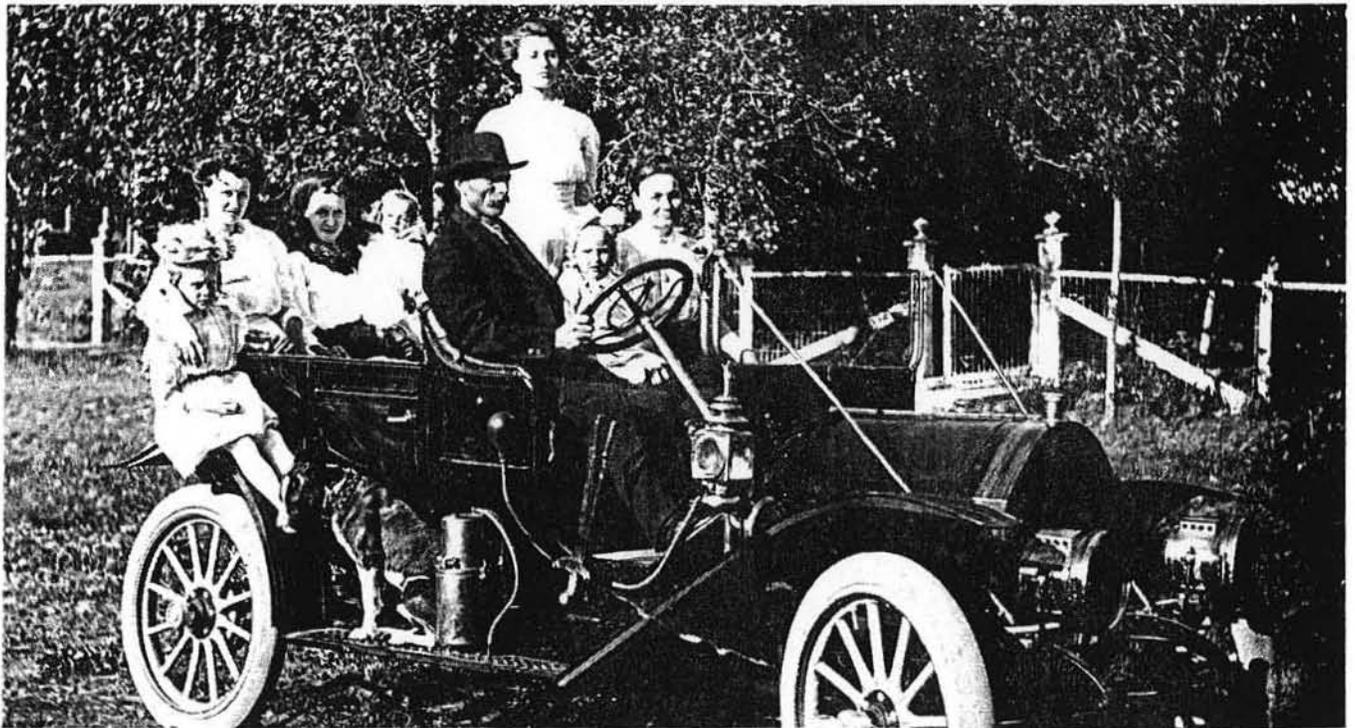


**The Mike Doll family, homesteaders in Croke Township.**



**Prosperity for this homesteader was evidenced by a bright new car being used to take the family on a Sunday outing. Mike Doll drives his 1909 Overland. The steering wheel at the time was on the right side.**

**3.** When Wheaton started building up, I was staying at Pete Thill's when I went to school there. The trains were always on time. When the passenger train was going to be in Dumont at eight o'clock in the morning, it was there at eight o'clock. When the freight was supposed to come through at 3:00 or 3:30 in the afternoon, it was there.

There was no such thing as overtime in those days. The men got \$2.50 a day, it didn't make any difference if they worked 16 hours or 20. So they hurried along so they'd get back to the other end down at Ortonville. The run was between Ortonville and Fargo. The train was always on time.

It cost me seven cents for a ticket between Dumont and Wheaton. When one of my cousins was working for my dad in 1916, after George and Paul went into the garage, we were knocking around together. One day we decided that instead of driving clean up to Wheaton with a team of horses, we'd leave them in the livery barn and we hopped a freight in Dumont that was heading for Wheaton.

Everything went along fine until we got up about by the Bender farm south of Wheaton, where Labodas live now. They threw in a couple shovels of coal and the cinders came right straight across the top of the boxcar. He got one of them in his eye, and we had to take him over to Doc Ewing. It cost him \$2.00 to get the cinder taken out. So that wasn't a very profitable deal. We could have gone up and ridden in the caboose and the conductor probably wouldn't have charged us anything. But we just wanted to beat our way up once and see what it was all about.

On every train that went through there were just hundreds of men in the fall of the year, like at the time of the Wheaton fair. That was the day we came up. There were hundreds of people going up north all the time, going up into North Dakota. Everybody you talked to was going to North Dakota for harvest. I don't think they did much better up there than they would have if they had stayed right down here. It was mostly young people from the Cities who just wanted to get around and see the country. And they were just beating their way from one place to another. Most of them just rode up one day and back the next. They didn't have anything else to do.

At the time the railroad came into Wheaton Main Street in Wheaton was what is today 1st Avenue North. When they built the depot where they did, from then on they built the main part of their town right straight down from the depot.

We were going to go and buy some horses. The old Ford

tractor had sort of given out on me. I sold that for what little I could get for it. Then I met a fella from over in South Dakota who worked for the highway department, dragging roads and things like that. His wife happened to be a Democrat and he kept his own politics quiet. But the Republicans got pretty mad at him because his wife was working for the Democrats and the township board was all Republicans. So they fired him off the job because he didn't belong to the right political party.

So he put his tractor up for sale. It was one of those little F-12's with a steel wheel in the front. That was quite a looking contraption. But it pulled about the same as four good horses would. We used that along with another team I had around the yard. We were farming only 200 acres at the time, so we got along pretty well.

During the depression years they came out with some projects, like sloping roads and hauling gravel. The county didn't have any money in those days either. Nobody was paying taxes during the depression. Some people owned their farms completely, didn't owe a dime against them, and couldn't raise enough money to pay their real estate taxes. They gave them five years to do it in, and by that time we got the crops again. So they got that thing all cleaned up.

There are a lot of people around here who bought four and five quarters of land just for the back taxes that was against it. That's all it cost them. We have one man living down by Dumont who told me that he got five quarters up the Charlesville area just for paying the taxes. Lots of farms you could buy for ten or fifteen dollars an acre. But most people didn't have the ten or fifteen dollars an acre to pay for it.

Some who took out bankruptcy got their old bills all cleaned up. But for those who stuck with it and paid their old bills, it took another six or seven years to get the bills paid. And by the time we did get ahead a little bit the land had gone up so high, you couldn't touch it then either. So we were left out.

We rented. I had one owner that I rented from for 31 years. We got by pretty good.

And then we had those seed loans you could get after awhile. There were three people on the committee — Mr. Andre, Mr. Murphy, and Jacob Bauer. They either approved or disapproved the loans.

There was one case where an old lady in town divided up her property among her children. One particular girl got 120 acres of land adjoining land owned by one of the people on the board. She couldn't get any seed grain. None of the farmers

had any. They'd rent the land if she could furnish the seed, but they wouldn't do it if they had to go out and buy seed, because they just didn't have the money.

Mr. Murphy regretted it so bad. He told me about it later on. It was one of the things that worried him a lot. Even in his later years he brought it up and worried about it.

There was Mruphy and one of the other fellows who were in favor of okaying her loan so that she could get some seed, and this man who had the land adjoining her place talked Murphy out of okaying it. He said that she wouldn't be able to pay it anyhow. They were living in town; her husband was a janitor at the school. With sixty bucks a month income if there was another crop failure they wouldn't be able to pay it. So he convinced Murphy not to okay the loan.

