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Berry, Hattie

Hattie Berry was born in Colorado Springs and attended the Colorado Teachers College (now the University of Northern Colorado.) She started teaching around 1927 in Brush Creek District 8 of Custer County, on land that had been donated by Conradt (also spelled Konradt) Koch. She said the school was situated near a seepage from irrigation, so the well water wasn't very good, and the children often brought water to school. The school was moved uphill, away from Brush Creek, because they were afraid of flooding. At that time, most children were lucky to finish through 8th grade.

She continued teaching until 1941 or 1942. She lived in the valley during the depression, teaching at the Willows school, and said many people lived on pork. They had a milk cow and a garden so they didn't go hungry. She told a wonderful story of the bank owner, George Bierslieb, who said if there was a run on his bank (during the depression), he could go to a local rancher and borrow the gold in his corn crib.

The recorder asked if Hattie felt schools shouldn't be consolidated and remain one-room schoolhouses. Hattie very definitely said no, that with the consolidation the schools have a much richer curriculum. She kept the Brush Creek school open one year after consolidation because children were limited on the number of hours they could be on a bus, but then she went to work in the consolidated school and her husband, Jim, drove the bus. She had several wonderful stories about teaching in a small, one-room schoolhouse.