

CARL OLSON

Second, ~~Third~~ and
~~Fourth~~ Interviews

Interviewed by:

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Oral History Project

Latah County Museum Society

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CARL OLSON

Troy; Dry Ridge; b. 1895

thrasher; miner; sawmill worker; service station owner 1.5 hours

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with Sam Schrage
August 17, 1973

II. Transcript

CARL OLSON

SAM SCHRAGER; Let me ask you some things. The first thing-- we talked about it a little last time, but I didn't put it down on the tape at all-- and that was, you described how you went about clearing the land, and the problems in clearing.

CARL OLSON: Oh, well, the way they cleared the land, y'know, there was all kinds of heavy timber in here. And the big stuff they couldn't do anything with, so they ringed the trees so they'd die, y'see. And then they cut the tree down, and then they'd bore holes in it, one this way and one that way. And then they dropped hot coals in there, and they had a little bellows there to get the fire started, and then she started inside, that tree would burn up, y'see. That's the only way they could get rid of it, they had no way to move those trees. And the other systems they used, too. The same with a stump: they'd bore a hole there and one more here, so they'd get a smokestack, you see, and it would lay there and burn by itself, get rid of the rest. Then when it come to clear the land, then you had to break it with a plow, breaking plow, y'know, hold the handles. And brush, when you'd hit the brush the horses would stop, (chuckles) couldn't make it. You had to break the plow loose, and take your axe out, and get up there and chop them roots off so the knife could get through y'know. There was a knife on the breaking plow that cut,

y'see, when the roots was too big they wouldn't cut 'em, so they had to cut 'em off with a knife, see. And that's the way they broke the land up. That was a slow process. If you'd break half an acre a day, that was plenty, maybe, because you had to fight all that stuff. And then you wasn't through. Then you had to let it lay over winter, so the sod kind of rotted, a little bit, and got loose, and then you had to go out there and pull that brush by hand. You had a grub hoe with you, see. And when they got to a big brush you couldn't pull out, you had to grub around it. So you get it out and you pile it up in the pile, see, and then you keep on that way until you get it all. And then you go back and burn all the brush afterwards, set fire to those bunches, y'see. That's the way they had to clear land. So you know how much work that was. Now they take a bulldozer and push that thing off in a day. (chuckles) So you see what they had to go through with here, that people don't understand, y'know, at all, these new people, what a big job it was to clear an acre. That was a big job if you had a lot of brush on it and stuff, y'know. Then you had to cut the brush first, the big ones, and pile them up and burn them, before you'd break, even.

Then you had the stumps to contend with, y'see. When you were breaking, there was a stump in your way, that'd throw your plow out and go around the stump. But there was one guy here, (chuckles) he liked the stumps on the hill. He lived out here. And he wouldn't even set fire on one, so it would burn, y'know, he kept plowing and plowing and plowing; and when the stump was here the dirt would fall over and leave a big hole below the stump, y'see, because it didn't throw it over enough. So one day a feller come up by there, I was working for this guy, "I seen the old man standing there with a stick today," he said, "putting the brace against that stump, and he was crying. So, I stopped and went out there," he said, "and asked him what's the matter. ' Oh, this

stump is falling over,' he said, 'I don't want it to fall over!'" (laughing.) That's true too, y'know. Well, it wasn't, y'know, exactly all the truth, y'know, but he never touched them. Those stumps'd been there so long that maybe you could kick 'em out, y'know, they were rotten. But he wouldn't monkey with them, he plowed around them, see. And was a pretty steep sidehill, like this, where they were. I seen the stumps there all the time when I drove by. (Laughs) So you can see a lot of funny things too, y'know.

SAM: Did he just like the stumps, was he lazy?

CO: Well, I don't know. He was kind of lazy all right. He just got by, y'know, he was one of these farmers that done just so much, is all. When he built his house, why, he didn't put the corners on 'em or nothing, y'know. Boards were sticking out like this, he didn't saw them off even. That's the way his house looked. And everybody was talking about it: when he come to a corner, like this, y'know, and then a board would be too long, he wouldn't even saw it off, he let it stick out there instead of put the corner on it. So the whole house burnt up one time, and he built a new one, and he put no corners on that one either. (Laughs) And you drive right by it when you go to Deary, about a mile out of town here. Yep, there was a lot of other things going on in those days.

SS: Well, how^would you get the stumps out mostly?

CO: Well, after a while, y'know, then they had stump pullers. You had to have drums, see. They made it themselves, the blacksmith, y'know. They can make a drum, and then they have a sweep on it, and then a horse on the end there, y'see. And then they put a cable around the stump, and then the horse would go and wrap that cable around and pull the stump out. But, you couldn't take very big stumps with that, y'know, maybe like, but bigger than that they couldn't pull them out at all, y'know. So you couldn't get 'em all, you had to burn the big ones. But the stumps

that was about a foot through or smaller, you could pull them out with the stump puller.