So this party went over to this woman and said, "You're not going to be able to buy any seed grain, so you might just as well sell me this farm." According to the woman, he said, "You're not going to get nothing out of it anyhow. You might as well sell it to me." She asked, "What will you give me for it?" He said he'd pay her \$1,800. She accepted the offer. She said it was no good to her any other way, so she let it go.

So you see, we had crooked officials in those days already too. Mr. Murphy didn't do it intentionally, and neither did the other party. But this guy wanted that hunk of ground and he killed her chances of getting a loan. That's the way some of our people accumulated their money that they're sitting around bragging about today.

I'm not a bitter man. I'm not talking about jumping on anybody's toes. But the title of my book is "The History of Traverse County — Telling It As It Was". So that's what I'm doing. Every word that I print in this book is the absolute truth. I'm not using my imagination or telling any lies. It's all the absolute truth. That's the way I was brought up and that's the way I've lived my life.

During those lean years we had different projects that came up. Dumont had old wooden sidewalks. But the town started improving a little bit. We got Lawrence Peterson and his father — we called him Sidewalk Peterson — from Wheaton to come down and put in cement sidewalks in the business area, one block in the main strip. Later on the village put in more by themselves. All the way from the Corner Store clean up to the Catholic church they had a wood sidewalk.

My dad bought a piece of land on the west side, between the town and the church, about halfway up, and built a home and retired there in 1916. My brother Al took over the home farm.

In those days we had such big families — and farmers had a reasonable amount of land — three or four quarters. And then when the parents died off there wasn't enough equity for each heir in the family so that one could make a big enough down payment to get a loan for the balance. Many of those young boys had their heart and soul set on farming.

Everything kept going up and up and up. And as farms

kept coming up for sale in families where they had eight or ten children, there wasn't any of them who had enough money so that they could buy the home place back. They had to sell it to some outsider. It was kind of heart breaking for some children who wanted to stay on the home place and keep farming.

Land had gone up so high at that time and there was always somebody who would overbid them. They couldn't get money enough so that they had to go out and work as a working hand again. I don't know if that was good for the country or not. But in my estimation, it isn't helping much.

The big farming operation today, if they can make a go of it, they're producing more to the acre and it seems to be more efficient, and of course we're building up bigger supluses than what we need. And that's a problem for our government to try to find markets for them, to ship it to foreign countries. In lots of cases where our government has shipped to foreign countries, they didn't get paid for it, and so the taxpayers back here have to make up for the losses.

When they talk about the good old days, I wonder if it wasn't just better possibly like when I first starter assessing. I was on for 29 years down in Croke township and I'll use that for a comparison. I suppose it's pretty much the same all over the whole county. I had 72 sets of farm buildings in Croke township that I had to assess, with people living on the farms. Today I doubt if there are 20 in the same township. So all those people had to go to the cities where the labor market was already overcrowded, and try to get jobs.

It seems to me that the young children today have a harder life to live than we had when I was young. Of course they have more money to spend, most of them. Both the mother and the dad of the family have to work nowadays with these exhorbitant prices to keep up the household.

But out there on the farm you could raise your own meat, have your own garden, have eggs, or you could go out and kill a chicken or butcher a hog. Of course, we didn't raise them for nothing either. They were eating up feed, but you had all of that so you didn't have to run to the supermarkets to buy it. And I think the children were just as happy then as they are today.

Being raised on a farm, and after living on a farm for 64 years, I can't see where things have gotten any better. The standard of living is higher today than it was then. We didn't have the money to buy all the clothes and other things, but the country wasn't in the financial condition it is today. And of course, we all blame the President right away when something goes wrong.

We did that when Hoover was President. He ran into problems just about the same as Mr. Carter is today. And people are turning on Carter just the same as we did on Hoover. So I don't see that a person has to necessarily have to ridicule a peanut grower because he happens to be a peanut grower any more than they would if he were a grain grower or a hayshaker, as they call a farmer once in awhile.

We don't have to have movie actors and guys who rode on

the moon at the head of our government. I doubt whether they are as capable as some of those people who are brought up the hard way — and honest, along with it.

I suppose you'd judge that I'm a Democrat. Well, I have been all my life. I haven't changed my politics because I have seen no reason for it. My way of life has always brought me happiness. The roughest times we've had have been under other administrations. But I don't say it was through their fault either. It was the condition of the world at the time that was causing those earlier problems, and I think it's the condition of the world causing the problems today. It sure as heck isn't our United States President who has caused things to be the way they are. Most of these things were here before he was elected.

The world is getting so big now that it isn't like it used to be when every county could be by itself if it wanted to be. Now, with the travel we have today, things are different. Yet today everyone seems to be cussing their legislature or cussing their President and finding fault for this and that.

I think we're the greatest country in the world today. If not, why do people keep coming by the hundreds of thousands every year from other places to live in this country? You don't see an influx of people from the United States going to other countries. I don't know why there are so many dissatisfied folks. We can't have everything. If we get enough to get along on, I think we should all be satisfied.

I guess a lot of people don't agree with me, but I don't care whether they do or not. That's the nature of my story. I'm telling things the way they are, and the way they were. I don't blame anybody for anything. We've had wars. I've had seven of my sons in the service, four of them in World War II, and three boys enlisted later. The first four were over in Okinawa, New Caledonia, Guadalcanal and over in Germany. They were right in the center of the scrap, and every one of them is a true American.

We can feel quite lucky to live in this country and in a community like we have at the present time. In all the years that I can remember, whenever things got tough there was always somebody here to help you with your problems. One of the greatest assets I think that ever came to this town was the time the county voted to build the nursing home. The older people in the later years of their lives, have handicaps, and we have a devoted bunch of girls working down there, taking care of them.

When the first movie pictures came into Dumont, a fella by the name of Smith from Wheaton came down once a week and ran a bunch of silent pictures. He'd have to stand there and talk, explaining each picture. He'd tell you the story of the picture. Later on the businessmen in Dumont went together and found an outfit that would provide a show every weekend. Felix Frisch got himself a movie outfit and he got in some of the leading films. They were the "talkies". He brought in a good bunch of pictures. Every week we'd have outdoor movies over on a vacant lot. A good crowd of people would come in for that. It provided a lot of entertainment. Transportation wasn't as good as it is today. You couldn't get

around too much, so people of all ages would gather there for those movies.

I missed out on a few because after the field work was done at night I was always great for hunting. I'd grab my gun and go out and hunt after supper until it got dark.

The times I cherish the most are when I was younger and my dad would take us boys out to the lake. He was a good friend of Einer Isaacson's dad, as he was of all the early settlers in this community. He'd come to Wheaton whenever he couldn't find what he needed in our little town down there.

Dumont was recognized around the country as one of the main dance towns in the country. They came from Beardsley, Browns Vally, Barry, Graceville, the southern part of Traverse county and western Grant.

Regarding the children attending school, at first when they started consolidation I was one of the doubting Thomases. But now I feel that it is a great improvement over what we had out in the country schools. We didn't have the opportunity to meet and get to know so many people. And naturally, you didn't have as many friends.

When the friends that you grew up with are practically all gone, that's when you really appreciate the friends you've had in your lifetime.

At the time I started farming on my own, after leaving my parents home back in the fall of 1917, I followed the auctions and got what I needed at the sales. It didn't cost much. We bought horse machinery and I had hay and feed, my oats right from the threshing machine that fall and hauled it over to the place where I was going to farm. Horses were selling quite high at the time, but horse machinery practically at give away prices.

When I got all through buying, my folks gave me a cow and a horse, a few things like that to help get started. Just as soon as I got to be 21 years old my dad started paying me wages just the same as any other man, only he added a little extra above the going wages, so I had that to go on. The balance I had to borrow from the Dumont bank. We paid ten percent interest at that time on loans. So really, the way everything else has gone up in these past few years, when you compare prices with what we had to pay in those days, I don't think that today's interest rates sound all that bad.

I had to pay 75 cents a bushel for my seed oats in the spring at that time. Cattle were cheap. You could go out and buy them at a price. At one time I bought 11 yearlings and one cow for \$330. The banks were quite lenient on loaning money for livestock, but on machinery alone there really isn't too much security for them. In those days livestock was about the only thing they were interested in. At ten percent on those low prices, there still wasn't any problem.

