

West Custer County Library District Local History Collection
Oral History Collection

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Hattie Burroughs

May 2, 1972

Interviewed by unidentified interviewer

UI: May 2, 1972. Present were Mrs. Burroughs, Mrs. Reed Morris and Mrs. Lowell Smith.

UI: In New York, now, I can't pronounce that name but you can find it in that part where it tells about their, where, that town where they lived.

MB: I don't know how much he got for him or nothing. He sold him, or bound him out to a party by the name of Russell. Now that is Dad Burroughs who was, whose mother bound him out to a family named Russell when he was a child of about five. And when he was, he stayed with them, they was supposed to give him some education and at least a pair of pants. When he was, he couldn't stand it no longer so when he was 14, they was a big ship come in on the lake so, but New York, and he run away and got on that ship. He scrubbed deck and everything else to keep from telling where he was from and he got into Duluth up there where the ship unloaded. He stayed there and chopped wood and trees and everything else till he was 16. When he was 16, there was a wagon train a making out to come West and he came with them.

UI: From Duluth, Minnesota.

MB: From Duluth, Minnesota. They come to Denver and then to Leadville. So then, they had the gold mines up there, six gold mines, and Dad Burroughs furnished the mead and flour, I think that's what he's got that called, the mead and the flour for one sixth of the gold that they got from the gold mines and then their placer mines.

UI: He was about, by this time, what age? Would you say 17 or 18?

MB: This was about 1860 I think [unintelligible]

UI: Oh, I see.

MB: And so, one winter he said [unintelligible] and camp 63 for the group up there. We can go back to Mother Burroughs. She was from Wisconsin. I can't remember the town now and her father was a saw mill man. He had this saw mill and he had a big lot of lumber sawed up so he thought he would take this load up to saw mill to bring West and then he would take the lumber down to St. Louis or whatever the junction was there and sell the lumber for enough money to come west. But he couldn't find a buyer that had the money that he wanted for the lumber, so he finally found a fellow that had 200 head of cattle and traded the lumber for the cows and they stayed that winter in St. Louis or Kansas City, someplace along there.

Then the next spring, why, the wagon train was making up to come west and they had two wagons or three and a little mule and a horse and then all this bunch of cattle. It was four youngsters, Mother

1 Burroughs, Mrs.

Burroughs and Mrs. Frazier, that would be Mrs. Rebecca Frazier, and the two boys, Russell and Flad, were the two Bruce boys, and all these was Bruces.

UI: And Mother Bruce that you're referring to was Sarah Bruce.

MB: Uh huh. Mother Bruce, and then she, two of them would herd, drive the cattle and then two of them herded the cattle at night when they had to. So, they'd bed them down, you know, with the wagon train. They had the one wagon, so all the little calves that was born at night or baby, they grabbed them up and threw them in that wagon hauled them because they wasn't big enough to be chased on the route. Aunt Jere Jones used to say she rode in the back of the wagon with the little calves.

They went, I don't know, they didn't come down past here, they went up through Colorado Springs and up the Ute trail up to, that Ute trail, that's what it is. It goes up from Colorado Springs up to Leadville and all up that way. So, they had their well, the road was going up that way then. They had their cattle and their home; you might say established there. The girls, they got a sack of flour and the girls made pies and they did thins like that and sold to the tourist train that was coming by. Paid \$20 a sack for the flour and finally, the railroad went through here. They changed the road so that they didn't come past their house anymore and there they was, stuck with that sack of flour.

Well, then, after Mother Burroughs went to work at the boarding house, up at, and Dad Bruce and the rest of them come down here and settled down here on what we know as the City Ranch where Dolly owns. Then, Dad Burroughs met Grandma Burroughs up there in Leadville and she was working there and so, then they got married and went to Denver on horseback on their honeymoon. Had to get their gold dust in currency. They took \$2000 from the gold dust and traded it or sold it or however they had to do, for money that they could use, and that was in 1863. So, Mother Burroughs, Mother Bruce, they was a living' down here and so of course, here's where they camped.

