

West Custer County Library District Local History Collection
Oral History Collection

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Falkenberg, William "Bill" and Inis

April 1990

Tape 1 of 2

Interviewed by Irene Francis & Ara Weimer

IF: This tape has been made possible through the funding of Colorado Endowment for the Humanities. It is part of an oral history taping series on the Wet Mountain Valley: A Gold Mine of History. The subject of this tape today is Bill and Inis Falkenberg, spelled Falkenberg. Inis is spelled Inis. The interviewers are Irene Francis and Ara Weimer. We are at the home of the Falkenbergs at 205 S. 4th St. in Westcliffe, Colorado. The date is in April of 1990.

INF: -That's where I got my name [unintelligible] I don't know their first name. That was the oldest child of that family and then there was a daughter, Catherine. It would be with a C, the Irish spelling. Her birthday was in August '82. She was married to [unintelligible] Dick, I suppose it was [unintelligible] Caughman, with a C. Caugh. [unintelligible] She was only 17 years old when she was married.

This is what I was going to tell you. She was 14 when the family came into the valley [ca. 1896] and they came up from, would it be Oak, Hector's Creek direction, with those wagons and horses. I suppose they had a lot of buggies because I don't know how many children were in the family. When they came by what is now called the Preminger ranch, out here, uh, the Beckwith Ranch is what it originally was called and they were having hangings at that place that day.

People had come from all over the valley with picnic lunches for this hanging. This body was hanging on this gallows frame when they pulled by, and my grandmother always told about how afraid that it made her that this is where we're going to make our home, you know. She was old enough to realize they were going to live in this area.

IF: Did she ever find out why the man was being hanged?

I

INF: I suppose she did but she never did go ahead and talk about it to us. It just impressed her as a child, you know, well she was 14.

IF: How did they find this area?

INF: Uh, mining people. Almost everyone who came in, except people who were homesteading and going to ranch, came in because of mining. In fact, that's the way both of my parents, grandparents, came here. My grandmother was, my grandfather, I never did know him. He died long before I was born. They were the first people who were married in this Catholic church that we have here now. It was-

IF: Was it where it is now?

INF: No, it was in Silver Cliff and they had just finished building it. In fact, they had not, it wasn't built. She said that there was sawdust and shavings and stuff in the church when they were married. Of course, I

think they were, more people didn't have big weddings. I suppose not anyone in there is, I guess, but [unintelligible]. Yes.

IF: Did they mine in Rosita?

INF: No. My, the Burns family, uh, my grandfather, mined at the Geyser mine. In fact, that's how this boy was killed. My grandmother had packed his lunch, you know, in these lunch buckets that they had to [unintelligible] real hot. They put hot water in the bottom of the pan, double bucket of some sort and she fixed him a hot lunch. Then, she put this, they had a carrier of some sort on this, with this grill, and she put this lunch bucket in this carrier. This boy took it up to-my grandparents lived fairly close. They lived in Silver Cliff and it wasn't very far. She fixed his lunch and sent this little Eddie up with, to the mine with his dad's lunch. The girl stepped in some hot cinders where they had been working with ore and it burned this girl and the girl [unintelligible] the little boy off and the boy got caught in this [unintelligible] thing some way and it drug him to death through these hot cinders.

IF: Oh no.

INF: [unintelligible] where I left off with that family.

IF: Tell about the man that-

INF: [unintelligible] acting as the registrar of vital statistics. He did it just because he realized the value it was to people to have deaths and births recorded. He published the Tribune. It's down in what we always called the bank building. Lots of people call it the bank building and this real estate group have it now. He published the Tribune and he had this check cashing exchange because we didn't have a bank here and the merchants needed a bank. The merchants would pay, what, probably \$30 a year.

WF: Well, part of the time, they paid so much check.

INF: They would take their checks to him. People would pay [unintelligible] to buy something and then, they would deposit these checks in a bank, the First National Bank in Canon, it was. They were greatly [unintelligible] a lot more than a lot of banks would do because it was just too small an account.

IF: Mm hmm.

INF: And he would charge people. Anyone who belonged to the association, they got, they didn't have to pay first. [unintelligible] Kind of merchant's association. Ray did that, there was a charge. I don't remember what it was, 10 cents a check about, very, very small compared to really now and like I said on these birth certificates and death certificates. A certified copy, if they had to have it, I I don't think he got a dollar. I'm quite sure he didn't and he'd have to go make a copy, take it to the courthouse and have it certified and attested before the county clerk or before a notary.

IF: You're talking about making a copy by hand?

INF: No, it was typewritten.

IF: Typewritten? I mean, we're not talking about running it through a copy machine?

INF: No! It was before copying machines. What did they have? They had mimeographs, something like that. That's the way copying was done.

IF: Right.

INF: But Ray- Ray just did not get anything in the Tribune office to-

IF: Was he a [unintelligible] or did he die?

INF: He died.

IF: Uh huh.

INF: He was married in his earlier life to this Laura Boss, Laura Canute [unintelligible] one of her sisters was Ray's first wife and there was a great deal of difference in their ages. I don't remember how much, but there was quite a difference in their ages and they had, not a large family, but they had four children.

IF: Mm hmm.

INF: And they separated. I suppose age had a lot, difference in their ages. Ray had, gosh, he, several of the kids lived with him for a long time and he hired a housekeeper. Then, in later life, he married Lucy Lloyd and she worked at the post office.

IF: Lucy, she had a soda shop or something?

INF & WF: Ice cream parlor.

INF: Near Linder's hardware store.

WF: Uh, two doors to the east.

IF: Mm hmm.

INF: Was she ever back there-

WF: Pardon?

INF: Seemed like she was kind of there in the back room at Sue's building, Grandma's House, for a long time.

WF: For a while, she had-

INF: A little ice cream parlor in there.

WF: Yes, and knickknacks. She had-

INF: Variety shop-

WF: Variety shop.

INF: Well, like a library.

WF: The library-

INF: Where the Community Building is, she had a variety shop.

WF: She [unintelligible] store.

End of recording.