We'd sell our steers for five cents a pound, and most cows sold for three cents. I remember my dad put a scale out on the farm and cattle buyers would come and to buy cattle and most of them would pay three cents. For especially nice looking ones they'd pay a top price of five cents. When we

shipped the hogs, I recall, a commission firm wrote to one of my friends that he owed some money because his animals didn't bring enough money for the freight and the commission. He wrote a note back and said he didn't have any money, but he'd send them some more sheep if they wanted them. He never heard from them after that.

That was the way things were back in the Hoover administration. And it wasn't his fault either. The load companies which were getting their money from out east just tightened up, just like they're doing now. If you went to the bank with \$3,000 security, the banker would give you \$1,000, and they'd loan him \$3,000 on your security. But their intention was to not loan you more than \$1,000 because they figured you'd be back after a little more after while when the harvest season comes on and expenses start piling in.

So when the eastern banks started shutting down on them, that's when the banks started foreclosing. There was no one to blame for it. The eastern money market just wouldn't give them any more money. They couldn't operate.

A lot of banks went broke and didn't pay anything. The one down in Dumont was closed voluntarily. They didn't wait until the real squeeze was on. The board of directors got together one night with the bank manager and when he explained the problem, they decided to lock the door. One day you could go in and borrow money, and the next day the Crow bank was closed. It was quite a shock to the community, and it never did open up again after that.

Years before when William Bill Zaire owned the bank, bank robbers came through and they blew the safe, ran off with all the money and put the building on fire. They went back to the stockholders, and all put in a little bit. That made it possible to get their bank back again. They put up a little brick building there, which today is owned by Sylvester Frisch who has it as a meat market.

The banks paid five percent interest at that time on money depositors would bring in, and they'd loan it out for ten. They probably loaned it out for less to some who were a little better financially fixed. But for us beginners who were just starting out, we had to pay ten percent.

Later when things started getting better again and money got more free, after the banks went broke and Roosevelt got in as President, the first thing he did was close all the banks in the country. He closed them all and he got Congress busy and they voted a bank guarantee law, where the federal government would guarantee so much on the deposits. We still have that today.

Those who had money at that time, when the banks started crashing, made a run on the banks and drew out most or all of their money. And that, of course, was what caused most of the banks to have to close. The depositors got that scare and they started taking their money out of the banks to put it in fruit jars and hide it away somewhere. Then after they got the bank guarantee law in effect, that money started coming out of the fruit jars and going back into the bank and drawing interest.

I remember one time Al Hiedelberger had a bunch of money. He wanted to give it to me to buy a farm, the one I was living on. We were situated just a mile from town and I was a little afraid to stick my neck out. He was getting only two percent interest from the banks at that time. They really didn't want the money. They told him he'd be better off if he'd just go and invest it in government bonds.

The banks had all the money on hand they wanted because there wasn't enough real property in the country anymore that was a good enough risk so they could loan it out to anyone. And at two percent they didn't want to mess with any more money than they needed on hand to do business. So they recommended that people buy government bonds. After awhile I bought a few government bonds, just for something to fall back on. But the occasion came up when I wasn't able to keep them to maturity. I sold them for what little had accumulated on them.

Back in 1916 we had a wet year, just terrible. Whole quarters of land were literally covered with ducks. I don't think there was a square rod on some of those farms where there weren't some ducks and geese setting while on their way up to their Canadian breeding grounds.

In those days we used those old black-powered shells. We'd get them for fifty cents a box. Later on when Remington and Winchester came out with what they called "smokeless" powder, they were 75 cents a box if you would buy several boxes at a time. If you bought a case, you could get a whole case of 20 boxes for \$13.00.

My dad used to rake me over once in awhile when I'd buy a couple of boxes at a time and pay that extra dime. He said "Why don't you buy them by the case? You'll get 'em cheaper." "Well," I said, "I don't have that much money." He said, "Go ahead and charge them to me." My dad was quite an avid sportsman himself. He was quite interested in getting us boys interested in hunting.

That's one thing I haven't quit yet today. I have never missed a season opener unless I was in a hospital. And sometimes I'd get out of the hospital in the morning and I'd be out in the field in the afternoon. It's something that kind of grows on you. It's a real sport, and it's an outdoors sport. I think everyone who can encourage their children to go into it, should.

My dad used to make a regular ritual out of hunting. The day before the season opened, you'd see him down in the basement with a pan with lime water in it and he had his old gun cleaner with him, and he'd clean out the barrel until it'd shine like a mirror. Then the first black-powder shell that went through it would make it look just the same as the inside of a stovepipe. It really didn't help much. The little soot that formed inside the barrel never really interfered with the shooting. The main concern was to have the smoke clear away fast enough so you could see where your bird dropped, in case you did hit it.

The Anderson family used to be one of our larger families in town here. I understand that there were eight boys in the

family. Benny helped Gus Levander in his drug store quite often. They had some real ball teams around here back in those days, and there was this guy by the name of Heap Swenson — I don't know what his first name was, but that's what he went by. He took whatever job he could get. He worked for Guy Quien in the pool hall.

The first county agent in Wheaton was Earl Huber. He had been here a number of years. He was quite a guy, a friend of everyone. At graduation exercises they usually had him as the main speaker. He always had plenty of good little jokes to tell between his more serious comments.

One night he was telling us that he had met a guy on the street that afternoon in Wheaton. Now Earl was a tall man, about my size — around six foot four. The guy walked to him and said, "Mister, I owe you 25 cents." Earl said, "I never saw you before." But the man said, "Yes, I owe you 25 cents." He said, "I'm a Jew myself, and I made up my mind that the first man I ever found with a nose bigger than mine, I'd give him a quarter."

The commencements we had at that time were for eighth grade students. Considering the short school terms we had and the opportunities we had after being held out of school to do field work, eighth grade was considered quite an accomplishment. Most who were able to go on further were quite fortunate.

Ed and Alfred Rustad were among the leading citizens in Wheaton. They also held jobs in the courthouse. Ed and Alfred were clerk of court and treasurer. I don't remember which was which. Alfred was a character. He was one of our main attractions out at the county fair when that started back in 1906. He was one of our clowns.

The REA came in after the Roosevelt administration. That bill was in Congress while Mr. Hoover was president, but you know how politics works. It was democratically controlled at that time. They knew it was going to go over and it was going to be something big. Mr. Hoover was all for it. But it didn't pass while he was President. And then, of course, the recession set in and times really got rough.

I was running a shipping association down in Dumont at the time the recession set in. I remember the Cory brothers bringing in two 600-pound sows. The market in St. Paul was \$1.60 a hundred on fat hogs. The boys told me that if I wanted them they'd sell them to me for \$12.00. So I got 1,200 pounds of pork for twelve bucks.

Being part of a big family, there was lots of cooking and baking going on constantly around the house. I used to buy flour in 3,000 pound lots from Chester Johanson at the Farmers Store. And we'd get 500 pounds of sugar at a time, because we had run short and were without practically anything so many times. Whenever we did get a few dollars ahead we'd generally put it into something so that in case another catastrophe would come along we wouldn't be caught short on food or clothes.

We wore overalls to church and we wore them wherever else we went. Those were our dress suits, and usually we'd

try to keep a new one hanging in the closet so that when you had to change from your everyday apparel, you could at least change to a clean overall if you wanted to go somewhere.

But as I mentioned, when the REA came in, that was quite an improvement. People began switching from wood and coal and corncobs over to electricity. The electricity bill wasn't anything to worry about. If you could raise six or seven dollars a month, that would usually pay the bill. But most of us had to get a loan from the government to have it installed to begin with, and we had a monthly payment of \$6.00 a month. That lasted until we had the fixtures and the labor all paid for.

Swift Electric Company was in town at the time. Houston and Head handled this thing at the time, and they did most of the electrical appliance work.

When folks switched over to electricity, they had to have their names down in an appliance dealer's place for sometimes six months before the name ever came up. When this thing got nationwide, the manufacturers of stoves and all electrical appliances had such a great demand that you had to wait your turn. Sometimes it was six months, maybe longer, before you could get one.