SS: Did you use dynamite at all?

CO: Well, you couldn't buy any dynamite around here then, it was too high of price for one thing, the people didn't have it, and it was dangerous to have, y'know. You have kids around and have dynamite, y'know, that's no good. That's pretty dangerous stuff. But I cleared up some of my land, I used dynamite on that. That was after the First World War. They had some cheap powder they sold ^{the farmers} then that worked pretty good for stumps. It wasn't so strong, y'know. If you get too strong a powder under the stump, it cracks it instead of pushing it out, y'know, so you'd have a sliver sitting there. But this powder the government had didn't have that much power, so it'd pull the stump out pretty good, y'see. So I used some of that. Yup.

SS: How would you set that up to blow out the stumps with the dynamite?

CO: Well, we'd just make a hole under it and stick a stick in, and put a fuse on it and light it, and bang, she'd go, see. You had to get away from it, the old stump'd be flying in the air. I told you that when I was plowing how I got rid of the roots. Yeah, yeah, I did. I guess you forgot about it.

SS: Tell me again.

CO: Well, I tied a sack of dynamite sticks on the handle of the plow, and whenever I hit a stump I stopped and stuck it in, about a half a stick was enough to blow that out. And then I'd tell the horses to "get up" and bang (chuckles), I'd be sure the horses went fast enough so that it wouldn't blow up too fast. So, that's the way I got all of the stumps out. That was, the roots, y'know, you couldn't see them. You'd hit that, and kind of mean to farm, y'know. When you got all the stumps out there was nothing to it.

SS: What was the main diet that the family had on their homestead? What

did you eat when you were a kid, mostly?

CO: Oh, now, well, I'll tell you. Skim milk, and mush, and potatoes, and if you had any fruit, you'd eat that. That took a while to get the fruit trees up, y'know, so you didn't have that right away. But we had a pretty good sized orchard on our place. That's what we ate, about all, and a little meat, y'know. We had no refrigerators. You couldn't go out and butcher a steer or anything in the middle of the summer, it'd ^{all} spoil, see. So you never got any meat. But most of them, when they'd been here a while, they went together and butchered a cow or something, y'know; and then they'd take a quarter apiece home, see, and it would keep in the winter because it was cold. That's the only time you had beef, would be in the winter. And in the summer you had pork-- we salted that down in a barrel, see, salt pork. The pork keeps pretty good, y'know. You salt meat down pretty good too, but it's got to be awful strong brine then on it, y'know. So that's what we had to eat then-- pork in the summertime and meat in the winter mostly.

SS: What did you tell me last time about how often you had mush?

CO: Oh, every night we had it, pretty near. Graham, Took a sack of grain and grind it on that watermill they had up there, y'know. Big stones that went around. Cost you two bits a sack to grind it. That's 150 pounds, about. Then we cooked mush out of that, see, we'd get all the grain that way. It was healthy food, y'know. So, you see it didn't cost much to feed a family in those days. A sack of mush like that would last our family all winter, and that's only about a dollar's worth. (Chuckles)
It'd cost you more ^{than that} for a sandwich now!

SS: Would you have anything else for supper besides the mush, or would that be it?

CO: Well, we drank skim milk with it, and bread, if you want to eat some bread, but it's no use to eat any bread with it because you had your bread in the mush, y'see. And that's what we had for supper pret'near all the time,

that is, the first fifteen, twenty years, y'know. After that, after you got more field and more work, then you had a little more money, so you could buy some stuff once in a while. But we never seen an orange or anything like that, no. We'd get some hard candy once in awhile when Dad went down and bought a little groceries. The old clerk, he'd always stick in a package of candy in because he knew we had a lot of kids. So we got one apiece and then they were gone. (Chuckles). Yep, that was homesteading.

Then, the water problem-- we got water problems now, but they had water problems worse than these. See, unless you happened to have a place where it was a natural spring. But if there was no water around, where are you going to get it? And the trouble with the homesteaders here, they just stayed in Minnesota, a lot of them, and there the soil was sandy. And you couldn't dig a well, it wouldn't hold it, y'see, it'd leak out. So they thought it would be the same here, so they never dug no wells the first few years. But here they found out that it was hard pan under here-- you know what that is, kind of a clay, and that's waterproof. So my dad, he made a cistern twelve feet wide and about eight foot deep in that hardpan, and then he set it with brick. And that's the water we had, y'see. No more. We couldn't waste any water there. I betcha for all the kids that was home, we didn't use up five gallons a day!! And to start with, my mother carried water for half a mile in the bucket, half a mile to the spring, see, before they knew they could make a cistern. And you couldn't make a cistern ^{off} over that that would hold either. [^] If you hit the wrong kind of a clay, it wouldn't hold, and if you hit ^{this} soapstone, they call it, that would leak out, like that. You had to hit hardpan, real hardpan, to hold it. But it would hold just like a real tank y'know. It wouldn't leak at all, just waterproof. I remember when my dad was making a big cistern. A butcher from Troy come up here, y'know, to buy a cow, and he looked at that cistern-- he thought that was great. And he told about how many

gallons it would hold, too, I remember that. Yah.

