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Berry, Hattie
No date
Interviewed by Debbie Hood

Note: Jim Berry is present for the early part of the interview.

There is also a great deal of background noise on this tape which occasionally obscures the speaking of the participants and makes it a bit garbled and unintelligible at times.

Unidentified speaker: This tape belongs to the Custer County Library. It is part of an oral history taping series. The subject matter is Hattie Berry of Westcliffe, CO.

DH: The subject of my visit today as I told you was to ask you about teaching in a rural school and with Jim having been a bus driver, I think I want to hear about this too. I may not be so positive about this when you get done. Tell me first of all, Hattie, when you started teaching.

HB: I started teaching in the fall of 1937?

DH: And was that here or was that-

HB: Brush Creek. It was District 8, Custer County. In those days, children walked 3, 4, 5 miles to school, never thought anything about it and that was my first experience. I had 16 children as I told you before it was related people because the valley was so intermarried. I had children even at the school with frozen feet and would warm water and thaw them.

DH: So, you practically had to be an EMT in addition to a teacher, didn't you?

HB: I also did janitor work.

DH: Oh well, I suppose you did.

HB: Yeah, every evening. Well, the children loved to clean those blackboards because that, they thought they were just doing something nice for the teacher. Children used to like to do nice things for the teachers. So, they would do that, but we swept every evening and, in the mornings, we had to be an hour or so before school to get fires going and warm the place, take out the ashes. Children would bring in wood if that was all you burned along with coal. Over at Brush Creek, the well was situated so it got a lot of seepage from irrigation and wasn't very good water, so they carried water quite often. They would come over here and get the water from the spring. They carried water. Each of us had to have our own cup-

DH: To drink from.

HB: That was the only halfway sanitary way we could get by. Then, once a month, we locked those doors and oiled them in order to keep dust down and make it more, the air, more healthful I suppose but that's

what we did.

DH: When the schoolhouses were built, Jim you may want to answer this, who built them? Was it a community project or exactly how did they come about?

JB: I don't, all I can say is, that they used to sit right over here across the two creeks, the old Brush Creek school and they got scared. We had a lot of water and they got scared and they moved the schoolhouse right over here on the farm.

DH: So, they actually moved it quite a bit uphill, didn't you?

JB: Yes, right.

HB: It sat between the creeks.

DH: Oh well, I can see where their concern might be valid. [laughing]

HB: And our winters you know, five foot of snow, was messy.

DH: Sure.

HB: So, that was what made so much water.

DH: I see.

JB: And I'm going to say it was, I'll say this much, Conradt Koch donated the land. Now maybe that'll help you out some.

DH: Yes, it does. Conradt's name had to be spelled Conradt, wasn't it?

HB: Yes.

DH: Yeah, and Koch. I know about the Koch. I talked to all these people named Koch [pronounced Cotch] when I first came to the valley that no, no, no! This won't work. [laughing]

HB: And people say it wouldn't be Cook either. It was [pronounced Coof].

DH: Coof with an F on the end, huh?

HB: Yeah, the ch would kind of take a, halfway between an F and an A and that way, but it just came out as Coof.

DH: I see. So, they really anglicized that name, didn't they? Can you tell, Jim, maybe you know this, was Conradt Koch related to the Carson Conradt's? Or was he perhaps just named after him? [Unintelligible]

HB: I think Conradt was a surname quite common in German.

JB: I was going to say this, there was only the four brothers-

HB: that came here-

JB: That came here in the Koch family.

DH: And who were they?

JB: They start out, let's see, grandpa was the oldest, wasn't he?

HB: [unintelligible]

JB: Konradt was one and then there was Fred Koch, there was August Koch-

HB: Fred, August, Pete-

DH: Konradt-

HB: Konradt, so if you run across somebody who says Kuyou [unintelligible]-

DH: Well, it seems like a logical nickname. Now if you heard the name Konradt, the spelling would lead you to anglicize it and say Comradt.

HB: Right.

DH: So, then, I guess that makes sense, too. I was not aware that the Berry's were partially, originally Koch's. I suppose it stands to reason. In among this, I think it's so interesting to find out how people got to be the families that they are today, so I'm going to have to diverge here a minute, Hattie, and find out how the Berry's got to here from the Koch's.

HB: Jim, your mother. She wants to know about your mother.

JB: Now, I said my dad was an Englishman and she married a Koch, er, Canute.

DH: A Canute?

JB: A Koch. She married a Koch.

DH: Ok. I see.