In 1936 I got an Electrolux refrigerator that was run by oil. You could freeze ice cubes and lollipops and all that stuff within 30 minutes from the time you put them in there. That was in 1936, and the electric lights didn't come in until about 1940 or in that area.

Lloyd Zimbrick was appointed as manager for this district. He was also the secretary for the Tara Mutual Insurance. Tara Mutual Insurance was the first cooperative instigated in Traverse County. The stock companies out of St. Paul were doing real well. When the first settlers came out here they were paying 50 cents a hundred for insurance and they started their own cooperative and signed up the farmers. And then it cost them 10 cents a hundred for insurance. They went for three years before they had a loss and that one was only \$300. They had a surplus by then already, so they didn't have to worry about getting ahold of the money to pay for it. It's almost unbelievable how much money that Tara Mutual saved for the farmers.

Tara Mutual grew quite fast. Their rates were low and their adjustments always fair. Pete Johanson, Chester Johanson's father, was an adjuster for the company.

We also had a wind insurance company that came in during the 1900's. I think it was about 1920 when I started writing for them, but my dad had been writing for the Farmers Home Mutual out of Madelia.

Back in those earlier years we had an awful lot of people coming up and buying the land from those people who were ready to give it up. There was also some land even lying open yet, owned by the state. They were buying a lot of this land as the drainage system developed so they could get some of the water off of it.

They used to have what they called their Illinois picnic.

The Athertons came out here were from Illinois. Along with other people from Illinois who came to neighboring counties, they waited for the Illinois picnic about the same way we wait for a 4th of July celebration. They came from all over Grant, Stevens, and Traverse counties.

They used to come in their "Tin Lizzie" Fords as we called them at the time, and others came in their Overlands. And there was another little car, that sounded more like a John Deere tractor, which they called the Brush. The first man who owned one of those was Jim Lynch, the butcher from Dumont.

The house I live in now used to belong to Effie Damon. She was the daughter of Mr. Collier. She and Bill Damon had been going together for quite awhile, and one day her father told her, "If you and Bill get married before seven o'clock tomorrow night, I'll give you that house over there." She said they didn't want to wait until seven o'clock the next night; they got married at seven o'clock in the morning. I notice my abstract shows that when the house was turned over to Effie Damon it was for a consideration of \$1.

Walter Murray lived in White Rock, South Dakota, just across the line from where Boisburg started when the railroad came through in 1888. The town of White Rock built up on the opposite side, so Boisburg never really got off the ground. Several of the homes built at that time are still there yet.

Murray was telling me about his dad being policeman over there in White Rock. One night he heard a commotion over at the bank. The bank was being robbed. They had blown the safe. He told Walter to grab a gun, and he took one, and they took out to get in a hiding position waiting for them to come out of the bank. There were two guys in the front seat at the time waiting to take off in their car when Mr. Murray saw the man coming out of the bank with a suitcase. He took a shot at him. He dropped the suitcase and jumped in the car and the streets of White Rock were paved with paper bills when the suitcase opened up.

The Whaleys were also among the first families to locate here in Wheaton. I remember Barney Whaley and his wife well. They used to come out and visit at my folks' home. Mr. Whaley was a well driller. That profession has kept up by his sons and grandsons. They had a trucking business in connection with it, as well.

It's quite amazing to look at all the changes that have been made since the first homesteaders came to this country. I can hardly keep up with the miracles that are being performed today, compared with the way things were when I was a boy on the farm east of Dumont. Where people used to live off the land, now you can just about live out of packages.

I bought gasoline during a gasoline war here in Wheaton, from Vern Fleischer. Hugo Miller drove into my yard one winter with a team of horses and a sled with a couple of barrels on it, and he said, "Jake, why don't you drive into Wheaton and get yourself some gas, they're selling it for ten cents a gallon." I told him I didn't have any barrels. But Vern

said he would give me one, so we drove into Wheaton with the sled and bought gasoline for ten cents a gallon. Nowadays the tax alone is higher than what that gasoline was.

When I started farming it was 35 cents a gallon. We didn't have bulk stations; we had to buy it at the pumps. There weren't many tractors running around that time.

We found out in those days that "moonshine" or alcohol would work in a car, too. A bunch of my buddies came home from a dance one time and the old Ford started sputterin' and they knew they were getting low. They stopped real quick. They had a quart of moonshine in the car. They poured that in the gas tank and the old Tin Lizzie brought 'em back to Dumont in good shape.

So if all else fails, they can still go back to making alcohol on the farms and using it in their machines. That stuff they cooked out in those days was 190 proof. That could have been diluted a little bit and still had plenty. They made 16 quarts out of a 30 gallon jar of mash — if anybody's interested. They'd run it through it through an old wash tub with a coil pipe on it and a batch of ice over the edge to chill it.

I bought the first Fraser that Lawrence Jacobson got when he started handling those. I bought this car for \$3,000. The mileage that that thing made was almost unbelievable. It didn't have all the accessories. We didn't have an air conditioner. But it was a nice looking car and a new style from any that had been built prior to the war.

One of my first trips included a stop in Wheaton at the Schmitz gas station. I filled the car up with gasoline at that station and I drove from Wheaton to Farmington, Minnesota, and I averaged 28.6 miles to the gallon. And this was in the winter months.

There was no reason in the world why these same type of carburetors could not have been put on any other car sold after that. The big oil industry bought the patent of the Kaiser-Fraser carburetor and took it off the market so they could sell more of their fuel.

I drove the Fraser car for 60,000 miles before I ever had it inside a garage for anything, except to change spark plugs. Oh yes, the tires weren't as good though as they are today. I've had lots of cars in my lifetime, but I don't think I've ever had one as good as the Fraser.

When I started my little story here it was my intention to just put down a few things so that all my children and grandchildren and great grandchildren would know of a few of the things all the great pioneers did in this part of Minnesota. I wanted them to know what these early pioneers had gone through in making this part of Minnesota the lovely place it is to make their home. I always want them to remember that when times get tough, their forefathers have had tough times also. And they came through it, and it will keep on that way until the end of time. All the things that we take today for granted, the wonderful inventions that came up through the years.

When the unions first came into being, I thought they

were a detriment to the country. The negroes had it tough when they were slaves. They were brought into this country against their will. They were sold on auction blocks just like any other piece of livestock. Things are getting better for them. If it hadn't been for people who were looking forward to making life better for the next generations, we would have had slavery. That's what we would have had today if it hadn't been for the unions. That may be kind of a strong statement. The unions may have to make some changes, but if unions did not exist, we'd have white people being slaves in this country working for the big interests for little or nothing, just as the negroes were.

The Indians, too, have a kick coming. They lived in this country for Lord knows how many millions of years. No one knows how long they've been on this continent. The whites moved in here and pushed them onto reservations. The food promised in their treaties didn't always come in time. The Chief would take the people off the reservation to try to catch some fish and the government military men shot them — women, children and braves.

They felt this was their country. They were divided up into tribes and the respected each other's rights.

Big interests have moved into our farming area during the past few years and have taken over the people. They've run their high-power electric lines through it. It makes a fella stop and think about what happened to the American Indian. He was driven off his land.

The commotion they're making now when the utility lines move in and cross a person's farm! They agreed to a reasonable price for their land. But they resent that because the utility power that they are furnishing on those lines is needed somewhere else. I don't know the answer, but this is pretty much like some old saying that they used to have: The big fish eat up the little ones. That's just a continuation of what has been going on for centuries and centuries.

We can't live here all by ourselves either. We have to keep other people's considerations in mind, too. The thing that I am against is the monopolizing people before they had unions — how they had 'em working for nothing practically.

I can remember back in the 1920's. I used to do considerable hunting. I used to shoot a lot of jackrabbits. There was no market for them around here, but I could take them down to the depot and ship them to Chicago. They went to commission firms.