SS: He told about how many gallons, your father did?

CO: Oh, I forget how many he said now. It'd be about a thousand gallons, maybe. Yeah, something like that.

SS: Would it come close to drying up in the summer?

CO: No, it wouldn't dry up at all. You see the upper part of it was topsoil, that wouldn't hold it, y'know. So, you had about three or four feet in at the top there that wouldn't hold the water at all. It was down below where you hit the hardpan; that'd hold good, y'know. And then if it rained it'll seep in a little too on the sides, y'see. Yup, the old cistern, I remember that. And then we had the pump, hand pump on it. That was good water, though. You could see there was no mineral in it or nothing, because it was rainwater, all of it. And then you'd catch water from the eaves too in barrels, y'know, for washing clothes with. That was no good to drink, because there'd be soot on the roof, y'know, and the water'd get black, kind of. So that was the water problem. You see, it was just as bad as Troy got it now. (chuckles) They're just about running out here.

SS: How could you make five gallons go for the whole family a day?

CO: Well, when we washed, we all washed in the same one. You'd never throw the water out, see. And you washed clothes, you had to wash in the same thing. Of course, we didn't take very many baths. My dad, he made a ^{big one} tub of wood, see. Then we'd all bathe in the same water, see. "Tee", they called in Swede, that tub. I remember that. It was about that deep, and it was made of wood, y'know, sitting up and down this way, and then iron straps around to hold it together.

SS: It's about three feet deep?

CO: Yea, about that. Yup, and, oh, it'd be about six feet long maybe, and two and one half feet wide. That was sitting out on the ground, y'know,

you wouldn't have no room in the house for that. So in the winter, you didn't take any baths. So maybe, that's good, too, (chuckles) because I read about two, three years ago in the paper where the doctor ^{was} examining why people get cancer so much. They found out the people that take the most baths had the most cancer. Do you believe that?

SS: I don't know.

CO: Yeah, that's what they claim. I seen some more about it lately too, somebody wrote about the same article. They claim your skin cleans itself, and it's a chemical or something that comes out here and stops the germs from going in your system, see. And long ago you hardly ever heard of any cancer at all, y'know, and now it's just all kinds of it in the country. I don't know. And the doctor that wrote this, he says, "I hate to write this, it sounds bad, because people won't take a bath maybe."

SS: Can you explain how the trails grew? Did each homestead make it own trail to its own place?

CO: Oh, trails. It wasn't too thick, timber, y'know. You didn't have to make any trails if you had some cows. They made the trails for you. When they went to the pasture they'd take the same route all the time. There's where we had our coyote traps, in them cow trails, y'know. They were all over. We had one that we called the big trail, because the cows went to that part of the canyon for pasture, because it was better pasture, and they'd wear it down, ~~that~~ deep, y'know, in a sidehill. But on the level they didn't wear 'em down very far, and it'd be about this wide, y'know. Cows always made a trail, and that's the kind of trails we had on the ranch. But if you had to pack something in, then you had to chop a trail, y'know, and make it wide enough to carry the pack, for the horses, y'know. But the other trails were cow trails. Then everybody had cattle for milk, y'see.

SS: What about the trail to the homestead itself, to get into your own place

and to the house? Did you just cut that in?

CO: Oh yeah, you didn't have a trail there. You had a wagon road in, they called it. See, you'd cut out wide enough for the wagons, about that wide, see, and you'd cut out that much brush. If the brush was too heavy, and sawed off the stumps close to the ground. You see, if you stuck 'em up, why the wagon wheels or the axle would hit them. So that's the way they all made those trails. There's a lot of those roads all over, y'know, because after they'd been here for a few years, they all had a team, y'know, or horses, because they had that to farm with. So they all had a wagon road in, y'know. And it wasn't like it is having automobiles now, y'know. You know what the two fellers said when they met on the road? A feller was coming with a load of wood or something, and he met the other feller, "If you don't get out of my way I will do the same that I done to the other ~~guy~~ I met!" "What did you do?" "I drove around him!" You can't do that when you meet a car now. You'll bang, like that (claps his hands).

SS: How did they decide where the main wagon roads went, that went from town to town?

CO: Yeah, that was the county that done that. And that's why they had so many hills in it, y'know, because they followed the lines between the places. They wouldn't go across unless they had to, y'see. So we had hills like this, y'know, all over the country. They followed survey lines between. If your place were over here and mine here, the road would be here, see.

SS: Right on the line.