HB: And Peter, he had married Lida? Canute. See, she got, as I told you, they were so intermarried that everybody was related. They really were.

DH: Of course, when you stop and think about it, there were relatively few families in this area. Most of them were large families when they came or-

HB: It's rather hard, I suppose, to think about, but in 1900 till about 1910 or along there some place there were eight families right here. One here, one down here, see what I mean [lots of background noise]

DH: I really would like to know this because it's something that not, that doesn't really come out in all the, you said it was given by the government to whom?

HB: To the Civil War vets, men that had served in the Civil War, either South or North, it didn't matter. But they didn't have the funds in the national treasury to pay them, so they were given their homesteads.

Right up here was the Irwin? Place and he was a war vet, and, help me with Brett's? place. Well, anyway, Coffman was, that was the place you turned down on the highway. Then there was a Coughlin man at the other end. Right over here, that was a Civil War vet. And Fellows? Now Ralph Koch, do you know if he, he is a descendant from the Fellows.

DH: Fellows, I see. As if I wasn't confused before. [laughing]

HB: So, you see, at one time, this was quite heavily populated. But then, when mining opened up more toward the western part of the state, then they weren't really making money on these smaller ranches.

DH: How much were the homesteads that they were given? Were they 160?

JB: There were some that were 360, I think. Uh, 340.

HB: 340-

JB: 340, yeah, some 340.

[background noise]

I was thinking about the place that I had of grandpa's up there. I know that was a 340.

HB: Yes.

DH: Was this lesser quality land? And maybe this land down at the bottoms was?

HB: No.

DH: Fred thought, was telling me the other day that some of the homestead claims people had proved, he divided it into just for example, A, B, C quality land was given larger parcels because you couldn't do as much with it. I had not been aware of this at all in Salida, they teach you, you study it [garbled]

HB: Well, there's a lot about the Homestead Act that's forgotten.

DH: It really is. I don't know why it was never written more clearly and kept alive, but it hasn't.

HB: Jim what did you do with that box that had the deed in it? That your [unintelligible] has signature on it? Would you want to see it?

DH: I would LOVE to see it.

HB: I just thought, you know, it was Civil War land.

DH: Now, was that only in the north end of the valley? It seems like the south end of the valley-

HB: I just, uh, was settled by the Colony and I rather doubt that there was anything up there. The lot was colonized and I can't think of the leader's name.

DH: Woolstein.

HB: That's right. Why, I have an idea their acreages were bought somehow or other through that Colony

but it didn't remain a colony too long. You knew that?

DH: No, only a couple of years. Now I've been told that they were given the homestead land under the Homestead Act but had to, oh what was the requirement, that you stayed three years, build an improvement of X dimensions, I think [talking over each other]

HB: Was that way, even I would say, as late as 1923 Jim's brother picked up a homestead up here in the foothills. They wanted it for pasture. Well, he was required to have a home up there and live there at least three months out of the year, and have improved so many acres, acreage, you know, in plowing and seeding. But later, they took it up under timber and stone? And that type of homesteading didn't require any improvement and I think a lot of these right close into the rings were temporary stone after that one [noise]

JB: I can't find it.

HB: That's ok.

DH: I'll ask Hattie some questions while you're looking anyway, Jim.

HB: Ok.

DH: I want to learn, on tape anyway, I hope to get down and talk some more to her and also do an interview with George? You know he's down there full time now.

HB: I didn't know that either.

DH: He developed really bad heart complication.

HB: I knew that he had that, wondered about it. I don't, when you see George, he's got his nose up here so far that you don't know whether you better speak or not. So, I don't know.

DH: So, I think they've got quite a bit to deal with there [unintelligible] Their place is listed for sale now which probably is, jump, just start over and you'll be [unintelligible] some of the questions that I asked.

HB: That's fine. If you wish to, but you'll have to ask questions so I know what to tell you.

DH: I will. Let's just start at the beginning, where are you from? You're from the valley, right?

HB: No, I was born in Colorado Springs. I went to grade school, [unintelligible] the Colorado Teachers College, which is now the University of Northern Colorado. And then, I went ahead and moved to Salida, my father had passed away, so when they had moved to Salida to be with him and I was going to go back and finish that last year degree, but because of my father's death, we [unintelligible] and I was asked to teach [unintelligible] and that was in 27.

DH: How?

HB: No, my sister and brother-in-law in Salida were in the insurance business and they covered this county and Ray Adams who was on the school board here, told them there was an opening, not that he knew I wanted a school. That was just in the general conversation. So, they asked me about it and the next

day came over and I signed a contract. Finally, all the things they used to put in the contract, now you must not plan to get married.

