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*Oral History Collection*

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Kattnig, Helen

Interviewed by Irene Francis

IF: We're making a tape of Helen Kattnig and she's going to tell us about her life in the Rosita area. When were you born Helen?

HK: 1901.

IF: And were you born in Rosita?

HK: Born in Rosita, yes. I went to school in Rosita and Junkins Park, too, but then I went to school most of my life in Rosita.

IF: And now, tell us your mother's name and maybe your mother's maiden name and your father.

HK: Well, my mother's name was Clara Hamill Hobby and my father's name was John Hobby.

IF: And did they come out here?

HK: They came with their parents. My mother's people came in 1880 and my dad's people came in '81.

IF: Where did they come from?

HK: Well, my dad's folks came from Missouri and my mother's folks came from Wisconsin.

IF: Did they come in covered wagons?

HK: My father's people did, yes, came in covered wagons across the plains from, there was a trainload of them came through there.

IF: And were they part of that colony that-

HK: Oh no.

IF: Bought ranch land.

HK: No, they come to mine.

IF: Oh, to mine!

HK: Yeah, my dad and grandfather both were miners.

IF: And what mine did they work?

HK: Well, my mother's father worked the, leased the Virginia mine and the Wisconsin mine, and then, my dad was a miner himself. He didn't own a mine. He worked in the mines all his life until he worked part time at the ranch. That was all.

IF: And then did he go into ranching then, or?

HK: No, he did both.

IF: Oh, he raised cattle?

HK: Yeah, cattle, not too much, but then mostly, working in the mines and back and forth to the ranch.

IF: And you were born in the town of Rosita?

HK: Yes, I was.

IF: And you went to school there?

HK: Yes, uh huh.

IF: How many children were in the school when you went?

HK: Oh, it varied from, I expect, now in my day, not too many, but my folks, there was, I expect, a couple of hundred kids went to school at that time, when my folks were going to school in Rosita.

IF: Oh, I see. How many people were living in Rosita at that time?

HK: When my folks was there?

IF: Mm hmm.

HK: I couldn't tell you. It was over the thousands anyhow. It was a big town, pretty good town. They had a bank and three lodge halls and three or four saloons and two grocery stores that I know of, and then, they had what they called a skating rink that that's where the young people went for entertainment.

IF: Was it an inside skating rink?

HK: Yes.

IF: Oh, roller skating rink.

HK: Yes, uh huh. Their dances and all their entertainment they held there. That was before my time. Then Rosita had that big fire, I can't recall the year that that fire was, but that took most of the town and from then on, it was, oh, I expect, two or three hundred people lived there as long, throughout my life until later years and then nobody was there.

IF: Was that cheese factory there when you were there?

HK: No, that was before my day too. Also, the brewery was before my day. I know where they were at but-

IF: Yeah, there's still some-

UI: Where was the brewery at? I didn't know there was a brewery there.

HK: Well, the brewery, you know where Laura Norton lives?

UI: Yeah.

HK: Well, you know where that house is just above Laura Norton's there and the corrals and things?

UI: Yeah.

HK: It's right in there.

UI: Oh.

HK: There was some bricks, stone wall still in there the last time I was there.

UI: There's still some foundations and stuff. That's part of the brewery.

HK: Yeah, that's part of the brewery. And the cheese factory, I can't recall right now.

IF: It was down the road further sitting back, I think.

UI: Someone told us there's some rock walls that are hand rock walls, you know, how they hand built them straight, no cement.

HK: That was the smelter.

UI: Was that a smelter down there?

HK: That was a smelter down there.

UI: Oh.

HK: Between there and the cemetery.

UI: Ok, see we hear different things and we don't-

HK: That was the smelter. A lot of these people come in here telling you a lot of tales that ain't true.

UI: That's why we want-

IF: That's why we want to come to somebody who was there, you know. The schoolhouse, was that also doubled, did they use the schoolhouse a lot like as a church-

HK: Oh no, no. We had churches.

IF: You had churches.

HK: At this little church over here, the Episcopal Church, was moved from Rosita.

IF: I see. The whole building was moved.

HK: No, just the church.

IF: I mean, the church building was moved from Rosita.

HK: Down here.

IF: I see.

HK: It was moved to Silver Cliff first. Then they moved it on down to here and they also, a memorial window of the men that came with my grandfather on dad's side by the name of Townsends in memory of him on the window over here. It's still on this window.

UI: Yeah, somebody told me that they'd moved part of the Methodist church was from Rosita too.