CO: Yeah, on the line, see. That's why we had so steep roads to start with. You wouldn't think about going across the other man's place. No. You'd go up and down, up and down, y'know, like that. They didn't have no automobiles then, anyway, they had horses to pull over the hills. But when

we come to haul something, then you were in a pickle if you had too many hills, y'know, you couldn't haul much of a load. We had a lot of them. That wasn't all, we had the mud to contend with! That was the worst. You know how big a wagon wheel is? And the hub was about that far from the ground, and we had a lot of places where we had mud that went clean up to the axle in the spring. So it was a heck of a job to get to town in the spring, y'know. The tires were narrow, and the wheels, y'know, they'd cut and cut and cut and the water would stay in them. There was no grade^s or nothing, see. So the roads were terrible, y'know. It's nothing like it is now. That's why where we lived, y'know, we were nine miles from town, so we couldn't cut any cordwood or ties and haul them in. *We was too far away from town.* We couldn't make it in a day. See, that made it a little tougher. The people that lived within two or three or four miles, y'know, they could haul their stuff in. But we had three or four hills a quarter of a mile long and about that steep, y'know how long it takes to get up there with a team of horses and a load. You had to rest them horses maybe ten times before you got over that hill.

SS: What kind of a grade do you think that would be?

CO: Oh, about twenty percent, anyway. You see, we couldn't change them, there's no way to change them hardly. There was too much timber maybe, and so forth, or you get on the other man's place, and they wouldn't do that. But some places, you had to, because there was no other way to get around it, then you had to go on the man's place. It was too steep and too much timber, y'know, big trees and thick, you couldn't build no roads there at all. The big hill we had from our place was the Dry Creek Hill, it was a creek they called Dry Creek, and they had the bridge there about oh, seventy-five feet long and about thirty-forty feet high. See, that was quite a bridge to build in those days, because it was down like this and then up like that, y'know. I crossed on that bridge with my thrashing outfit, I was scared to death every time, I thought it might

go down. So we'd take the engine off, and then we had a long cable that we put on the thrashing machine so we wouldn't get all the weight on one spot-- that's the way we crossed the bridge all the time, see. But there's no road there no more now. They took it around.

SS: Do you know who built that bridge or bridges like that?

CO: A feller by the name of Ely. Ely, he was a bridge builder. There was three or four of 'em, he said. One of them lived on Little Bear.

SS: Would the county pay for that or would the homesteaders?

CO: Oh, yeah, if it was a county road, they would, yeah, but if you didn't have a county road, then you had to take care of it yourself, see. Then they had the poll tax, those days they called it, y'know. Two dollars I think it was, poll tax. Everybody had to pay that tax when he was twenty-one years old. Then you could work it out if you wanted instead of paying the two dollars, so they worked it out on the roads, see. That's the way they kept up the roads, quite a bit, just from the poll tax alone. I even worked out the poll tax myself.

SS: Did the poll tax give you the right to vote? Is that it?

CO: Oh, yeah, you had to be twenty-one. The poll tax was put in more for building roads than anything else, y'see. See, and then they started getting machinery and they took off the poll tax. You don't pay that no more now. They had that all over the United States, I guess, at one time.

SS: Was the road from Troy, let's say, out to your place, already there when your folks started homesteading?

CO: No, there was no roads at all. From Troy east was no road whatever, no road anywhere, not even a trail! Because it'd just been surveyed, y'know, ready for homesteading. Nobody lived there, y'see, it was wild country. But y'see, when they keep moving in, moving in, they went between the trees, wherever they could with their loads. And some of them, they'd fool around a couple of years before they had any road at all. They'd

carry it on their backs, see. Suppose a road went here, now you were a half a mile from the road, he'd walk in from his place out to the road, carry it on his back, see. No, it was awful hilly country here. I should take you over there and show you some of that I guess, what they had to contend with, but you don't see them hills any more. They've taken them away.

SS: Well, when they first put the road out, do you think they paid much attention, when these guys were coming through, to the property lines? Did they try to go along the lines when they came out?

CO: Oh yeah, if it was possible, you'd do it all the time. And in those days, y'know, they didn't have no automobiles or anything. They had horses, and a horse would go up steep hills, y'know, so they'd put it there, and especially if it was open country-- maybe big trees only, no brush, or small trees-- and then they could build a road pretty fast, y'know. And some places you didn't do anything but just drive on the ground and it was level, see. When we got to a little side-hill, then you had to pick off some on the upper side and throw the dirt below, so the rig wouldn't stand this way, see. And then they didn't have to be wide or anything, so they didn't have that problem, because, just like I said, when them two guys met, (chuckles) you had to back up or get around some way, see, if it was trees around there. But you always found a spot where it was open, so you could drive off and get by that way.

SS: Do you think that they worked together in building the road in the first place, or was it each man going out and going through, and then the road just took shape that way?