Then, that was the story of how Grandpa Burrough and Miss Sarah L. Bruce were married at Sterling, Park County, Colorado Territory. I'm reading now from the document that was signed by the minister who married them on the 16th of October in 1863.

About the first thing that Dad Burroughs did was to get food. That's right through down here, the Denver one. That's the first on the river and the first on the Hardscrabble Creek. Then he-I have a picture in here where they lived during the time they were back and forth, when they had a couple of little kids. Then they come down here, taking up the homestead, what we call the Lively place. It's the place right down here. Grandma Bruce then lived in what we'd call a dugout or a cellar or bank, bank house. And the old Indians used to come up there, Dad Burroughs wasn't home and she wasn't. He was always going to Leadville with a bunch of prey. And they'd come and they'd circle round, round the hill, yelling, Mr. Burroughs! Mr. Burroughs! Mr. Burroughs! And she would take them earthen crocks like that full of milk and a pan of biscuits, set it out on the doorstep and shut the door right quick and the Indians would come and get that milk and bread and they'd just loved and eat it just pretty near like a bunch of pigs.

One day, Mother Burroughs' sister, they was living in Florence, that was the shoe furnisher and they used to come out here with a covered wagon and then they'd just stay overnight and sleep in the wagon. The Indians come up there. They begin taking the tune? Cups and the knives and things and said, she, Mrs. Bruce, Burroughs, ah! Mrs. Frazier, she got a knife and went like she's going to give them so they dropped the cups and just laughed and had such a big time! Heap big squaw! Heap big, strong squaw! (laughing) Heap big squaw!

2 Burroughs, Mrs.

UI: This Mrs. Frazier, you say, was Grandma Burroughs' sister and she married who? Which Frazier? Do you recall?

MB: Jesse? Oh my! In 1874, Dad Burroughs bought this, what we call, McClure land. It's a piece across the creek here and here is the proof of it. This United States Land Office, that was Major McClure and he bought it from McClure for \$500 and a team of mules.

UI: How many acres?

MB: 160. [unintelligible] You must say all the things (laughing)

UI: This is a very interesting document. It's from the recorder of the General Land Office and it's dated 15th of August in 1876, signed by President Grant and is for the property you just described that your grandpa Burroughs bought from John McClure. I suppose this is an original homestead. Is that a part of this property that you now live on?

MB: It's the piece across the creek here. We have 160 here and 160 there, 80 up there. At that time, Florence had brickyards down there where the kilns, what do you call them, where they burned bricks, made them and burned them. So, Dad Burroughs hired a bunch of those guys to come out right down here. They built a kiln, burned, built and made these bricks for a roof. There were all these buildings. You'd have to haul them out from Florence, took a hundred years. We've got a many of them.

UI: About what year do you think these buildings were put up?

MB: Well, this one was finished in 1888. Then, the barn the next year, and then this little house out here was three or four years after because it had a lot of [unintelligible]

UI: Where did they get the soil?

MB: From right here on the hillside. We've had a lot of buildings, an outfit from Denver that [unintelligible] makes bricks up there, has been down here and trying to locate it, but so far, they haven't, or don't know what they, or don't know what they made them out of, how they made them. Now, Bill Esmyers' dad used to make bricks. [unintelligible] Did you ever see a brick kiln? Brick far in the middle of it? Ron-

UI: So, now we have Grandpa and Grandma Burroughs on this place with their new home built.

MB: On the place right next down here.

UI: But their new home was built and their family was coming along and how was he making a living?

MB: Well, they raised horses here mostly, fancy horses. After dad Bruce, Grandpa Bruce was killed, he took over that, hauling cows and then he wasn't a saw mill man, so he sold the saw mill. But his interests were still in the mines in Leadville.

UI: He was not primarily a farmer then?