I was told that there were so many foreigners coming over here and working in the cities for the little amount doled out to them in wages. Most of them had large families. And one jackrabbit would give them enough food for a day. I got to thinking how lucky we were here that we could just go out to the hog lot and knock off a nice hog and have all the meat we wanted.

We had times when we had it a little tough. That's when yellow corn was rated at 3 cents a bushel and white corn was a little more. We had to burn it for fuel because we didn't have the money to buy coal or wood. Most of the tree claims

were growing good then yet. There was no dead wood. And we didn't have incomes large enough to go up town and buy coal. So we know what it is to be hard up and going through tough times.

I previously mentioned how a bank sold me and many others out to get money to loan out to help some who were even a little more unfortunate. Those people didn't have enough to pay and the banks didn't want to take their losses on them. So they sold out a few of us, knowing they could get enough money on us to carry these others.

I felt pretty bitter about that at the time. But if it helped somebody else, I've never felt any ill feeling toward the banks that performed what they were hired to do by a larger corporation.

I wasn't entirely left out in the dark. It was my friends who jumped in and gave me a lift so I could keep on going.

I mentioned Mr. Deal. Another one drove in the yard with a load of oats and a team and wagon, and told me. "I'm going to leave these horses here so you've got something to plow with." We got our plowing done, and then the next spring the "barnyard loan" came into effect and we were able to borrow money from the government.

That time showed the kind of people you were living among — the good and the greedy. You learned to respect a lot of the poor folks who were doing what they couldn't help. That's one thing you always find out here in the rural area — somebody willing to help somebody else who's down, if he just tries.

My dad's motto was: "Always be honest, even if you have to die a poor man." And I think that the country was built on people of his type. Traverse County is very fortunate to have had the type of settlers that they did have.

It isn't what you go through, it's how you come out that counts. My advice to anybody is, never give up. When you live in a community as I did and was fortunate enough to live my life, things are always going to come out.

I don't believe that I mentioned that my first wife, Veronica, died in 1959 after we had left the farm and moved to Wheaton. I went into the flower business the following spring and I discontinued that after seven years. I was offered a job at the court house as radio dispatcher. And I stayed with that for twelve years.

In 1964, I remarried Elizabeth Johnson, who was born in Millington, Illinois, in 1903. She married a fella by the name of Fred Johnson. They moved to Iowa on a farm and in 1919 they moved to a farm near Donnelly. Due to his health they had to leave the farm. They lived in Donnelly where she took over the job as telephone operator. He worked while he was able as a lineman for the company. He died in 1953.

She worked for a farmer-owned telephone company for 13 years, until the company sold out and the new owners went on the dial system. She was out of work so took whatever job she could get, working in restaurants and stores. She got a job as a priest's cook in Donnelly for a year or so, and then

she worked for a priest at Collis for 20 years. And then she worked for the priest at Herman for four years.

She and I got married on the 24th day of October, 1964. Since the first part of January in 1980 she got this hardening of the arteries and got quite senile. She's been in the nursing home in Wheaton.

Another of the old settlers that came into our county in the early 1880's was Carlson. Edwin W. Carlson is the son of the original homesteader. They homesteaded just north of Wheaton. Edwin still lives on the home place.

The Scandinavians came over and settled up in the area along the Mustinka River in the area north of town. After they got a pretty large delegation, they were all people who were religious, they went ahead and started building themselves a church. The first one was in White Rock in 1880, and then they built this one up in Monson Township. That one started around that time also.

Dumont didn't get their first church until they held a meeting on the first day of June in 1897. They built what they called a German Catholic church at Dumont. Up til that time they went to Collis. The Irish, when they came over in 1878, the first thing they did was build a church at Collis. That's where our folks went to church. All the Catholics in the Dumont area went there until they started building up funds to start their own.

They started the plans on building this church in June 16, 1897. I was two years old at the time. My father was elected secretary and John Fridgen was made treasurer. They took up collections and they got \$1,675.00 to start out on. They bought a cemetery lot from Jake Heidelberger. He owned the half section just east of Dumont. Joe Brink owns the land now. They got two and a half acres along the Dumont creek bank for a cemetery, and later the Lutheran church bought a parcel of land right across the road which they used for a Lutheran Church. That came quite a bit later.

During all those years that the Germans used the Catholic church at Collis to worship, everything seemed to be hunky-dory. But when the Germans got the one built at Dumont and called it the German Catholic church, all the priests gave their sermons in German. My dad didn't think that was quite fair, always having German sermons, because we had a number of our good Irish neighbors living in the area close to Dumont, and everything was horse and buggy in those days. And rather than having them drive the longer distance to Collis, they figured they should come to Dumont. But everything was Greek to them when the sermons were all done in German.

So at one of the meetings before election time my dad was running for county commissioner, and he mentioned that because so many Irish were coming to our church and contributing on Sundays they should be entitled to have an English sermon once in awhile. He thought possibly every other week the priest should give the sermon in English.

Most of these Germans have a reputation for being a little stubborn. I'm one of them myself, so I know what

they're like. They got kind of teed-off with my dad when he suggested an English sermon for the benefit of the Irish. Dad felt it was no more than fair. Henry Heidelberger was running for county commissioner; so was my dad. The guys that he thought were his friends got mad at him for his suggestion and went to the election two days later and voted against my dad. He lost out in the county commissioner election by two votes.

Sometimes you don't know who your friends are. But these guys felt pretty bad about it. They came back and apologized to him for working against him. They figured possibly he was right — but they hated to admit it.

At the time they bought this land from Jake Heidelberger for the cemetery, the two and a half acres cost \$125.00. They made a down payment of ten bucks. On the opposite side the Lutherans bought a piece of land about equal size along the creek bank. They bought that from Mike Doll. That was his homestead.

When the Dolls came up into this country the boys were all old enough to homestead land. There are two survivors of the Dolls left. Andy and Leo Doll live over in Rosholt. Andrew Doll was their father and the original homesteader over in Dollymount township was John Doll, the man after whom Dollymount township was named.

After they got that burial ground in Dumont in 1897 many of the graves from the early settlers, and children of the early settlers were moved over to the Dumont cemetery. They had two epidemics going through at that time. There was the smallpox epidemic that killed so many people.

And of course dyptheria took a third of the population, along with whooping cough and scarlet fever, a lot of them children. All of those diseases have vaccine to prevent them today.

They blame quite a bit of this type of fever epidemic on to those open wells they had in those days. They were shallow and dug out by hand. My father said when he homesteaded, he had to go down only four feet and he had a vein, giving him all the water he needed. Later on when he dug a deeper well he went down 40 feet and the water came to within a couple feet on the top of that. So the water lever was high in the country at that time. There was never a shortage of water. But those open holes were never quite as sanitary as the wells we are having dug today.

They didn't move a lot of those people who had died from smallpox at that time. I don't know if there was any difference in the varieties of smallpox, but the people who died with smallpox turned almost black shortly after they were dead. And, of course, no one was embalmed in those days. Of course there was about 18 or 20 years later when we got the cemetery in Dumont. And with what little they knew about smallpox, they were afraid to disturb the graves in case the disease would break out again.

There are markers out on the cemetery in Dumont where there is no body. The people are buried out on the side hill up on the Merton Lichtsinn farm. They used that for a cemetery.

Most of the folks who lost young people buried them in that grove that they had started.

When I was a young fellow tramping the tree claims, every once in awhile I'd run onto a marker in a grove where some child or some person had been buried in the early years. After all, it doesn't make too much difference if a stone is set there and no one is in the grave. The stone usually reads, "In memory of" and that's the idea of the stone anyway.

All the caskets in those days were made by just some local man who was handy with a hammer and could work with wood. They were just plain board boxes. After 12 or 15 years in the ground there wouldn't really be much object of moving them.

On the farm where Mert Lichtsinn now lives, just north of his building lot on the higher point of the creek is where the Servous Doll family homesteaded. I used to run into the old foundations of the buildings when I was out hunting prairie chickens. Just east of that there's a ravine that comes down into the 12-mile creek. The Lichtsinns built up a dam there and have sort of a wildlife refuge, sort of an artificial lake. It's a beautiful spot. Wild ducks and geese stop in there and stay the year around. They feed them. It's kind of a conservation setup. At the deepest point the lake is about 20 feet deep.