CO: No, if they had a road to be built, and it went to a certain community, y'know, where quite a few people, they all went out and worked on it. Free work, y'know, donated it. If they had horses, they'd take the horses, y'see, and build it that way. Because, to start with, y'know,

they didn't have no government, you might say, you couldn't get any help. I don't know how long it took before they started the county roads. When they started them then the county built them, see. But they tax so much so you build them anyway, y'know. They tax your land, and then the poll tax done it, and that went for roads, all that stuff. But then, it wasn't too much hauling, y'know in the early days, because they had nothing to haul, nothing to sell yet, except those that had ties and wood. But for grain, y'know, they didn't haul much grain. A lot of people fed ^{up} everything they raised. They had cows, y'know, and horses, and they wouldn't have much to sell. They could sell the butter and stuff like that, y'see, and eggs. So they didn't have any heavy hauling, til they start getting fields, and then they had to have better roads. They got stuck a lot of times in the ^{old} wagons, go down to the hub, y'know, had to throw the load off and pull out and then reload ^{it} again. It was that bad, y'know, if you come to a place where there was real mud, and nothing hard under it, see.

END OF SIDE A

- SS: So, your father didn't try to sell any of his wood in Troy?
- CO: No, we never cut any because it was no use, because he couldn't haul it in, he couldn't make it in a day. See, with nine miles, that'd be an eighteen mile trip, y'know; that's pretty long in a day when you're alone. But if you live within five or six miles, y'know, you could do pretty good, you could get one load a day anyway.
- SS: Well, the homesteads, were they all about the same size out there, then?
- CO: Oh, yeah, one hundred and sixty acres. But you could take-- I showed you that paper, that ^epre^amption paper-- then you can pay so much an acre, and then you could have a homestead besides, then you get three hundred twenty. There was only one guy on the ridge that took it, and that was Flodin. He had a ^epre^amption, so he got three hundred and twenty. But they took that ^epre^amption off, I don't know how long they used it, they

finally took it off though.

SS: Was there any trouble with the land being taken up and other people wanting to move in and not being able to get homesteads?

CO: Well, if there was no homestead to take, y'see, then there could be land, all right, left, but it had to be enough for cultivated land, ^{on it} or seven acres, I believe, before you could take a homestead. It had to be that much good land, see. I think it was only seven acres, I ain't sure about that, but something like that. Then it went to stone and timber, y'know. You could take a timber claim, but that cost a little money, y'know, something like the ^{pre}emption did. You paid so much, y'know, for timber land. You didn't have to live on that either, but you had to live for five years on a homestead. Five to seven, I think you could live up to seven, if you wanted to. And then, you had to live six months ^{a year} on 'em, see, or else somebody would be there and jump it. Did I tell you about that guy up in Clarkia there where that spade hung in the tree?

SS: I don't think you told me that one.

CO: Didn't I? Up in Clarkia there was the last homesteads on Marble Creek, y'know, homestead and timber both. So they went down there and took homesteads, and then the lumber company sent in a claim jumper, see. He'd watch you. If you didn't stay six months, why he'd report it, and somebody'd ^{rise} come and take it, see. And this guy, he was running around doing that up there. They knew who he was. So they met him on the trail one day and they just pulled a gun on him and buried him right there. I seen the grave, myself, so I know what I'm talking about. And it said, "You're a Good Woodsman, but You're an Old Son of a Bitch", or something, ^{it said in there} "And Here's Where You Belong." And they hung the shovel on the tree where he was buried. That's how I happened to stop there. The postmaster and I (that used to be here) ^{we} went fishing, y'know, and we took this trail, and he didn't see it. So I said, "Come back here, there's something funny

happened ." There was a grave there, because you could see the rise in the ground, a little bit. And I looked up and there was a gallon can, y'know, they cut the front out and they scratched in there and told all about it. So they got rid of a claim jumper (chuckles). They didn't do nothing about it, either. The government never or the state never tried to look for him, or a thing. 'Cause he was a bitch, y'know, running around sneaking like that, y'know, way back there on the homestead, and they had to carry everything on their back there too. And if you didn't live six months, he'd watch that, y'know. He'd go from homestead to homestead.

SS: Was he trying to get it for the lumber companies?

CO: Yeah, that's what they claimed. There's a lot of good timber in there, y'know. And a lot of the land there was timber land, you had to take timber claims on it. It wasn't enough cultivated land, so it had both, y'know, but it was a lot of homesteading too. And that's what they were after. So you see, all the Nixons didn't live now, some of them lived then. (chuckles) Yep, I should have had my camera along and took a picture of that, the tree and the shovel, and it was a gallon can, y'know. When you buy oil in one of them kind of square (ones) they cut out the face, and it was kinda tin on it, so you can scratch a knife in it, and you could read everything, y'know.

SS: Was it a real long time ago you found that?

CO: No, that ain't so long ago, twenty years, maybe. It's still hanging there, I think.

SS: Even though you had a hundred and sixty acres though, a guy was only using a little bit of it, right? For a really long time? He'd have only just a little bit that he had in cultivation, then he'd be cutting some wood maybe, but most of it wasn't used, huh?

CO: No, no. All you had to do was to put a shack there and live there six months out of every year for five years, and then you prove up on it.