3 Burroughs, Mrs.

MB: No, no, he raised horses here for a good many years and then-

UI: And here's another story but this reference that you made to Grandpa Bruce being killed at the saw mill, was the story that you'll tell us another time about the Espinosa killing, isn't that correct, isn't that correct?

MB: About the Espinosa's killing him?

[unintelligible]

UI: Mm hmm. [unintelligible]

MB: Well, after they, you see, the railroad was going through here and all these coal mines were being, starting to be operated. So, they had to have poles or track or-

UI: Ties!

MB: Ties! That's what I want to say. I don't think he was making any lumber for houses at that time. They did mostly ties and because he just was short of anyone to haul, there was no people here to haul logs and [unintelligible] but while they still had all them cows, one winter, they made 100 pounds of butter or more, put it in a barrel and put it back under, that was a water wheel thing that was running-

UI: At the saw mill you mean?

MB: Uh huh. Had a ditch coming out of the Hardscrabble up here and it made a, what they call an overshot and that turned the wheel and that turned the saw. I've been up there when the ditch was still there.

UI: Just, can you locate this area? How near to the junction of the two Hardscrabbles was the saw mill?

MB: Well, one comes down this way from George Billington's and the other one, I could show you where, but I don't know whether I could tell you or not.

UI: Is that the area that I've heard called Bruner Eel?

MB: Yeah.

UI: There's a trailer right down over the edge of the road there, sitting there now, and you can just go right on over to the crick that you just thought where it's at.

MB: [unintelligible] water out of the what, comes from down here-

UI: No, it's Hardscrabble.

MB: And then, they run it here so that they could make it turn the water and it's built over into the two Hardscrabbles there. But he was, just stuck on, up on the left there, where that trailer house used to be several years on, it was still out there. There's still one that's about where he was when they killed him. Enough there, just letting his horse feed, that's all I know. No Indians or anything around that I ever heard of.

Now Dad Burroughs was gunning plain with Kit Carson.

UI: Well, now, going back before you leave this, was there anyone else working there at the saw mill?

MB: There was nobody there that day at all but only him. See, he had two sons. We didn't come, all my boys were stepped there did fine. See what was the matter with Donny. I don't know whether they was on [unintelligible] I just don't know.

UI: What gave them to feel that it was Espinosa's that had killed him?

MB: Well, you see, they killed all these other people around here. The second man that was killed was this man over here at Dead Man Canyon.

UI: Oh.

MB: And then from there they went to up around Leadville. They killed 25 or 30. There's quite a piece there if you want to read it. This [unintelligible] and then-

UI: Then there actually was no witness to this killing? It was simply assumed that the Espinosa's killed Grandpa Bruce.

MB: There was nobody else there.

UI: I believe you told me that the Bruce's, that Grandpa Bruce was a member of the first white family that lived in the Hardscrabble, is that correct?

MB: Yeah. He and his family moved down here and they were the first white family that was there from this part of the country. Then, I guess he was the first white person that was ever killed around here.

UI: Was the Hardscrabble Trading Post completely gone by the time the Bruce's and the Burroughs' came in the settlement?

[unintelligible]

MB: They came with the people that was building the railroad through here. That's how they got down here was the railroad and then for ties and lumber and this happened [unintelligible] saw mill until someone come into the mill. That's how he come down here.

[unintelligible] Taos, New Mexico, came this way cross instead of down around the river, came this way and these Mexicans that finally came up here and were catching all these beavers, he was taking them back to, I mean, Kit Carson was buying them or taking them back to Taos to sell them.

UI: The Mexicans?

MB: If you'll hand me that paper that had the-

UI: How did the, do you know anything about how the Hardscrabble community, that early little settlement, how it came about?

MB: Well, didn't, what I've read and what I've heard and everything, it was what was left of the Pueblo

5 Burroughs, Mrs.

settlement that was burned down on Christmas Day and killed by the Indians that was, and they came up and settled on the Hardscrabble, what is now known, what we've always known, as the City Ranch. I don't know why they left. I don't know why they left but they left a lot of buildings and things because-

End of recording.