HK: Yes, it was rebuilt from Rosita, and so was the Baptist church.

UI: Is that right?

HK: Yeah, that originally was the Rosita schoolhouse. They moved up to south of town here and used it for a church for a while and then, they decided to move to town. Of course, it ain't nothing like it was there. See, that was a two-story schoolhouse.

IF: Oh.

UI: I saw a picture of the Rosita schoolhouse once. It was like two story, looked like a pretty good size schoolhouse.

HK: Oh, yes, it was four rooms.

UI: But the fire didn't get that, huh?

HK: No, it didn't get that, no.

IF: How did the fire start, do they know?

HK: I have no idea. I don't know, it was never told to me how it started.

IF: What year was that that it burned, do you know?

HK: I can't recall.

IF: You don't know that either.

HK: No.

IF: Tell us something about the ranching out there. Was it always been strictly cattle, or did they raise things like potatoes or-

HK: It was homesteaders was what it was, People homesteaded the land out in there. They raised grain and potatoes and all kinds of vegetables, different things and cattle, horses and all.

IF: Was the climate wetter than it is now?

HK: Oh, yes, much wetter, yeah. We had more severe weather than we've got right now.

IF: So, did, when you, like the food, did most of the people just raise their own food or was there anything brought in?

HK: Well, sure, there was stuff brought in but they did raise potatoes and such as they could here but there was other things they had to bring in like, they freighted, one of my grandparents on dad's side run a freight line from Canon City to Rosita and hauled things in and out.

UI: Did they have root cellars and things like that where they stored potatoes and carrots and things like that?

HK: Oh, yes, uh huh, canned a lot of food and things like that what was available.

IF: Did people very often go down to like Pueblo or Canon or was that a once-a-year type thing? How long did it take in those days to get there?

HK: About two days. One day down and one back, unless they had lots to do in the day down there.

UI: It was about a one day trip each way.

HK: Each way, that's right.

IF: Someone was telling me that you got, I think, Van Kelly was telling me that you got caught in a flood down in Pueblo once?

HK: It was Pueblo, yes. That was in 1921, that big flood in Pueblo. We lost two big loads of potatoes and-

IF: You went down there to take, sell your potatoes?

HK: Sell the potatoes, uh huh, yeah, and then we lost two loads of potatoes, and we lost four head of horses in the flood.

UI: You got caught in the water.

HK: In the water, uh huh.

IF: Was it just all of a sudden it swept through the town?

HK: Yes, it was. We were, went down in, put our horses in a livery barn and left our wagons there too and we got our rooms and we was going to stay all night and we decided to go to the show and while we were in the show, of course, there was a high water warning before that, but nothing like it happened at the time. Then, after the flood was so bad, they put all the lights out and we stood on what they called Tenderfoot Hill half of the night. It was four days before we got any connection back to home. They wouldn't let anybody in or out.

UI: Did they know what caused the flood? Was it a big rain storm up here or-

HK: It was the reservoir broke up.

UI: Oh.

HK: Up at Victor, Colorado.

UI: Oh, ok.

HK: But it was a big storm all the way around and the two rivers come together there.

IF: Were there people that were killed in that flood?

HK: Oh, many, many and a lot of them they'll never find cause you see, they were trapped and they wouldn't leave when they had warning, a lot of them.

IF: Maybe you'll tell us some things about the mine.

HK: Virginia mine was very rich mine in its day. In fact, my grandfather made quite a stake there in the Virginia mine, and then he worked the Pocahontas mine too, and that was a rich mine. The Maverick was a pretty rich mine for silver and a little bit of gold but not enough to call it a gold mine.

UI: Where's that Virginia mine at now, can you see it?

HK: Yeah, you can see where the Virginia mine is. You know when you're going through Rosita?

UI: Mm hmm.

HK: Through out there. I think you saw the name of Shy lives up on the hill.

UI: Yeah, yeah.

HK: That's the Virginia mine, that big hill right there.

UI: Ok.

HK: The next big dump on over is the Humboldt mine.

UI: Ok, is that the one where you can see the hole in the side of the hill? It looks like the mining thing-

HK: No, no. That's the Victoria, going out of Rosita. That's the Victoria, that's a rich mine too. Of course, it's overhead and everything. At that time, the mines all shut down, why was water and finances to go on with it you know.

UI: I've heard a lot, some of those, not a lot, but some of the mines were flooded out because they just couldn't pump the water out.