Then it's your land, and you can leave it and never have to go back, see. That's the way it worked. The reason that they had to have pret'near a law like that, or else they'd be jumping around and taking more claims, too, y'know, fussing around. So they had to have a kind of regulation on it. If they didn't have that, y'know, these big companies, like this one up in Clarkia, they would have hired a bunch of men to go there and take the whole damn works for them. So they had to have a stop-gap. But you had to live there six months and had to be seven acres of ground that's cultivated ground, and so forth. So they couldn't go and take a homestead on a timber claim either, y'know, because it wasn't fit for it. 'Course then they'd hire somebody to go there and take it for them, y'know, and live there and leave it, and then they'd own it.

SS: Was there a lot of turnover among the homesteaders?

CO: You mean selling land?

SS: Yeah, just being on a little while, and then leaving.

CO: Oh, not too much, y'know. That Vollmer was around here, that's why they didn't like him, he was always buying land or loaning them money with high interest rate and they couldn't pay it, and then he'd take the land. So it was quite a bit of that-- not too much here, ^{either} not around Troy, but maybe other places would be. Yeah, there was a lot of trouble then too, y'know. We had criminals too, y'know, in the homestead country. They'd beat it, y'know, to get away from the law, and then they'd take a homestead and live all by themselves, and nobody would ever find them. (chuckle) There was quite a few, not too many, but two or three I knew of that people told me about, that they'd done some crime somewhere and then skipped out, y'see. Go up in the woods here and take a homestead. From the old country, too, they'd get to the United States to get away from it. When they got here, 'course they were all right, ^{here} they couldn't do nothing about 'em here.

SS: Would they be just like anybody else?

CO: Yeah, yeah Well, that's what they had, anyway, y'know, it was nothing but foreigners to start with. They all had to come from the foreign countries-- Germans, Swedes, Norwegians, and everything. (chuckles) But they grouped up pretty good, y'know. If you was a Catholic, they'd notify the others and they'd all move in there, just like Little Sweden up here. On American Ridge there was quite a bit of Catholics there, about half of them I think or more were Catholic homesteaders, and around Genessee country. They'd tell 'em, y'know, well they were better organized that way, too, so they'd get along better.

SS: Would you say that was a lot of help, cooperati^on, they helped each other a lot?

CO: Oh, yeah. If they wouldn't have done that, they could never have made it, y'know. That's why it's so funny for me to live now⁴days. Everything you do today, if you just turn over a shingle on the ground they want a dollar. (chuckle) And those days, they'd work two-three days for each other and never charge any money! If a man built a barn here in homestead days, they called it "raising the barn". All your neighbors come up, then they started raising the poles, setting them up, y'know, and getting the rafters up, see. They always talked about that, y'know, and then they'd have coffee and a picnic, kind of, there. Then they went home and then the homesteader finished the rest. He could do that himself, you see. But when you raised the barn, you had to have help, so the neighbors come and done it. And if you butchered a big animal, the neighbors would help you, see, to butcher and so forth. So it's quite a difference today. It's getting too much like a big city all over now in the country and everywhere. I remember a woman, when I had the service station here, she drove into a garage and she was going to back out and the car slipped over and she couldn't get out through the door, y'know. She come

to me and said, "I'm stuck out there." So I went down there and put my jack under it and kicked it over, and she backed up and said, "How much do I owe you?" "You don't owe me nothing," I said. "Don't owe you nothing? How can that be?" she said. "Must be something wrong with you." (Laughing) "I'm from Portland," she said, "you don't get any help there." And that's the way it was ^{here} in the early days, y'know. You'd always help the other feller. Help him in the haying, even. Anything, you help back and forth. ^{See?} But they don't do that now. They want pay for everything, the people. You can't blame them, they got to have money or they'll starve, the way things are now. (Laughs)

And then, go into a place, y'know, "Hell, sit down and eat with us!" All over, there was nothing to that. And then we had the tramps, y'know, that come around, ^{too} and we fed them too. We used to have one that come around every year, y'know. The lame shoemaker, they called him, he limped a little when he walked. That's the way he lived, y'know, he went from house to house, and then when the winter come he disappeared. He went down to the river, I suppose, and then in the summer he would come back again. But we didn't pay no attention to him. We let them have food and everything they wanted. So living was quite a bit different than it is now.

SS: People weren't afraid of him at all?

CO: No, no, they got a kick to talk to him even, y'know. (chuckles) You know, people is people. When I was in the army, the officer told us, "If you got anything on your mind, ask us! I don't care how foolish it is," he said, "it might be something good in it." And that's true. I thought it sounded funny then, but it's true. And that's the way it is about these tramps, y'know. He might have something we didn't know, see. We learn from each other, y'know. So you don't have to be an expert for that. Then there was more besides this lame shoemaker, ^{they called him,} there was a couple more that come around, too.