The Lichtsinn family moved up here from Iowa. The first people living on that place were a family by the name of Olson. The mother of the family died early in life, and Mr. Olson later on sold the place. That, too, is along the Twelve Mile Creek. It's some of the better land in Traverse County.

As I mentioned, where Mert Lichtsinn lives now was the farm homesteaded by Servous Doll. His brother, Henry, homesteaded just a half mile towards the southeast along the same creek, also known as Dollymount Creek. The Henry Doll family moved away, going out to California. They moved to Dumont for awhile, and then they left for California.

Just a little more about the Heidelberg family. The parents of Jacob Heidelberg came over from Switzerland in 1851 and settled in Hennepin county, down in the same area where my father and his family settled. Mr. Heidelberg was born in 1851 in Switzerland and his father came to America in 1855, that was one year after my father had settled in Minnesota. My father knew the Heidelbergs before they ever came out here.

As Jake Heidelberg grew up in that area down around Minneapolis, he worked in a candy kitchen. My father used to call him the "candy man". He followed that trade for 12 years. He came to Traverse County in 1879. That was four years after my father homesteaded out here. He homesteaded in section 14 in what later became Croke Township. He put up his buildings on the northeast quarter of the half section along the creek.

But he also built a tree claim along the south side along the half section. As I mentioned before, in those days you

could get another quarter of land if you could establish a grove of trees over ten acres and cultivate them for five years. You could then claim the second quarter of land. The land now is owned by Joe Brink from Dumont.

Some of the first settlers in what was later designated as Traverse County included Henry and Rudolph and Emil, also came out here at the same time. All Heidelbergs.

They did their first field work with a team of oxen. The cost of those oxen was \$135. That was his horsepower at the time.

People from Switzerland displayed a characteristic different from others. Usually here we planted our groves on the west and north of a farmstead because our winds blow from the northwest in the winter when we get out real bad storms. But over in Switzerland the wind used to blow from the north and east. So that's where those people would plant their groves.

When Dumont started building up, Jake Heidelberg managed a lumber company, known as the Charles Belcher Lumber Co. That was back in 1897.

Most everyone has heard of the Turpeny family. The father, Orin Turpeny, was one of the early residents in Windsor township. He was born in Wisconsin, and his father, Calvin Turpeny, was born in New York. They came to Traverse County in 1877. They built a claim shanty and a sod barn. The closest towns at that time were Morris and Herman. They used to haul their grain mostly over to Morris at the time because Morris had a little flour mill, and people would take their wheat over there and get it ground into flour.

The Turpenys built a small shack for a house, but their barn they built out of sod.

At one time Wheaton had quite a payroll at the Co-op Creamery and also at Powers Produce. The Wheaton Creamery was dressing poultry and buying eggs, and had trucks going out on the road gathering cream. John Bigalke had a pickup truck after the buying stations had quit buying cream in that area. They had good thing going there for some time. They had about 25 women dressing poultry of all kinds, and candling eggs, and then there was the creamery crew that churned the butter. And Powers had a large egg candling setup going in his place, so he employed about 25 people. Chester Johanson said he used to keep \$2,000 cash extra on hand on Saturday nights just to cash checks for people who were holding jobs at the two buying stations.

During World War II Powers Produce was shipping hundreds of carloads of eggs to the government.

I had four sons in World War II. Eugene, after he left Okinawa, was stationed over in Korea. He was in a big school building that they had taken over and he was made a cook. He mentioned that a lot of Traverse brand eggs, coming from Powers Produce, arrived there.

The creamery here used to ship out carloads of dressed turkeys and other kinds of poultry. It went out in refrigerator cars. Dairying was quite an industry at that time, too. There

was more of a diversified type of farming. They had cows and pigs and chickens, and everyone had gardens. Everyone seemed to get along, although they didn't have too much money in their pockets. They planned ahead, they didn't have to buy groceries from day to day. And when they did have a little money on hand, they'd buy sugar and that stuff by the hundred pound bags. Generally in the fall of the year, they'd lay up enough of a supply to pull them through the winter and along into the time when another crop would come through.

Some other industries tried to get into Wheaton at different times, but the folks that were at the head of the business of running the town at the time couldn't see where this would be much of a help.

At one time this was a great area for raising alfalfa. Everyone had dairy herds and they raised hay for those cows. There was what everyone called a "cow chow" that was bagged, processed from alfalfa. It gave off quite an odor, and they figured that for the few extra people who would be employed, and the extra expense the city would have piping water out to those plants, they weren't happy about that. The school was also pretty well crowded, and they figured they would have to add more to the school building to take care of the people who would come in if a plant moved to town, so they just kind of overruled it and forgot about it.

The Peter Schweitzer outfit that later on built up over at Breckenridge, we've heard many times that people have regretted the idea that they were looking at Wheaton as a spot to build. The same plan was used there as it was for this cow chow. They would have to run water out and it would cost the city quite a bit to get the required facilities out there, so they turned that one down, too.

There has been a lot of comment over the years about the mistake our city heads made by not letting those business come to town. It would have made a little extra employment. But as things have turned out now, diversified farming is a thing of the past. People used to have plenty of help running their farms with just their own children. They could mess around with poultry and hogs and cows and horses, all that stuff. You could use most of the help as they were growing up.

But the farms were all small.

When the war broke out, that's when farms started getting big. The dairy people figured that with the price of flax and with all the prices on grain going up, it would be a lot easier to just break up the pastures and put that into cropland. At one time the government was paying \$20.00 a bushel for flax. They needed the oil to coat their battleships. And it was used in so many other ways that there was quite a demand for oil. So this old prairie ground that had been used for pasture was soon broken up and put into grain. And then cattle were bringing a pretty fair price at those times, so they sold off their cattle herds.

The younger generation didn't care much for sitting there and milking cows anyhow. That was generally left for Mom and Dad, so they just sold off the cows and went entirely to grain farming. And then the cost of farming got rather expensive. A small farm wasn't paying off either; you couldn't find a market for your eggs. You had to haul them a long distance after the Wheaton Creamery closed. Greg Powers closed up his place.

Then we got altogether a different style of farming. Farmers who could buy extra land bought out some of the small farms, and young folks preferred to go to the Cities to work. So the farms were sold and the larger farm owners bought adjoining farms or any other one that they could get their hands on. Then when this big machinery came out, one man could do the work of half a dozen. It kind of proved that big farming was paying off a lot better than the small farming had been doing.

With all these changes, those plants that used to want to come here would not be doing much today anyway. The cow chow plant would have had to shut down because of the change in farming, and the Peter Schweitzer plant that located in Breckenridge just use their buildings for storage now. They have no full time employees there.

So while we used to criticise our local people for not allowing industry to come in, it would have been of very little benefit to the town.

**4.** Back in 1910 the Conroy family moved in from Illinois. They bought a farm just northwest of Collis. James Conroy and his wife and three children, William, Dan and Agnes.

The Conroys farmed for awhile, and their neighbor Barney Peyton bought some road building equipment. He bought a big Altman and Taylor gad tractor and some heavy equipment to go with it. That's when we really first started getting roads. I don't think there are many roads in Tara township or Dollymount township, or Croke, really anywhere in the county that Barney Peyton hadn't changed over to a pretty good road, that used to be just an old wagon trail.

It was a real benefit when they got those road building crews operating in the county. They'd usually get a ditch a couple of feet deep at least to get the dirt to build up the center of the roads. And that gave us a chance to make a few drainage ditches out in our fields in the low spots and we could drain the water off our into the road ditches which would carry it somewhere to a ravine or creek. It was quite a help to the farmers when we would get these heavy rains and floods.

Dan Conroy got a job with Barney helping him build roads. He got his first road building experience there and later Dan bought the business from Barney Peyton. Since that time it has been known as the Conroy Construction Company. Dan started there in 1916 working for Barney Peyton. After Dan decided to take it a little easier, he turned the business over to his sons James and Donald. James got killed in a car accident and the business was then run by Donald.

