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Schultz, August

December, 1966

Interviewed by Richard Reiberg and Russ Farnsworth

IF: This tape is property of Custer County Library. It is part of an oral history taping series.

UI: December 1966 at the Community Building. Present were Dr. Richard Reiburg and Russ Farnsworth of Florence, CO interviewing August Schultz of Westcliffe.

RF: So, you were about 20 when you came out to this area, is that right?

AS: Well, when I came to Canon City, I was 15 years old.

RF: I see.

AS: That was in 1890.

RR: Where did you come from?

AS: Germany.

RR: Oh, you came straight over from Germany.

AS: That's right, all by myself.

RF: Is that right?

AS: That's right.

RF: Well, what did you do when you first got here?

AS: I worked for my uncle in the ? He had two places on Lincoln Park.

RF: Oh, I see.

AS: And he used to live here, and he sold out and he came to Germany. He was my father's brother. He was telling me all about this country here so I took a liking to it and I told him I'd go along with him. But my mother says that time, you can't go until you finish your school here, see? So, I did and I had to wait another year. Then I wrote my uncle a letter to send me a ticket which was paid all the way from Germany clear to Canon City. Yeah.

RR: Do you have any idea what that ticket cost? Do you remember?

AS: That ticket was \$85 at that time.

RF: That would get you to about Kansas City now. (laughing) That's interesting. Then you worked in his orchard down in Lincoln Park?

AS: For five years.

RF: I see.

AS: Then I came up here in 1896, I came up here, see? And I've been up here in the valley ever since. I worked on the farm for my cousins for five years and then in 1905, we got married. I had rented a farm out here for two years and I didn't like that very much. So, I moved to Westcliffe. That was in 1907.

RR: Now, where was the farm that you farmed on?

AS: Out here in the valley.

RR: Just south of here?

AS: Yeah.

RR: I see.

AS: So, I went to the town here and I worked for Mr. Ray. He had a grocery store here at that time. I worked for him for one year. I guess he went broke or something like that. He couldn't go any further and so then I worked six months for a hardware man by the name of Knuth. I didn't like that either. I worked for \$55 a month back in those days. So, I decided to go in business for myself. I put up the building out here where the soil conservation was up at that building up, which they're changing now for a funeral home.

RR: Oh, I see.

AS: Yeah, right on the street here.

RR: That's pretty nice. First, they make the soil and then they, you know-they bury 'em.

AS: I had a grocery store in there from 1909-1922. Then I quit the grocery business and sold it and went into the dry goods business. I kept that up for, till '44. Times then was that second war was on, you know, and we couldn't get any merchandise. So, I said to my wife, I says, well, I says, I don't think there's any use to keep on going. Let's sell out. We sold all of that. We spent our winters then in California. Both of my children are out there. Stayed there about, oh, sometimes a month, sometimes three months. And we came back here and now I am in the insurance business selling auto insurance and fire insurance.

RR: You're still going full out.

AS: Oh, yes. I've got to because I lost my wife last December 10<sup>th</sup>, almost a year now.

RR: Oh, I see.

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AS: We were married 61 years. That's a long time.

RR: You bet that is.

RF: You bet it's a long time. What was her name?

AS: Elizabeth M.

RR: Ok.

AS: Now, she died on, in Pueblo hospital. She was there only four days in the hospital.

RR: What was her maiden name?

AS: Her name was Erps.

RR: Erps.

AS: ERPS.

RR: Oh, I see. Not Wyatt either. I've seen it around some place.

AS: Yeah.

RR: When you came up here, excuse me, Russ. When you came up here, right before the turn of the century, was mining going pretty strong here then?

AS: Not too much anymore because that was more in the '80s, see.

RF: It was pretty well slowed up by then.

AS: Oh, yeah, yeah. Oh yes, it was a big town here at that time when the mining was going on. They were undecided where to put the capitol. They thought maybe they was going to have it here in Silver Cliff.

RF: I remember reading about that.

AS: But they changed that and so it moved to Denver. They had over 10,000 people here in Silver Cliff at that time. Then the neighboring mines here around at Rosita, Querida and all, they had quit working them when I came here, see? There was nothing here anymore.

