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**Summary of Oral History Interview with Helen Kattnig**

Interviewed by Irene Francis

Helen Kattnig was born in 1901 in Rosita, Colorado, to Clara Hamill Hobby and John Hobby. Her grandparents arrived in the area in the early 1880s, coming from Missouri and Wisconsin in covered wagons. Helen's father and grandfather were miners, working in the Virginia and Wisconsin mines, while also maintaining a small cattle ranch.

Helen attended school in Rosita and Junkins Park. She recalled that during her parents' time, Rosita had a thriving population with a bank, multiple stores, saloons, and a roller-skating rink. However, a large fire destroyed much of the town, and its population dwindled over the years. Many residents worked in mining, farming, and ranching. Helen described homesteaders raising cattle, potatoes, and grain, relying on root cellars to store food through harsh winters.

In 1921, Helen and her family were caught in the Pueblo flood while delivering potatoes to market. They lost two wagonloads of crops and four horses, witnessing widespread devastation. She also shared memories of mining disasters, including the Bassick Mine explosion, where her father was the last person to escape before the boiler blew up.

Helen's recollections of Rosita's transformation included the relocation of churches and the gradual disappearance of businesses. She described life before modern conveniences, when travel to Pueblo or Cañon City took two days by wagon. She also remembered early medicine, where midwives handled births, and castor oil and turpentine were common remedies.

Her interview provides a vivid account of early life in Custer County, detailing mining, ranching, homesteading, and the resilience of settlers in the Wet Mountain Valley.

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