To make rugs with?

Sherry Farrell Racette: To make, well, they made all kinds of stuff with those white sacks. They could buy them from the *Free Press*. They made, oh, I don't know, all kinds of stuff. But I guess everyone used the paper. I never heard of anyone advertising in the paper.

Guy Blondeau: Oh, yeah, yeah she had a real business thing going.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, that's neat.

Guy Blondeau: Yeah, it, it paid my way through, I attended Gravelburg College for half a year once when I was fourteen, and I know she said that's the only reason I could go was because she was doing that. I didn't get back—the money ran out, but I didn't get back after that half a year, but, you know, I mean this, this, it helped, I guess.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Yeah, yeah. Well, that's neat...

11.45.48 Jimmy LaRocque: Another thing they supplemented—you tell them supplemented income—the women around Lebret, anyway, all had clientele of cottages that they cleaned the cottages in the spring when they were coming back, and did little bit of chores, you know. Sometimes once a week and, of course, closing down the cottage in the fall, scrub it, wipe it down.

Sherry Farrell Racette: Oh, they used to hire themselves out to do that?

Jimmy LaRocque: Oh, yeah, lots of them. Joe [?] sometimes in the morning go out to Katepwa with a carload of women, and that was to do work in the cottages. And some of them got pretty, paid pretty good, especially in the later years—they got ten bucks an hour when everybody else was getting about five.

Sherry Farrell Racette: They must have been good at it.