Dan was a well known man and well liked. They put a little pressure on him to run for state representative from this area. After convincing him that he should try it, he ran for the office and was elected. But he never relished the job too much. He would rather have been back out on the farm. He was a farmer. He stayed a term or two, then decided not to run again, and he went back out to the farm where he stayed for a time to help with the road building. And then later he and his wife moved to Dumont and built a home there. Dan died several years back, but his wife still lives in Dumont.

Dan told me that one of his first jobs on a federal contract was with a group of other contractors, building the stretch of road from Doran to Breckenridge. A lot of their work was with state and county roads. There aren't many roads in the area which weren't built by the Conroy Construction Company.

We have another road contractor down west of Collis. Lawrence Mange is also in the road building business.

John Kinney started out as a homesteader north of Dumont. He was living in a small building, about 13 by 18, for many years. He was a good manager and did well. He married one of the Henry Heidelberger's daughters.

Farming is altogether different now. Using this modern equipment, they're doing a wonderful job of farming. They produce more per acre. Of course, the land was misused in the early years, too. Stubble fields were burned off to make the field look nice and black. They figured the darker you could keep your plowing looking, the better farmer you were — which was a mistake. They should have plowed the stubble back under. The humus was being robbed from the soil and the land got heavy. Now they use commercial fertilizer heavily, and they use crops that will produce three and four times as much per acre as was considered a good crop back in the horse and buggy days.

The threshing machines used to be moved about every half day. They'd blow a straw pile here and another one there. Nobody had any use for that straw. On a foggy or rainy night you'd see those straw piles all burned up. That was a mistake, too. It should have been plowed down into the field. That's happening today with the modern equipment they have. The straw choppers put all the straw right back into the soil again. Now they're raising a lot of sunflowers and corn stalks, and that's all chopped up and put back into the soil.

When I was farming if you could get 45 bushels per acre on corn you thought you were doing pretty well. That was more than the average with those old types of seed and the farming style of those days. Anything under 100 today is considered a poor crop. Of course, with the price of land you've got to produce those crops, too, in order to make it pay at all.

After all these years since 1884 when the railroad came through — that was a godsend at that time. The town started building up and many of the old farmers went into town and into businesses. A lot of the land laid idle for years and years, growing up to weeds. And then some farmer with equipment enough to add on a little more could buy it quite reasonably and they developed some of the best farm homes in the country.

After having a railroad through here for 96 years, the railroad has been pulled up and taken out, so we're what you'd call an inland town right now. It won't be as sorely missed as we probably feel it would have been because the

trucks are taking over and have been doing that. All the commodities that used to come into Wheaton by rail, that business was lost by the railroads. The lack of a railroad is no indication that it's going to kill out the town.

A friend of mine up near White Rock told me about how he had borrowed \$80 from an elevator back in '32. In the fall he hauled back just 1,000 bushels of oats to pay back his loan. Out of that \$80 he also had the threshing bill to pay, so deducting the threshing bill, he got about \$50 for a thousand bushels of oats.

We didn't hear much about prosperity back in those days. We resorted to what our pioneers had to do in their early years out here — just live with what we had and that was the best we could do. There was no such thing as free fuel and food stamps at that time.

I had occasion recently to spend a little time with the children of one of the first settlers over around highway 236. Fritz Johnson and his brother Walter are neighbors in there and they told me about the time their father, Pete Nelson, more commonly known among the early settlers as "Little Pete", came up with his family from Illinois. Little Pete homesteaded the place where Walter Johnson lives now. He was a little short on change, too, but he had that pioneer spirit. For a house he took a wagon box and turned it upside down and that's what he lived in the first summer. And all the farm equipment he had was a walking plow. That was his entire line of machinery. He would help some of the other homesteaders in the area with their work, and they'd come back and help him with what they could do. They broke up four acres of sod, that was all the crop he got in the first year. Other homesteaders only had a team of horses or oxen, so they didn't get much done either.

Little Pete went back to Illinois that same fall after spending the summer here, and he got himself a job back home. He had a friend, Gust Johnson. They worked over the winter and gathered a little money between them and came back with the hope that the land next to Pete's wasn't taken yet. So Gust homesteaded the land next to Pete's. Between the two of them they built a small house right on the quarter line.

One of the stipulations was that you had to have your house on the quarter you homesteaded. So they built the house right on the quarter line, and Pete slept on one side and Gust on the other. That was perfectly legal.

We've talked about the wet years and dust bowl years in the 1930's. We've talked about some of the storms. But the worst wind storm that ever hit this area was June third to fifth, 1953. Previous to that, there was a hurricane raising havoc down in the Gulf of Mexico.

Another man and I were sitting in my car and we noticed a good sized tree between two buildings on main street — probably 30 or 35 feet tall. That blew out by the roots. We thought something odd was going on. We started for home, and as we were going for home Junior looked out the window and said, "Dad, there's a couple of boxcars going down the tracks by themselves." They had been parked in Dumont and

the wind caught those and pushed them down. They got off the sidetrack and jumped onto the mainline. And they were going at a pretty good clip toward Wheaton. They made about three-quarters of a mile out of town before the wind rolled them off the railroad track. They wound up lying on the bank beside the track.

When we got home a couple of the boys were working in the garage on a tractor. They weren't thinking anything of the wind blowing so strong and I didn't much more than get the car parked and I noticed my garage was bouncing up and down off the ground. It would go up a foot or so and come down and settle down. About the fourth or fifth time she did that, she blew apart and went across the yard in pieces.

Just about then a big tree, probably 50 feet tall and a foot and a half in diameter, between the house and garage where the boys were working, just slowly tipped over and brought up a couple of yards of dirt with the roots. That thing must have been standing there for 50 or 60 years. A good, strong, healthy looking tree. All at once I noticed the shingles started flying off the top of the house. I thought we'd better get into the house and get into the basement. I didn't know what in the world was going on.

But the wind just seemed to get stronger and stronger. I got the boys in the house and pretty quick some windows went out of the house, the screen door slammed open and broke off. There were big barns that were twisted and leaning over. The only buildings that weren't hurt too bad were houses. They were heavy and sitting on good foundations. They took it pretty well. It was mostly minor damage to most of them, like chimneys, doors and windows and so forth. But the barns, most of them, were leaning one way or the other. Field granaries and corn cribs, all empty about that time of the year, it wasn't much for the wind to take those and roll them over. I don't think there was a house or barn in Traverse County that didn't have some damage.

I was writing for the Farmers Home Mutual Insurance Company at that time, and three days later an adjuster stopped in, Mr. Hardy, a full time adjuster for the company. He wanted to know if I'd drive around the neighborhood with him. He said he had 250 loss claims in the car that had already come in from our area. I was acquainted with practically everybody in that area, so it didn't take us long to go from one place to another and find the people he was looking for. There were a lot of small claims.

At that time there was no deductible policy. They paid from the first dollar up on every claim. There were claims of all sizes all the way from a few dollars up to a couple thousand bucks. But most of the barns that were twisted and moved off the foundations, the company sent up some crews that had the equipment to move them back into place and get them straightened up again. They did a pretty good job of handling the claims.

Mr. Hardy got himself a room over at the Palmer House. Tom Heatherington owned the place at the time. He stayed right in this area about three weeks. Every morning when he came down to get his mail he'd have another stack of loss

claims that they had sent to him from the main office in Minneapolis. I ran around with him for about three weeks and helped him locate most of the people he was looking for.

When he got the job completed, he had 550 claims in Traverse County alone. He was pretty lenient. He knew right to the penny what shingles cost. The wood shingles weren't so hard to figure. But the shingles came in so many colors, and sometimes the lumber yard would be sold out of shingles. So some of the houses would wind up looking sort of like checkerboards. And some of the people didn't like that.