DH: Was that for an indefinite time or for one year or-

HB: While you had that contract. Sydney didn't approve of married teachers, married women teachers at that time and-

DH: I have to stop and ask you, why did they not approve of married women teachers?

HB: Because of their pregnancies.

DH: That terrible affliction! [laughing]

HB: Well, it would, unless there would be more teachers who were in the field at that time. Why they couldn't-

DH: They'd need a replacement. That's right.

HB: And I have no, later on, when we did have married teachers, they'd just teach almost to the last, so that it wasn't good for them.

DH: No time off for pregnancy then.

HB: No, no! No, we had no retirement back when I first started teaching. I first was notified about PERA for teachers when, I guess it was in 41.

DH: and you'd been teaching at that time for how long?

HB: From 27 to 41 or 2.

DH: It would have been 14 years. So, you hadn't had a retirement plan when you started. You would have been on wages.

HB: Well, not the way it turned out. They finally made the ruling that they would take your five highest paid years and your, my retirement was based on the last five years that I taught in consolidation because that was the highest pay. Teachers' wages were just beginning to go up a bit. I started teaching at $75 a month and it went farther than when I was getting [unintelligible]

DH: How exciting that must have been.

HB: Don't you know, our lifestyle is different. You didn't go to all these places. You didn't have to have something new to wear every weekend. I remember very distinctly one place I boarded, this was how a [unintelligible] the Depression, that the ladies said, well, if we could, if you could pay us three dollars a month so we could have steak once a month.

DH: Oh dear.

HB: Pueblo everybody, since the end of World War II.

DH: I could not imagine before. I'm slowly learning with this project it's changed terribly.

HB: It's electronics [unintelligible]

DH: Well indeed they have.

HB: And then, too, I think people went through the hardship of the Depression and then World War II and then, they got a little bit and they thought, well, we're just going to do what we can, so if we have to go down in the dumps again, we have memories and I do hope that we come out of this hard time with people feeling that they can go ahead and have a good time.

DH: If we don't, part of the hard time [unintelligible]

HB: That's right. I think there's a reason for it. But I think the Depression there in 29 and through the early 30s just taught people, when you have it, do something. Don't just sit. Now, I do know people who lived here in this valley, had children in school, never, oh maybe they'd go to Canon if they had to be in the hospital, but I have known some of them to be 40, 50 years of age who's [unintelligible] Pueblo. So, that is too narrow a mind. I can see it now. When I first started teaching, I thought well, gee, the peace and the quiet, everything going like the way I planned a month that month.

DH: When?

HB: Can you think of that today?

DH: No, I can't even get through one day. It's like-

HB: We don't either.

DH: I was going to ask you, as an outsider, and also as an unmarried outsider, you could view the Depression results here in the valley with a little bit different viewpoint than the people who were involved with ranching and with the truck farming that was here at that time. How do you remember the Depression affecting the people here?

HB: Well, you know, I don't think the rural places were hit as hard as the cities, more populated. They could go out and put in a garden. Now most of the people lived on pork. Very few of them butchered beef. The fat, the hamhocks, you know, and they cured their own, so they had been doing that all this time, and managed to get money. It wasn't vague, it was varied. Or it was hidden somewhere in the house or something like that. They didn't trust banks so -

DH: Was this even before the Depression?

HB: Oh yes, when I first came up here, George Bierslieb, cause his father before him, but George was the head of the bank up here and he told me one time, during the Depression, he said, if someone would make a run on my bank Hattie, I could go out here and I won't name the rancher, because they might all still be doing it, he's a very old man now. He said, I could go out here into the southern part of the valley and this friend of mine could go into his corn crib and get me all the gold I'd need.

DH: Oh, my.

HB: Now that was a banker telling me that. We were talking about how would we ever get out of this Depression, see. How would people ever have money? So, really, I don't think this valley was too hard hit.

DH: I had never heard that they were that well off.

HB: Well, not everybody.

DH: I'm sure they weren't.

HB: But still you see even the smallest and the poorest rancher had a pig, a milk cow and a guard? So, they didn't go hungry. They didn't have to have the soup lines and bread lines or whatever you might call them. They were still eating, perhaps maybe not the finest affair but good food. So, I can't, I do know, of course, none of the schools were open, because taxes weren't being paid, but most of the teachers who taught here were local people and they took the school, for the term, whatever the district had. I was up at the Willows at the time and I taught three months with pay, and then he stopped the eight months term because the children had to go on. And I wasn't the only one. Every teacher could see that this was a problem and we all had to work.