RF: They were all closed.

AS: Oh, yes. Silver went down you know that they couldn't make anything.

RF: You said that you, we were talking a while ago, and we were kidding about I'll bet you voted for William Jennings Bryan. Do you remember that campaign, how people felt? Were they really made about it?

AS: I guess they were! (laughing) Sure.

RF: Was the Populist Party still going then?

AS: Oh yeah.

RF: Where did you have your meetings? Did you go to any of the meetings of the Populist Party?

AS: Oh, no. They didn't have much of a meetings in those days here.

RF: That was a little earlier.

AS: That was a little early, till later years here, you know.

RF: Yes, they started in around 1890 here.

AS: Oh yeah.

RR: How long after election day, can you remember this? How long was it after election day was it before you knew that McKinley had been elected?

AS: I don't hardly remember that any more. That's been quite some time ago and I was young, you know, and I didn't really pay much attention to that at those days.

RR: I expect it took several days though, didn't it?

AS: Oh, yes, sure, sure.

RR: That's very interesting.

RF: How long did it take you, saying you would come up from Canon City up to here, how long did it take you to get up here?

AS: One day. Come up on the stage coach.

RF: It was a whole day's travel.

AS: Oh yeah.

RF: Was this up through the Oak Creek grade.

AS: Coming up the Oak Creek. That's right.

RR: Come up here in 40 minutes now.

AS: Oh yeah! Yeah, we drive down to Canon City in an hour.

RR: Sure, right.

AS: But I don't drive on the highways anymore. I'm getting too old. I don't like it. So, I'm planning-

RR: You sell the insurance for the others that are.

AS: Oh yeah, I can do that. I can drive a car around town here, you know, and see the people around here. I have a very good business in the insurance business in both fire and auto. My boys started it here in '38 and in '41, he went to California. I was still running my store then and I took over the insurance from there. I kept it ever since. I've been in it now for I think over 26 years in the insurance business.

RR: Now, another thing we'd like to find out, Mr. Schultz, after your days here, any particular incidents that you remember concerning people that were very interesting or made an impression on you, any people that might have come up here or people who lived here, either one?

AS: When the Colony came in here, that was in 1870. The Colony was formed in Chicago. Fellow by the name of Karl Wulstein. He brought them out here in the valley. Those people out there, they had a hard time when they first came here. They had to get their provisions out of Denver with ox teams, see? Took them six weeks to make the trip!

RR: Is that right?

AS: That's right. The farmers have very little equipment at that time to cut their, harvest their crops here, you know, and all like that. It was quiet. Indians were here at that time, buffalos were running around all over.

RF: What type of Indians? What type of tribe were they?

AS: That I don't know. No.

RF: I would imagine they would probably use this for their winter ground, or summer grounds, I mean?

AS: Sure, sure. Of course, they called this the Wet Mountain Valley. There was lots of water here at that time, which you know, so they called it the Wet Mountain Valley, I guess.

RR: Well, now, when they would go to Denver to get their provisions, with the oxen, which route did they use?

AS: Down here, the Hardscrabble, I guess. Right down that way and through Florence, then on.

RR: I see. They curved the mountains on the eastern border. Were they still doing this when you moved here?

AS: Oh no, no. We had, at that time, when I came here, they, well, the train, the railroad built here in 1901, see. Before that, they had freighters bringing up the stuff from Cotopaxi and Canon City and Florence and all that country there.

RR: Those were large wagons?

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AS: Wagons, oh yes! Fellow by the name of Mr. Beardsley, he run a freight outfit here with four 8 teams, four horses, or eight horses to the team. They were two going down, two coming up. They go halfway. It took them two days to make a trip round there, you know. From Cotopaxi.

RF: How much freight could they carry in one of those wagons?

AS: Oh, they had big wagons. They hauled everything – coal and groceries and all kinds of supplies. Wit scared everything else!

RR: Oh, they had a ? I guess a necessity there.

AS: Sure! Had to have that here, you know.

RF: Good and the bad, didn't they?

AS: Yeah, and in, let's see, that was in 1910 or '11 when they had that big fire across the street there, that took the hardware and the big saloon and a couple of dwelling houses out of there. The whole block burned out.