Then they'd feed the animals on straw in the winter, too, y'know, like the milk cows and stuff. That's why they had the big straw stack, y'know. I remember they'd eat a hole in the straw stack, and then the cows couldn't get out because it caved back over, and they had to get a horse to pull her out, y'know. I remember that. (Laughs) Yeah, they made a tunnel in there, y'know. Yep.

SS: Would a tramp sleep in the barn or would he sleep in the house, if he came through?

CO: Oh no, he never slept with nobody, he had a sleeping place somewheres. He'd sleep outside somewheres. I don't know where, anywheres. That's why they only come in the summertime up here, because they could sleep out. They didn't carry any blankets or nothing, they just lay down, I guess, just like a dog does, and that was all there was to it. They used to come to Troy here when I was in business there. But they never went out in the country anymore, they hit the towns only. And there was one here, he was a Norwegian, I believe, pretty big guy. And the policeman, he was a Norwegian here, and he said, "Let's go down and see where---" I don't know what they called him--but he had a name anyway. I said, "Yeah, I'll go with you down there." It was in the winter too. I said, "We'll see." Well down there about a mile out of town, there was a big log that was lying, see, an old log about that high, and it laid up from the ground a little bit. He had put bark and everything under there and there's where he slept, under that log, in the winter. He never took his clothes off, y'know. He had an overcoat and he crawled under that thing and then built a fire there. Then we asked him, "Why you live so far from town when you're here?" "Well," he said, "we know something, too," he said, "they got laws that you can't get within two miles of town, And that's where we have to stay, " he said, "or else they'll put us in jail." They got that in a lot of place, you know. You can't come into town at night and sleep anywheres. So he fixed it up good

under that log down there. (chuckles)

SS: Would he go to a different house every night for supper?

CO: No, he'd beg all right, and they'd give him food, and then he'd go down there and cook it himself, where that log was. Very seldom anybody stays the winter, but this feller he'd come up to Troy here every year. I don't know, I guess he liked the people around here. The doctor gave him an overcoat one time, so he kind of liked the people I guess, and that's why he come up here. And he stayed in the winter, y'know, and he slept under that log.

SS: Did you ever get an idea of how they got down on their luck like that?

CO: No, I don't know. Maybe they're smarter than we are. (Laughs) Maybe they can't see anything in the world that's any good, so they just forget everything. I don't think they have any worries, and I don't think they're sick very often. So I don't know what to think about it. The way I look at it, it looked like a tough life, but I guess they know how to live, y'know, and I don't think they suffer at all. But they've disappeared now. Then they'd ride the trains on the rods, y' know, under there, climb under the train, ride the rods. They were pretty common in those days, ^{and} I don't know why, either. Well I can see one reason why, because it was no work, y'know, in the early days here. Was only the homesteaders, y'know, and no work hardly at all. The people that lived here done all the work, so an outsider couldn't get a job hardly, y'know. And that may be one thing that started 'em, y'see, no work anywhere, so they just kept moving and moving and moving, see. And then when they found a place where they were liked pretty good, they'd always come back there. Yep.

SS: If a guy come in and he was a newcomer, he would get accepted real easily here in the early days, if he came in and bought a place and moved in? Or would it take a while to be a part of the ---?

CO: No, he'd be welcome right away, ^{pretty} near. That is, especially if he was a Swede or an Irishman or a Dutch, if he happened to come to that settlement, you'd be right there ^{right} now. But it was some friction all right between the races, y'know. They'd get into fist fights and stuff. They done that quite a bit. There was more fist fights around here than it is now. You don't hardly see any any ^{more}, but that was pretty common in those days. Yuh, because it was cliques, you might call them, see. They'd bunch up, see. They used to have 'em out here on Dry Creek too. You had the Osterberg clique and Drury clique and some more. I forget what the name of them was. They'd get together, y'know, ^{they'd} have fist fights pret' near every time. (chuckles)

SS: You mean there'd be one group that would be Swedes and the other group would be Irish?

CO: Yeah, uh-huh, something like that, yup. But you didn't have to be that either here, 'cause pret'near all Swedes, ^{but} they want to be best, y'know, they want to fist fight and knock the other feller out, y'see, and they'd be bigger, the clique would be, y'see. There was one they used to mock here: "I ~~am~~ sixteen years old and there is nobody can mark me!" And he was pretty big too. I think they marked him up sometimes all right.

SS: Well would a clique grow because all the people were living in one area?

CO: They had to live kind of together in one area, the cliques would. There was a bunch of them out of Deary, on one of them ridges, the Drurys, they used to ^{be} kind of ^a clique one time, but it isn't anymore now. There ain't very many Drurys left. And then they'd have fights, y'know, when they'd have dances, parties, something like that, when they'd meet, and they had 'em here at Nora, they'd fight and raise hell there too. They never went so far as to kill anybody. Just fist fights, y'know, that's what it was mostly.

SS: What kind of things would cause a fight?