DH: It was left up to you as teachers to get used to that time to get them on with their education.

HB: That's right. Yes, the teachers did it. Now we had a very good county superintendent.

DH: Who was the Superintendent?

HB: Jessie Bealer. And if you look up the records, I think you'd see that she was there, oh I couldn't even tell you how many years. She was really good, even when she became quite elderly. She had a very good mind and I do really believe that if it had not been for her, we would never have had the high schools there, Jessie did.

DH: I was familiar with [unintelligible]

HB: Oh, yes.

DH: Followed by Ruth Wayne. Was Lucy before Georgina [unintelligible] Did Miss Kettle take over Miss Damens right after Miss [unintelligible] or was there someone else?

HB: Georgiana took over from Mrs. Damen and then when, her personality was very strong and very strict and she could she possibilities in everything. Time is your element in rural school, or was, I guess it still is, if we have it.

DH: I think so.

HB: We were stretched too thin anyway but then she would into the schools demanding that this be done and that be done and something else be done, which really, we would have had children there from midnight to midnight. So, she met with displeasure and then with Wayne Golder. She was elected.

DH: Yeah, well, she tells me that Miss Kettle had chosen to not bring any term that year??

HB: Ah, for the simple reason that defeat was written all over it, the county.

DH: Well, Miss [unintelligible] didn't really tell me this but it was quite evident, really, she was nice about Miss Kettle.

HB: Well, Miss Kettle was a nice person. It was just that you know, as I say, she was so domineering and her own life was run that way.

DH: I had understood that.

HB: She never had a hair out of place, you know, what a, you've seen that kind of person. Now as far as being friendly, surely, she was nice to teachers and all, this and that, but she was pushing to the extent that not only the teachers [unintelligible] the children and the parents. But fortunately, she got over at El Paso County and they had more money. They could run in a few substitutes. By that time, we were beginning to use parent aid and you see, it didn't bother her there, and there she was, until she was ready for retirement. So, it all worked out fine.

DH: Oh, yes, and she was much better off in that larger area.

HB: I think that was why.

DH: She could do it.

HB: And she was quite capable and when she got over there, I think her program was going over better and consequently, she was very happy with it. And our Republican County chairman, I think they call, June Canda, helped her get that.

DH: [unintelligible]

HB: Yes, he was county chairman for quite a long time and he also was a very capable fellow. We have had wonderful citizens in this valley. We still have.

DH: Oh yes.

HB: But we were talking about the past and that's why I said 'had'. But it all worked out and after Ruth Lange resigned, it seems to me, and Miss Kettle took over.

DH: Miss-

HB: Miss Frances, and she's very good with the schools but I remember Mrs. Beeman in particular, because she was there for so long and she knew everybody, even the first graders by their first name, cause she had been into those schools for so many years.

DH: Flattering to the children, too.

HB: Oh, well, she was one of them, even though she were maybe 70 years older than some of them. [laughing] But she was still one of them. She really did do a lot for education you know.

DH: But I think all of the counties have been hit so hard-

HB: And then, of course, with consolidation, we didn't need a county superintendent. It was just a figurehead.

DH: And still remains so if you agree with [unintelligible] I think-

HB: Wherever they have them.

DH: Well, now we do have a superintendent of schools.

HB: Uh huh.

DH: But it's not the same kind of community job that it was years ago before they were consolidating.

HB: No.

DH: I was going to ask you this, your own opinion. There's a movement in some areas, not so widely in Colorado as in some of the more populous states, to kind of retreat from consolidating the schools and especially for the younger children to go back to the one room school. What do you think of that?

HB: I think it would be a mistake.

DH: Do you? Why?

HB: For the simple reason that even if you would have, say you have the first three, or first four grades, the curriculum is much richer, much wider, than it was when I taught rural. We were very well satisfied if the child in science got a little nature study. You couldn't get by with that in this day and age.

DH: No, you can't.

HB: They have to know something about mechanics, they have to know electricity, they have to know radio, television. I don't mean that it's going to be their life work but how are they going to choose if they don't have the basics as they go along and some of that basics has to start in primary grade. I am 100% for consolidation to this, but I do think that one [unintelligible] came from a chronic complainer.

DH: Some things I've heard have been from that sort of person. I know one lady whose oldest is in second grade and she has one in second grade and she said even worse when started, they're going to be really tired for the first two weeks, but they'll manage and so will I.