RF: Is this right on the corner?

AS: Yeah, and it was never rebuilt up. They quit after a while, after all of them. But I remember when the fire was very well.

RF: From the time that you have been up here, do you recall any unfortunate incidents with the Indians or was it a pretty peaceful situation?

AS: No, I don't know anything about that. They never talked about it anymore and so I don't know anything about it.

RF: There's one thing that's always interested me. Maybe I have this story wrong and if I do, you tell me about it. They claim that when the people moved from Westcliffe, I mean from Silver Cliff over to build Westcliffe, that they were broke. They didn't have any money and this is because the mines didn't pay any more. Do you remember how they raised the money to build Westcliffe?

AS: No, I don't, but Westcliffe, well, there was a few stores here and, but how they did it, I don't hardly recollect.

RF: That's a point that's always interested me. They claim that Westcliffe didn't exist until the mines went broke in Silver Cliff and then the people moved over here and built a town. But I wonder what-

AS: Well, there was a lot of buildings, lot of houses moved out of Silver Cliff, moved down to Westcliffe.

RR: They just moved them, they moved by regular poles and horses and so forth.

AS: On big wagons.

RF: Yes, and wagons.

AS: Yeah, they, all of these buildings along in here, they were moved down here. I owned them here, the next door to it, two of them I owned. But I sold them later, and sold them out in '44 when I quit business.

RF: And they were moved in from Silver Cliff.

AS: That's right. That big hotel was moved down here from Silver Cliff. They had hauled that on planks, laid planks, you know, on rollers. Had a horse around and pull them down here.

RR: Do you think the horses in those days were stronger than the horses we have today?

AS: Oh, yes, I tell you! Well, it took about, when they moved my house down here, they had 16 head of horses on it, come right over the prairie here, you know, and then they moved another one that is the funeral home here now. That was a heavy house. They had two big engines and I think four or five teams of horses on it to pull that across the prairie. Yeah.

RR: A lot of work.

RF: I know there was one other time I was up here they said, there's a big, you can see it from here in fact, it's a big church down here.

AS: That's the Lutheran church.

RR: Lutheran church. When was that built?

AS: in 1917.

RR: 1917.

AS: Yeah, we had-

RR: Impressive structure there.

AS: We had a big congregation at that time. Our minister, he built that whole thing and made all the fixtures and everything in there.

RR: Is that right?

AS: That's right. That building cost us, of course, we had a lot of donations from the congregation, and the total amount was, I think, was \$18,000.

RR: Which was a lot of money in those days.

RF: Yes, it was.

AS: Oh yes, it was, sure.

RR: Mr. Schultz, you mentioned the Colony of people from Chicago that was brought out here in 1870. Were these people who were just picked up around the area of Illinois or were they, a lot of them, people who had-

AS: Well, there was quite a few people, I guess, that lived in Chicago, you know, all the German people, see.

RR: Yes. They were German people mainly?

AS: Oh yes, they were all German people.

RR: That's interesting to know.

AS: Here comes another fellow that can give you more information than I can, I guess. I came to the valley here in '96, 1896.

UI: That's when I was born.

AS: That so? (laughing)

RR: Mr. Schultz, it was a real pleasure to talk to you, and thank you for coming down. If you happen to remember any particular incidents that you think might be useful to us, we'd sure appreciate your letting the ladies know cause we'll be up other times.

AS: All right, maybe I'll think of something else.

RR: Sure, you remember any particular incidents, that you know of, something that happened that you think might be of use, we'd sure appreciate it.

AS: Right.

RR: Is there any one thing you can remember now in a hurry that you'd like to say before we get out of here?

AS: No.

RR: I think that's the understatement of the year. I think you know quite a bit.

AS: You just kind of caught me on a surprise, you know. I wasn't really prepared for this.

RR: No one ever is. And if you have any old documents, anything that we can photograph, and include in this, pictures or-

AS: I got a lot of them, a lot of pictures.

RR: We'll make a session just out of getting photographs and stuff too, so if it's convenient for you, we'll contact you one of these times.



AS: Ok.

End of tape.