HK: Well, that's right. Some of them, the shafts were. The tunnels never were.

UI: But it was mainly silver they got out of those mines.

HK: Mainly silver, uh huh. Yeah.

UI: Did your dad have any problems with cave ins or anything when he was working?

HK: No, not in that mine, no. No cave ins only, of course it probably doesn't have anything to do with this but when the Bassick mine in Querida, my dad was the last one out of that mine when the boiler blew up. Yeah, it was that gold mine.

UI: I see. I'd never even heard of that. Do you hear of a boiler blowing up?

HK: Bassick mine.

UI: Tell us about that.

HK: Well, it was just a chimney of rich gold and they employed a lot of men you know at that time. I don't know, that must have been oh, in the early 1900s when that happened and then they, of course, that was one mine was flooded out. They couldn't compete with the water to get it out but it was a good mine and it traces of a tift over there.

IF: How did they have to get the water out? Did they have to pump it out?

HK: They bailed it out with buckets.

IF: Bailed it out!

HK: They had what they called bailer buckets and they'd fill them, the pressure would hold it down and then lift it up and spill the water out.

IF: And then, how did the boiler blow up? Did they-

HK: Well, that's what they fired the engine to pull the men above the shafts with, you see, they had a

cage that pulled them up out of the shaft and when the boiler blowed up, why then, they had to climb the ladders up.

UI: How deep was that mine, do you know?

HK: Well, 11 miles drift in there and how deep it was, it's a deep mine. I can't tell you how deep but they claim they's 11 miles of drifts out of tunnels from one area to the other.

UI: 11 miles! All dug by hand! Blast and pulled out-

HK: Pick and shovel.

UI: Pick and shovel.

IF: When the boiler blew, were the men killed?

HK: No, there was no one killed because the boiler was down a separate connection from the shaft. See, it was quite a ways from the shaft. It just had no steam. They couldn't do nothing with it.

UI: Was there a lot of, did you see a lot of deer and elk and things around that time when you were-

HK: Deer but not any elk, no.

UI: Not any elk.

HK: The elk didn't come in to this area here. I think east of here and up near our place there was first elk that was planted in here and that must have been in about 1918 or 20.

UI: I see. So, they were planted, transplanted in here?

HK: Yeah, they were transplanted?

UI: They weren't native here.

HK: No, they weren't native here. Deer were.

UI: Deer were.

HK: Oh, yes. Deer was. Another thing I think is wrong. A lot of these people don't understand the hills around Rosita and now where you live, that man that lives up on top of that hill, that's saddleback.

UI: That's called saddleback.

HK: Yeah, they've got another name for it now though.

UI: He has a name for it but I noticed, a little bit higher and then it sort of saddles down to his.

HK: That's saddleback. Then, the one in Rosita back to Filma's house is Pringle Hill.



UI: Ok.

HK: That was named after one of the old, old settlers in there and then, the one, well, north of Filma's going up what we used to call Hungry Cuss, that's Robison mine, and then, the one in front of that one, is Lucille.

IF: Oh, they've all got names! Well, what's the one in front of Hamilton's where he's got the big house. That's the one we have that we call Holy Hill now. You know, where the split rocks are.

HK: You mean, split rocks.

UI: Yeah, the split rocks, we're a little bit south and east of there.

HK: I can't recall any name for that hill.

IF: oh, ok, well, we gave it a name. it's called Holy Hill now. (laughing)

UI: We have crosses on the top.

HK: Oh, I see.

UI: I just wondered if they ever had a name too. I call that one big one down there along the creek down there Elephant Rock because one great, big solid piece of stone.

HK: Oh, that's Split Rocks.

UI: Split Rocks, yeah. There's still water runs down that stream along that county road there you know, runs up towards the cemetery. It still runs year-round down there.

HK: Maverick Ditch.

UI: Yeah, is that what it's called? Maverick Ditch.

IF: Was that full of water at one time?

HK: Springs is all, course if floods go down through that, that's the big drainage for the whole town in there.

IF: People are building houses in it now.

HK: I know (laughing)

UI: Some of them almost near a drain. Was Rosita cemetery there when you were growing up?

HK: Oh yes, my parents, my grandparents are buried there and I think one of them died in 1881 and another in '82. They didn't live long after they come through here because, well, it's my grandad and my great grandad that come here. They didn't live too long after they come here. One got pneumonia and I

don't remember what happened to the other one, but pneumonia in them days was, couldn't compete with that.