HB: That's right. Well, I rode the bus, Jim drove the bus, and I rode the bus and then he had many a time first grade child would start to fall asleep on the bus on the way home and I would just move over and put the child in my lap and let him sleep. That way, he had no chance to fall off the seat and hurt himself or herself whichever, and I could remember Jim Lane, who is now Foreman of Trails and rode the bus. Jim would come back and pick him up just as though he were a wee, not walking yet, and just hand him out the door to his mother. He never awakened. But that didn't go on every day. It would just be, perhaps the family would be up a little bit later or they would be someplace that he didn't get his night's, full night's rest. But we have done that, and I'm sure older children on the bus helped little ones.

DH: Oh, I'm sure they did.

HB: But what is, we've been retired now, for someone to fall asleep on the bus, is that a greater harm than losing out on the enrichment that this program can give them? Now, I'll take the enrichment. If I had even a preschool, one that was even younger than kindergarten and they opened it up, if I had one, that child would go to consolidation because I went through these rural schools and saw these children. Really, now, where I went to school [?] was {?]. At that time, Colorado? Springs was not a suburb of Denver. It was a dying mining town. In fact, my graduation class was 13 so you can judge the other grades, maybe 20 or something like that but we did have teacher per grade. No kindergarten because that wasn't such a thing at that time. But the education that I received right there was broader than what we could give these rural schools.

DH: Didn't it make sense to know what is, what would be possible from your own experience that would not be able to pass on?

HB: That's right.

DH: How many, just a rough estimate, I know that it would be impossible for you to name an exact figure for all the years you taught, but how many children that you taught were able to go on to college?

HB: Well, in the beginning, the first four or five years that I taught, very few of them had gone on to high school.

DH: I knew 8th grade was-

HB: 8th grade was it. Now there were instances they could have gone but it was the parents living in this rural rut. After that, it started to pick up and I would say maybe one out of ten, or something like that, would go on. And then gradually grew so that more of them went. Now, I think we are overdoing a lot of it. I think a lot of the children that are enrolling in academic work in universities and colleges should maybe be going to vocational, or commercial because some children are not university material.

DH: This is true. You, I assume, are aware that in the freshman programs in most of the larger universities, they have remedial programs.

HB: Oh yes. When I would know isn't I suppose at that time, the Colorado Teacher's College, if it were, oh sure, it was accredited, but I doubt that its credits would have carried into any university. You would have had to make up some. We had to pass the English and the math and the history examination before you could, before they'd take your tuition. You either passed it or you didn't go in.

DH: For heaven's sakes.

HB: There was no prep. You just simply had to know it. I remember I missed the English entrance exam by one half of a point!

DH: Oh dear.

HB: And that was more or less carelessness, but I missed it, let's say, and it could have been I was dumb. So, I got to talking about it with my sponsor and she said, you know, I'm going to talk to Dean Cross. He was not only the Dean of the college; he was Dean of the English Department, and see what he says. Now she in mind that I wouldn't take first year college English because I came so near passing it. She thought

she could get me right into the second, and of course, at that time, it would have saved some money, had I been able to put some other class in there. But Dean Cross called me, and he said, I want you to come into my English 1 tomorrow, so I did. He suggested that I take it. He said I think you have enough common sense to know that you need a little bit more background than you have. And I have been very happy to this very day that I did because when I got out and had 8th grade and even some 9th graders, I could teach them parts of speech, we could parse, decline a verb. How many children can do it today? They don't have to, and so naturally they don't. And sometimes, if they would see a verb coming down the street, they wouldn't know it from a noun or an adverb.

DH: This is true. And by the same token, how many teachers, without boning up for a few nights at home, could teach it?

HB: But I've always been so very happy that he took that interest in me and I know he wouldn't have if my own sponsor hadn't. See, when we went, when you would sign up at that day in college, you would pick your sponsor. Well, I wanted primary as my major and music and kindergarten as minor. And she was the second-grade teacher, from the second grade at the training school.

DH: I see.

HB: But she also sponsored and taught educational classes in college. The college teachers had to do more than job at that day.

DH: Obviously.

HB: So, I chose her because I thought, well, second grade, it would be right in the middle of every primary. So, I made my mind to get a chance to pick up a sole first grade way of teaching, I mean, teach the first, and I might be able to put on the child that could go faster and do it correctly. And so, I chose her for that reason and we just got along splendidly.

DH: Oh, that's marvelous.

HB: Wonderful for me. It was a break that very few people got.

DH: How large were your classes? In college, at that time?

