Johnston’s Drapery Shop origins

Harold Johnston:
Well, Granny was in the shop here. She started the shop in 1901.

Maurice O’Keeffe:
This drapery shop?

Harold Johnston:
Aye. Well, actually, she had five girls employed upstairs. She was a trained seamstress. She had gone down to — I can’t think of the name of the town — but near Derry, where there was a big place doing all kinds of dressmaking and stuff. And she trained as a seamstress there. She served her time to it.

Maurice O’Keeffe:
So there was a small enterprising business going on here.

Harold Johnston:
And then she came out here and she set up making stuff upstairs. She had five girls. A couple from Donegal came down here, and they married local men in the 1900s, you know.

Maurice O’Keeffe:
It goes back that far.

Harold Johnston:
So they used to make a lot of ladies’ flannel petticoats and stuff — red flannel, a bit of red flannel, for underclothes. And she used to make the odd wedding dress for people who could afford them at that time. And they made other types of stuff.

But then, when manufacturing started picking up after the First World War, she just did bits and pieces, you know what I mean, and she went into more general drapery at that time.

Most of the stuff that came, came from Belfast at that stage. You would order the stuff one day in Belfast and it would be at Belcoo Railway Station the next day.

Source: Harold Johnston, interviewed by Maurice O’Keeffe, Irish Life and Lore, 2018.