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**Summary of Oral History Interview with Barbara Louise Donley**

July, 1967

Interviewed by Arlie Riggs

Barbara Louise Donley was born in Pueblo, Colorado, on December 9, 1917. In 1918, her family moved to a ranch in Wetmore, Colorado, which her grandfather had purchased from the Blake family. Her parents managed the ranch, and Barbara later took over its ownership and operations with her husband after they moved there in 1945.

The ranch, originally 2,000 acres, expanded to over 3,000 acres under her father's ownership. It primarily functioned as grazing land, with a small portion used for irrigated crops. Water shortages became a growing issue, as early irrigation rights did not guarantee a steady supply.

Barbara shared her family's history, detailing her paternal grandfather, William Henry Billington, who moved to Colorado in the 1870s and worked as a shipping clerk for Colorado Fuel and Iron. He later bought the ranch as a business venture. Her maternal grandfather, James Sheffield, was a Civil War veteran who settled in Wetmore after traveling west by wagon train.

She described early ranching life, including cattle drives, grain harvesting, and traditional haying techniques. In her youth, hay was cut with horse-drawn mowers and stacked manually, requiring large crews. Over time, mechanization replaced many of these labor-intensive practices.

Barbara also recalled the history of the Blake ranch, which had been established in 1872 and once housed multiple homesteads. She noted that early settlers encountered Native American groups, such as the Arapaho. Despite changes in ranching and irrigation over the years, the land remained in her family, preserving a legacy of hard work and adaptation in the Wet Mountain Valley.

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