HB: Oh, uh, some of them would rank maybe about 50 and the largest one I was every in was 225. That was a nature study class and Dr. Gene, who was at that time, Dean of the science, felt that he could take care of most of all of that, you know, so he took other subjects, I think some math, to help the crowded condition and put a lot of his nature study classes together. But we had to have that one nature study class in order to apply for our degree.

DH: Oh, I see. And then did you have to [unintelligible] or student teaching?

HB: Yes, I did and I was very fortunate there. The teacher that had been out at Kersey, CO took time off and they came in there for help and my sponsor got me out there. So, I was actually doing my student teaching and making a little wage at the same time.

DH: How exciting.

HB: And, exciting? Necessary! [laughing]

DH: Very!

HB: I don't' mean we were poor, but you know, there were four of we girls in the family.

DH: That makes a lot of difference.

HB: It does make a difference.

DH: I've heard people joke that girls are more expensive than boys and it's no joke. It's true.

HB: Well, I think so, too. The social life starts a little bit earlier and they're more particular about what they're wearing.

DH: Well, and for so many years, girls just played more and more clothes? I think that makes a difference.

HB: One of the ladies said to me, my daughter's going off to university. She says, she has two trunks full of clothes. She said, I went to Gunnison with two dresses, one pair of shoes and a coat. [laughing]

DH: Times have changed.

HB: Yes, and what time she taught, married and reared this daughter, she was just amazed at what her daughter was accumulating to go, she was going to university which would be a little different lifestyle for the college, yes.

DH: By the time you get your books, and your favorite hair towel to dry your hair on, and your casual clothes, and your more formal clothes, and your favorite teddy bear, favorite teddy bears do take up room.

HB: Yes, they do. But I don't think I'll ever forget her remarks about that. I don't think she went with quite that few clothes but that's what she claimed.

DH: Oh, goodness.

HB: I bet you don't really, people of my generation have seen such a change. I don't think there could possibly ever be such a big change in such few years.

DH: I would wonder how really.

HB: Science has taken over lifestyle just completely. You couldn't begin to live today like we did then.

DH: People have tried it and not been successful at all.

HB: That's why I say I would never want primary to go back in one school.

DH: I'm so glad to hear you say that. I had been of the same opinion but I didn't have quite the years of experience to base it on that you do, and somebody who's been there I think? like say.

HB: well, and then both of them, and I really think any other teacher that came from the rural school to consolidation that even the smallest schools we have right there in Westcliffe you could see the difference.

Really and truly, the first year that, see I kept Brush Creek open one year after they consolidated because of the bus situation. At that time, the state law set the number of hours a child could be on the bus and this was going to be too far by the time they made the whole big route. So, I kept this open under consolidation and then I [unintelligible] the second year of consolidation to the second grade but that was what is now the youth center or used to be the DFM there and I tell you the first month that I was in there, I wondered why I had so much time.

DH: You only had one class.

HB: Yes! And it just seemed to me that I had just oceans of time, what was I going to do with it? And then it dawned on me well, let's just use it. So, we did, you know, we could put in a lot of things, and having lived so by the clock, and now I didn't have to. If my reading class went over half an hour, what difference did it make? We could pick up some tomorrow [unintelligible] any of those extra classes.

DH: When you taught anyone here in school at Brush Creek, how long did you allot for each lesson.

HB: Oh, anywhere, it would depend. A writing lesson was about 10 minutes. Can you imagine learning to, but-

DH: Well, I would imagine that about all the patience some of your pupils had-

HB: Yes, but, timing the lesson was about the length of the class because by that time, somebody else was beginning to wiggle if they had a book that they would have to take a lesson from or if you could have a lot of sear work, something like that, in putting them in time out, that was their span, most of them, and of course, your little children, when you first started, that was about five, but what we used to do, was, if you had a 7th or 8th grader that was interested, and most of them were, they liked to help. Well, now, when you get through, would you, if this child that kept your older students happy and it kept your younger children from being so bored and so fidgety because their interest span. Really, I think the first grade, the first grader, first come into school has the interest span of five minutes, that's it.

DH: But they can be deeply involved in something?

HB: It grew, of course, as the years went by.

DH: Well, sure. I suppose even for the first graders as they became more accustomed to the school routine, their attention span would grow.

HB: And then, they learned to go get books or extra work that you might have sitting on the desk or something[unintelligible] and they would, when they would finish that work, see, they would be, it would take two or three for them to adapt to that. Well, at home, probably you have me answer, you know how it is yourself and I don't think children change that much. It's just consolidation that changed the schools. [laughing]

DH: While you were telling me about this, I was thinking of 7th and 8th graders I know in school, how young all of the adults considered them. You know, we still considered them children.