CO: Well, I don't know. They had no other way to show off in those days, because they didn't have much education, y'know, and they just wanted to show their power, I guess. That's the way I figure it. They want to be the boss, see. They didn't hate you or anything. You'd meet those people any other place, y'know, just like I'm talking to you, that's the way it would be. But whenever they had a party or a dance, there's where they'd tangle up, see. And that was just their strength they wanted to show, I guess, or they wanted to show they were boss, I don't know.

SS: So, like all the Drurys would be supposed to stick together, if you were in that clique, and it wouldn't be two guys fighting, it's probably be eight guys on both sides fighting?

CO: Oh yeah, yeah, sure. Yep.

SS: Would you tell me some of the stories about Nora, about the town of Nora?

CO: Well, I don't know, I think I told you all of them, that time.

SS: Yeah, but you -- we didn't put any of them down on the tape, and that's what I wanted to get.

CO: About the pennies, and the boy and the pennies? Well, the boy come in, and the reason I get so much kick out of it now is because they're still using pennies, and I don't see why they use pennies today. Well, he come in with a handful of pennies, maybe had six, seven, eight, of them. Wanted some candy from the boss, and the clerk said, "Go on, throw them in the creek, and I'll give you the candy!" And the kid done that. They wouldn't handle any pennies, they didn't want no pennies those days. If you owed the man, if you figured you owe two and a half you paid him a nickel, or the other way, see. They didn't want to monkey with pennies. And today they put pennies on an automobile, even. (Laughs). That's why I get a kick out of it today ^{for,} because they're using pennies, and a penny was worth as much as a dollar is now, in those days, yeah, ac-

cordova to what you get for 'em. I guess I told you about the bra. You don't want that on there?

SS: Yah, I do, that's a good story, the bra.

CO: (chuckles) Well, they had a bra laying in the store there. It was P.E. Johnson, I knew him, he was neighbors of ours, and he was in the store then--and B.S. Nilson-- he was a photographer, he run all around and took pictures all the time, and he was in the store too then. They owned it together. And that bra was laying there for years, y'know, and they couldn't sell it. So when Christmas come (chuckles) they wrapped it up and sent it to a girl. And the girl never said anything, y'know, until next Christmas, and then she took a horse turd and wrapped it up and wrote, "B.S. Nilson and P. E. Johnson, be so kind and divide this between you!" (Laughs) She knew where it come from, 'cause you seen it in the showcase all the time. Yup, and that's no story, that's true, absolutely true, the whole thing. No, everything I've told you is true. I don't stretch nothing. It all happened. My uncle he had that store down at Nora five, six years, and I stayed with him down there. But this was before my uncle had it. My uncle had it there on a Halloween night. The Halloweens come up, and he had kind of a storehouse in the back of the store, y'know, with a roof, y'know, on like that. And here come the Halloweens, and there was a buggy set in there. And he went and hid, he didn't show himself, my uncle ^{so they} took and put two planks up, y'know, and then they took the buggy, and they put a rope on it, and they pulled it clean on top of that building, see, and on up to the peak. They set the buggy this way, see, and then they went down and when they got through my uncle come out and said, "Take ^{that} down!". (Laughs) So they didn't get much out of that. Nora used to be quite a little town at one time, y'know. They had a saloon there, cigar factory, a blacksmith shop, and a hotel and a store right there, and a sawmill right there. Y'know. You know Patrick that pret' near lost his lip, y'know. He got drunk - 'course this is just a story,

I suppose, but that's what they said. He got drunk and he fell off the wagon, and the wagon wheel hit him here and tore-- this is true, that the lip was tore off, all right. But they said he never knew his lip was tore off till he was gonna put a big chew of snoose in there, and there was no lip there. (Laughs)

SS: Was he one of the rough bunch?

CO: Well, he wasn't rough, he drank a lot though. He was drunk all the time, y'know, drank whiskey all the time. Kind of a nice guy, too. I knew him, seen him a few times. He froze to death, I believe, crossing the mountain here, carrying moonshine in the moonshine days, if I ain't mistaken. Yup.

SS: What was this bunch like? You mentioned before that they really celebrated when Hays got killed.

CO: Oh, when they shot Hays? Yeah.

SS: What were they like? Was it just a bunch of guys that was drunk all the time, or what?

CO: Yeah, they drank, that Nora bunch there. They were known all over the country for being the biggest drinkers, y'know. They all drank, pret' near. Everybody up ⁱⁿ there, they got drunk. They never bothered anybody though, but they were drinkers. And then when they shot Hays, y'know, they hated him, because I guess maybe he arrested some of them down here once in a while. So they celebrated for three weeks up there! Old Hays, he was a mean guy, ^{anyway} y'know. He got a drunk guy and he'd tie a rope around his arms, and led him behind his horse just like he'd lead a cow. And then he arrested a guy that fell off a wagon because he was drunk. He had a lame back, y'know, and he missed a step, fell back, and here was Hays and grabbed him. (chuckles). And he threwed his own son in the jail another time.

SS: Yeah.