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Interview with Van Kelly
November 19, 1985
Interviewed by Stan Francis

Van Kelly was interviewed on November 19, 1985, about his experiences living in the Rosita area, his work as a teacher, and the history of the town. Originally from Oklahoma, he and his wife moved to Rosita in 1941 to teach in a one-room schoolhouse, arriving sight unseen through a teaching agency.

Kelly provided insight into Rosita's origins as a mining town. Established in the early 1870s, it was named after the wild roses that grew in the area. The town's peak mining years, from the mid-1870s to the 1890s, saw a boom with businesses such as general stores, hotels, saloons, a brewery, and blacksmith shops. At its height, Rosita had approximately 1,500 residents. However, as silver prices declined and mines became unprofitable, the town dwindled, and many buildings were moved to nearby Silver Cliff.

Kelly recounted stories of early settlers, law enforcement, and conflicts such as the "Pocahontas War," where outlaws attempted to seize control of a productive mine but were driven out by vigilantes. He also described Rosita's first sheriff, Schoolfield, and the role of the local citizen's committee in maintaining order.

Mining played a crucial role in Rosita's development, with prominent mines including the Humboldt, Senator, and Pocahontas mines. Ore was processed in local smelters before being shipped to Pueblo. Later, prospectors searched for rare minerals like perlite, though large-scale mining never resumed.

By the 1940s, Rosita had only a handful of families remaining. Kelly noted how the town began to revive in the late 20th century as people purchased lots for summer homes. He reflected on Rosita's rich history and its transformation from a bustling mining hub to a quiet rural community.

The interview concluded with a recording of Kelly playing the violin, a skill for which he was well known in the local community.

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