HB: Oh yes!

DH: They're just blossoming into their teenage years and thinking if that's all the education they can get, would they really be prepared to go on with their lives and I would have to say, no, and I don't know-

HB: Not now.

DH: No, not now. Not as they were years ago when you were teaching several grades at a time, but of course, I have known and have come to understand more during this project, that the kids that were in school even 20 years ago, more like 30 or 40 years ago, had so much more responsibility at home and were expected to accept that responsibility and take on more. So that maybe if they were not older, at least more mature by the time they got through the 8th grade.

HB: Oh, I'm sure they were. In fact, I think some of the 8th grade girls [dog shaking collar] those children pitch baseball, you know, and they would sit back, the washboard, milk the cows.

DH: Yeah, yeah. What was about the average age for a girl to be married in the valley who started teaching?

HB: I'm just at a loss.

DH: Were most of your girls able to go on to high school?

HB: No, not the first two or three years I taught over here. I can think of very few, girl or boy, from, see, this district here. Dorothy Adams went and a few like that. The larger families did not. [taking about different students sotto voce, hard to hear [but it wasn't because they couldn't. It was just not the thing. These people that were going on to school were, the parents were reckless, they were just being, I don't know, just silly.

DH: Uh huh. There wasn't the appreciation for higher education then that there is now.

HB: No, I didn't have it and I made my living.

DH: Yeah.

HB: I had one lady say, well, my brother in Ohio didn't even finish the 3rd grade. He can't sign the payroll but he makes a good living. I said, doing what, working in the coal mines? And was that the future you'd want for every child in the United States? But that's what it was here. It was beginning to break in 27 and yet there was very, very little new blood coming in, let's say. Most everyone was still related, maybe 3rd or 4th cousin or something like that,

DH: But still, and most of them were what, second generation in the valley at that time?

HB: Yes, there were, I did have the good fortune to know the, one of the Canute's that came here as a young married woman with the Colony. She was grandmother of the Bosses, John Canute's wife, maybe you know her. But anyway, she was very elderly but quite, quite the mind yet and I used to go over and visit with her just to hear her talk about the early days here in the valley. There were Indians here. Had you been told that? Did you realize that?

DH: Yes.

HB: Well, anyway one came over to her mother's place, no, to her place, and her children were home, so she was afraid, see, that he was maybe going to harm them but he kept pointing and pointing and finally she decided he was pointing at one of her chickens and she had three hams so she picked up the hen to give to him and he shook his head, no. But he kept pointing and finally she decided she went into her storehouse. Most of them had like this rock building down here, cool place, cause they had no refrigeration and got an egg, handed it to him, and he went away happy.

DH: Oh, for heaven's sakes. [laughing]

HB: That was most interesting to be able to talk to someone like that that had actually lived pioneer days.

DH: Yes, did she tell you anything about the trip over from Chicago? Probably, it was on the train, they didn't really go by wagon train very long.

HB: No, they weren't, I think from St. Louis though or Kansas City. Kansas City.

DH: Still, that's quite a trip.

HB: I learned most about that from Conradt Koch. He had this place over here that Fred Berry has now. But his folks came in, and his folks' place was over here on the hill where George and Virgie Koch live. But he used to tell us. There were just the four boys and most of what he told us, was how much mischief they got into. [laughing] He could tell you quite a little bit. They said it was just the sway of the wagon, hour in and hour out, and then, they had to go slowly or they would've worn out their horses. So, the kids would get off and play game along the way and then run and catch up.

DH: For heaven's sakes.

HB: I learned most of that from him but, and one time, he told me about when they first, they stopped in Canon City and they, the boys went out and paper, put them out, the dog [unintelligible] on the paper, set it afire and in order to smother out the fire, the dog had more sense than the boys, who went under the houses. They were built without a foundation you know and he said, boy, did we get it. He said, the dog lived, but we didn't think we would. [laughing] I boarded with them the first year I aught here.

DH: I see.

HB: And he used to tell me so much.

DH: Oh, what fun.

HB: But it's like I say, if I were [unintelligible] I'd write a book. But I'm afraid I'd use names and insult the people who [laughing] Everyone would seize me, you know, they'd always say, now, don't tell my children anything about what I did [laughing] Chester, Jim's cousin, who's teaching at Canon City, well, he did his student practice, student training up here at the high school in math and the first day he was there, I was sitting in the lunchroom with the children. I was supervisor that day. He walked over and sat down and he said, Hattie, you keep your mouth shut. [laughing] And I knew he was kidding me, you know, but you'd have thought he'd [laughing] So I had him the first six years of his school.