IF: We noticed in the cemetery there's one plot where there's four little kids you know, looks like they died about the same time.

HK: Epidemic of the scarlet fever I believe.

UI: That's take off from strep.

HK: My folks are all buried in the cemetery there. They were Hobby's I guess you've seen that.

UI: We know them.

HK: From Rosita, from Westcliffe to Rosita, was a horse and buggy.

IF: So, they made house calls.

HK: Oh yes, they never failed, or else, they got there.

UI: What were some of the names of the doctors, do you remember?

HK: Dr. Sperry was one of them. Dr. Baldwin was another one and let's see, Dr. Long was another one. He's buried in Rosita and Dr. Sperry's buried in Rosita.

UI: Was it a couple hour trip out there by buggy?

HK: It all depends on the weather.

UI: The weather, yes. You were saying that there's not too many left that were born in Rosita. You're about the only one-

HK: I'm the only one that I know of.

UI: That was actually born in Rosita.

HK: Yeah, there's others that lived on the farms around Rosita but they weren't born in Rosita.

UI: Yeah, and we've noticed too that even now neighbors for the most part are pretty friendly and helpful and you almost have to be out there.

HK: There's a couple what you call midwives to take care of all of the sick kids and everything till the doctor got then, and helped out all around there.

IF: Is that who delivered babies mostly was the midwives?

HK: Yes.

IF: And they're going back to that, kind of, today again here, going back to having babies in the homes.

HK: That's right.

IF: So, it wasn't a bad way to do it.

HK: No, it wasn't. That's right.

IF: What kinds of medicines and things did they use back then?

HK: Castor oil and turpentine, old standbys, I wouldn't think. Oh, they had different kinds of medicines but little kids always got castor oil if they got sick.

IF: Turpentine! What, straight turpentine, how do you take that?

HK: Oh, they'd put it on your chest.

IF: Put it on your chest! Ok.

HK: No, they wouldn't take it.

UI: No, that'd kill ya.

HK: They would mix it with tallow or something, make a poultice and put them on that way.

IF: And what were some of the, you remember some of the pastors and things from the churches?

HK: No, I don't. In my time, they didn't have any pastors or ministers. They were what they called evangelists that come and stay weeks at a time and just rotate around.

IF: Different houses.

HK: Yeah, in different houses. Some they held in some of the little churches if they had congregations and stayed long enough, but other than that, why, it was just from house to house and you had to provide food and beds for them and everything.

IF: How about the teachers, were they single people or, mostly, married, did they do something else?

HK: There were married ones, but most of them were single people, uh huh. They boarded in the town.

IF: Stayed in the homes.

HK: Yeah, we had several that boarded with our family.

IF: Oh. You were taught by them?

HK: In the school, yes, we was taught by them in the school.

IF: I wonder how the kids today would like teachers staying in their house.

HK: They wouldn't like it, I don't think.

UI: No, I don't think so.

IF: What grade did they have, kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> or?

HK: No, it was 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

IF: 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

HK: To 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

IF: The child stayed at home and learned from momma and then they'd go to kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup>.

HK: Through 8<sup>th</sup>, and very few went on to high school from then. It was too far away and too expensive. People couldn't take it.

UI: Where'd they have to go to high school?

HK: Canon City.

UI: Canon City.

HK: And another thing, I was neighbors to Karl Wulstein and I knew him very well that brought the colony to the valley here.

IF: Tell us about that. How did he bring, how did he come to bringing the people-

HK: I can't tell you the story about that because I'm not, he never talked, of course he was, well, you might say, thrown out of the colonists when he lived up there in Rosita and they went on their own from then on and I don't really know how they brought them. But he did bring them in here and I guess he spent their money and let them down and they went on to their own way. But he was a pretty good neighbor and a good friend of mine.

IF: Now, where did he live?

HK: Well, do you know where Gwen Hobby lives?

IF: Yes.

HK: Well, his house, he lived right there, had a two-story house there. It's burned down now.

IF: Yeah, that was the one that Gwen Hobby lived in for a while. Now, where did you live in Rosita? Several places, huh?

HK: Several places, yes. Let's see, four houses in Rosita at different times and we'd move from, it would

depend on if it was rented, why, we'd take one that was wasn't, then we'd move to town. But later years, we kept one house completely furnished and then all we had to do was back and forth to the house from the ranch. It was only-

IF: Now, this is the ranch in Junkins Park you're talking about?

HK: Five miles east of Rosita.

UI: Is that where Bud Hobby lives now? In that area?

HK: Yeah, he lives in Junkins Park.

IF: Is that the ranch your dad, your dad's ranch that he had

HK: No, the ranch that my dad homesteaded is on the west end of Junkins Park coming this way. You ever been that way? The first house down in, right down in the creek bed is where ours was, we had all those ponds on our places.

IF: And so, he came and homesteaded that?

HK: Oh, my dad homesteaded, yeah. 1909.

IF: Tell us about that. How-

HK: You file through the government and then-

IF: For how much acreage?

HK: Well, he had 160 acres at the beginning and then they had a stock rating in addition to it, he had 640. You file it and you have to live on it I think it was 3-5 years and prove up on it.

IF: With buildings on it that kind of thing.

HK: Make it a home, make your living there, and that was, it was, well, anyway, it was your land after you proved up on it. You could do as you please with it, sell it, do anything.

IF: After three years-

UI: 3-5 years.

HK: My husband I, after we were married, we lived on that land there for 45 years.

IF: Oh! And so, you ran cattle there?

UI: It's pretty cold up there in the winter though, lots of snow.

HK: Oh yes, we had a lot of snow in there.

UI: I know our school bus has to go up there. Sometimes he has a hard time getting in and out of Junkins Park.

HK: Them school busses going to learn a whole lot before they're through if they get a hard winter.

UI: He's gotten stuck up there quite a bit last year. He's getting so he's going to wait for the snow plow before he goes up.

HK: So, there were times when you were just snowed in.

HK: Oh yes.

IF: And that's not so bad.

HK: No, we didn't mind it at all. We had fun, had our stock in where we could feed it and everything, and we had fun up there and entertainment and as long as we could ride horseback from neighbor to neighbor, we had pretty close neighbors up there at that time. Now, it's one or two people on the whole place.

UI: Did you cut your own hay and that type of thing and bail it by hand I suppose?

HK: No, we stacked it.

UI: Stacked it?

HK: Mm hmm, we built it.

IF: Haystacks, like-

UI: You just feed off the haystack.

HK: Oh yeah.

UI: Now they make them big round ones.

HK: Oh yes.

IF: They're going back to the haystacks, I guess.

UI: Sort of. But not quite.

IF: Well, it's really been a pleasure to talk with you, and I'm sure you've told us a lot that some of the younger people over the years will-

HK: Well, I hope it helps some memories back, goes right off the field.

Tom wells and deliberate people had barrels and stuff to hold it in so much a week a well it was they'd hold water there. And they was the two wells, it was pretty good wells in town but there was very few they got water in those good wells.

UI: Is there a place right on the other side of that hill that's called, had, like, arsenic in the water or something, was a poison well, spring?

HK: Oh, that's clear down in poison springs, that's out towards Querida.

UI: Oh yeah, right, in between Rosita and Querida.

HK: Yeah, uh huh.

UI: But someone, I think it was Mr. Sparling, is that his name? He was telling me that they thought maybe the elk could drink water there and then run over and die in Bones Park or someplace like that, but I don't know. I think that was a guess.

HK: I'll tell you what that was. It wasn't exactly poison. It was a weed around it that, the water was not poison. It was a weed around then. Any cattle that eat this weed and drink the water, it would cause them to bloat and die.

UI: So, they thought it was bad water but it was actually bad weeds.

HK: They pumped that water back to the Bassick mine to run the mine with.

UI: Yeah, the Bassick mine is across the road down there.

HK: It's across the hill, across there.

IF: So, the reason you didn't have a lot of wells there was because the water was hard to get. You'd dig a well and you wouldn't hit anything.



HK: That's right, uh huh.

IF: So, that might be a problem with all the building that's going around.

HK: Well, of course, they can go much deeper for water nowadays than they could then. But there was quite a few wells around there different places but this big spring was the main water of the town.

UI: Was that man was mentioned, was it called Brown Spring at one time?

IF: Where was the spring?

HK: I'll tell you where the brewery was.

IF: Yeah.

HK: Well, it was just that basin in there.

UI: Ok.

HK: I think they got it pumped out for stock water or something. I don't know what they done with that there.

UI: I've seen a few pipes down there but I haven't seen-

IF: There doesn't seem to be hardly any water there now.

UI: Probably got covered up, the spring did.

HK: Well, they did develop it into a stock, just run down the pipes. I haven't been down to it since they did that. I think Margaret's family done that.