DH: You taught in several places in the valley besides Brush Creek.

HB: Yeah, whenever Miss Beeman would come down, she'd say, I suppose that's what made it so interesting that I stayed and there's always a challenge. She'd say to me, I was such a crank [?] so she'd say we're having a discipline problem with a certain child who'll still be in that school next year. There's going to be an opening. Will you apply?

DH: Oh, so you were kind of a troubleshooter here in the valley.

HB: I was crank.

DH: I see, crank.

HB: I wouldn't be so sophisticated to say troubleshooter. I was the cranky one. Let's see, I taught Willows, Colfax, [unintelligible] Wetmore.

DH: My goodness. Now when did you teach at Wetmore?

HB: 37 to the 40, that moved down the street in 41.

DH: I see.

HB: Is Ruth?

DH: Mrs. Mezzle? Was telling about, that you'd never tasted an orange or coconut, so she got them all coconuts for Christmas.

HB: And one year the children asked me if they could please have the decorations off the tree that I had bought so we'd have a school tree decorated because I didn't have any at home. So, I divided all the decorations we had. There weren't, just weren't enough, you know, that they'd have a very pretty tree so Jim and I went and bought Christmas decorations. At that time, you'd get a whole boxful for a quarter, and we had the happiest children around here in this district.

DH: Because they never had.

HB: They had Christmas trees but never had, well I suppose, I doubt that they could afford cranberries in that day to string, but I suppose they had popcorn and like that, but one girl told me, she said, we save all of the little bits of our hair ribbons, and I think I saw them wear hair ribbons twice all the time I taught.

DH: Oh. [laughing]

HB: Another thing that just because the church used to send around what they would call your gift basket and somebody would put something in the basket, why money they got like. Well, if there was something in the basket you want, you can take it out, but you must put in equal or more so for what you took out and then your money donation. And I had one family down here that always asked, came up and asked Mrs. Berry to put in pineapple because their father would let them have a can of pineapple. So, every so often, at a school party, I would have pineapple. Can you think of that being a treat?

DH: No.

HB: No, no, you don't but in that day, this pineapple was a treat and when we, the [unintelligible] that I

had Brush Creek, I talked the school board into financing canned soup we would warm and the children brought their own service and all, you know, and I bought crackers or chips or whatever I thought we'd have that day and so we would have a hot bowl of soup every noon. Well, that was just marvelous and at that time, we didn't have such interesting soup as alphabet, you know, but they would pick out, oh, I've got a piece of chicken today. They analyzed their soup and it was such a treat because it was, not that they didn't have soup at home, but they never have had it at school.

DH: Sure.

HB: And one would say, can we have more than two crackers? Every day that little boy asked me. May I have more than two crackers? So, I used to say, you eat what you can. Don't waste, but you eat what you can so that you can come.

DH: You had one of the very first hot lunch programs, didn't you?

HB: I think perhaps the first one, as far as I know, and I got that idea from having, had my teachers training in Kersey. See, the county is surprising, even in that early day, up there in Kersey. I think their problem was that so many of the settlers in around there at that time were Russian people and borscht was what they lived on. Soup, you know. And that was about it. They never had clotheslines, the Russian women would wash their clothes and they'd just be sparkling clean but they had to put them all on barbed wire fences, something like that, or hang them over a tree branch. Well, by the time the wind would blow up there, that dusty, well, how can you go. It was all potato country. Why, that was just, their clothes, they'd never get the dust out. In fact, you could tell, when the Russians would come into the theater, because you could smell the dust. Now, not that they weren't clean, but their lifestyle was so lowdown on the ladder and so I got that idea from up there.

The first year I taught in the valley, one of the board members was rather miserly, oh, no, no, what was the matter with me? He thought they hired an insane teacher. Well, I thought so too, but I didn't tell him I thought so. So, the next year, early in the year, I asked for it. We were having trouble with the well. He came up and showed me how you pumped out that well, so we would get decent water and the children wouldn't have to carry it and he pumped and pumped until he was just worn out, and perspiration run out. He threw bucket and water together the last couple of times he pumped all the way across the county lane over here.

DH: Oh, dear.

HB: And then he turned to the other board members that have this well. The thrashing man had a pump, see, that he worked with his thrashing machine. He said you get this well pumped out within this next week. They started pulling them down through the yard and then he turned around and he yelled back, and get her that soup!

End of recording.