Back in the early 1900's when a lot of us were going out on our own and farming, we didn't have the working capital to go out and buy our livestock. Fred Wohlenhaus, quite a successful sheep raiser, would start out quite a few with sheep. He'd give them to us on shares. He'd give out as high as 200 head, if we had the feed and ground suitable for raising sheep. Then he'd keep the old original herd. You'd feed them and take half the increase. Of course, you had to stand the loss if you lost any. You didn't make very much on it and sometimes you didn't make anything. But it was a way to start in on it if you wanted to get into the sheep business on your own.

Doc Ewing had a system that worked quite a bit the same way. He put cows out on shares. He made the remark to my dad one time that if he could get out enough cows and get half the increase and half the cream check, it wouldn't take long before he'd be the richest man in the county. It didn't take long before the farmers caught onto it. He was quite an asset to the community. He was about the only thing we had here for a doctor for a good many years. He took care of this end of the county pretty well until Dr. Lindberg came in with him.

And Dr. Randall and Dr. Oliver took care pretty well of the south end of the county. Once in awhile when they were undecided whether someone had appendicitis or inflammation of the bowels — they knew inflammation of the bowels had already killed so many young people back in the early years — a good many times Doc Oliver and Doc Ewing would get together and operate right in the home. We didn't have any good hospitals then like we have now. The doctors were doing the best they could under the conditions they were working.

Doc Oliver got talked into being a State Senator. When his term expired he quit. His son had already taken over some of the duties that his father had, working in the same office down in Graceville. Doc Oliver was a doctor, he was no politician. He said that 80 percent of the people holding office down there were attorneys, and once in awhile when you'd suggest something, he said, they'd just sit back and laugh at you. One term of that was enough for him.

There were quite a few people in the early days who used to go out to South Dakota. They had a doctor out there by the name of Dr. Thill. A lot of our neighbors went out there, and one had just come back one time, Emil Conrad. He was on the township board and my dad was township clerk from the time the township was organized until he retired in 1916. They held all their meetings at my father's home.

He said to Mr. Conrad one day, knowing that he had been

down there for treatment, "What did they do down there?" He answered, "Oh they just take a big strip of cloth and they smear it with plaster and they stick it on your back from the back of your neck clean down to the lower part of your body." Dad said, "Did it help any?" He said, "Well, I'll tell ya, George, that plaster burned me so darned bad I never felt my other pains at all while I had that on there." But a lot of people went out to Canastota to those rub doctors.

In 1918 when I was doctoring down in Rochester, the time I had a liver ailment, Dr. Mayo took care of it for me. We had a couple of chats about these quacks and he said that there's only one trouble with them. He said that people spend too much time foolin' around with those guys that haven't got any chance of helping them whatever, unless it's all in your state of mind. And then after they would find that they really didn't get helped at all they would come down to Rochester, but by the time they got there it was too late; they couldn't help them at Rochester either. If some would have come sooner there would have been help for them.

That got to be quite a racket out there. They called them "rub doctors". I fell for a lot of fakers in my lifetime, but I never got taken in by any of them.

For a good many years the medical profession didn't recognize the chiropractic. But they have their schooling and can help where medicine won't do any good. I went to a doctor that we had here in Wheaton at one time about a pain in my back. The medicine he gave me wasn't doing any good. So he suggested that I go see a chiropractor. I got four or five treatments. He noticed that I have four or five ribs that had been knocked out of their sockets. After those four or five treatments I never had any more problems.

Today is January 23, 1981. I was reminiscing, trying to remember when we had a winter as mild as the one we are having today or this season. We've been running anywhere from 35 to 50 degrees above. Under ordinary conditions we could be looking for anything from 15 to 30 below. It's been a really exceptional winter.

I can remember at least several times in my life where we hadn't had any snow at Christmas time. But what came to my mind last night while I was thinking about some of these things was an article in the Wheaton paper that one farmer threshed two crops of soybeans in the same year. It came to my mind on whose farm this happened. Gilbert Smith, who's living northwest of Wheaton.

Due to a wet fall and the early snows he was unable to get his soybeans threshed. It was around the time when soybeans first became a major crop in this area. During January we had what they call chinook winds, those awfully warm winds that come up southerly. They took out all the snow almost in one evening and it was followed by some clear, cool weather for quite a period. Gilbert was able to go out in January and harvest those beans that had been standing in the snow.

And that next fall he still had a new crop of beans coming up and he got these out. With proper weather he got them out in the ordinary time, September.

So that was the first incident where I ever saw one man take two crops of beans off one farm in the same year.

My life came in what was known as the horse and buggy days. We used to have horse traders coming through the country. They generally followed the towns. They let their horses graze on the railroad land next to the railroads and one man usually had about twenty head, sometimes more. There would be western broncos and local horses that he had taken in on trade.

It was an almost impossible job for one man to control so many horses. But the way this was done, they would tie one horse to another horse's tail. They'd be strung out for rods. They'd come down along the railroad track leading a couple of the lead horses and the other horses would be tied to the ones that was joining them in the rear. That's the way they would travel through the country trading horses. They made their living that way.

We had a few local people who were involved in horse trading also, but these fellas sometimes came a long, long distance. They had a lot of western broncs that had never been broken. I traded a horse I had one time to get one of those. I really didn't trade, I bought it directly. The thing had never been in a barn and it didn't know what one was. It was off the ranges out in the western states.

It happened to be threshing time when I made the trade. I had a crew of men around. Of course I had plenty of help around to handle the darn thing. It was a medium size horse. It was nice looking horse but I never noticed at the time I traded for it that it had its ears cropped. If the cowboys had a horse that almost impossible to handle, they would just ride up alongside it and fire a couple of bullets into its ear and split its ear. That was a mark so that the next man would leave it alone.

Of course I didn't know anything about that stuff when I picked out the horse I wanted. We weren't threshing on that particular day and the boys were all in town, imbibing a little bit. When we came home there were three or four of us on the wagon, and they helped me get this thing lassoed down at the stockyards. Finally a guy lassoed him and we got around him and put an extra rope around him and tied him down to the wagon. He gave us quite a hassle.

We brought him home to my father's place three miles east of town. He was pretty well lagged out by the time we got him there, but when we tried to get him in the barn he wouldn't go in. The boys started fooling with him and tormenting him. We got him in the barn; he went in backwards. We got him into a stall and fastened him to a manger board in the holes where they tie ropes, and tied him snugly up to one of the mangers.

The next morning when we got up he was outside. He had the top board of the manger hanging on him and he was scrambling around out in the yard. But after he got used to being around people who treated him kindly, he kind of cooperated. He was probably one of the best horses that I ever had while I was a horse farmer.

Smokey Haggardt's dad did a lot of trading. I traded for a horse from him one time and he was really something. He had several dispositions. You could walk up to him and put the bridle in his mouth, but you'd have to use a pitchfork to lay the harness on his back. There was a time finally when we caught him, we thought we had him under control. I went and loaded up a load of grain and I was going to take it up to the elevator to get some money to pay for the horse. Everything seemed to go okay until I got down on the road about 20 rods from home and all at once he stuck his head clean down to the ground and his back feet came up. I had a high wagon with a triple wagon box on it but he kicked the top end gates right out of the wagon box. He just kept on hammering away until there was hardly anything left of the front part of the wagon.

Well, I didn't have a full load so I didn't lose any grain. I finally got him squared off again and we got about as far as the angle road that turns as you come out of Dumont and goes northwest towards Wheaton. It was just then when the darn old freight came through and the horse went into another rampage. By the time I got him to the elevator he was foamed completely white with sweat, he was so nervous and excited.

We couldn't get him into the elevator with the load, so we took him off and another fella came along and we put his team on and put my wagon in the elevator so could get my load unloaded. We put the team back on the wagon and by that time he was pretty well worn down. When he wanted to run going home, I let him go. I figured that was okay. I was standing in the bottom of the box then instead of sitting on the spring seat.

I got along pretty good with him after that. Then I took him back to Mr. Haggardt again and was going to trade him off for something else. I thought I had a pretty good deal this time. Then I got one that balked. We'd go plowing three or five rounds around the field and the thing would lay down and lay there just as long as she felt like it. You could have done anything that you wanted to — poke it, whip it — but she wouldn't get up until she got good and ready for it. When she did, she'd get right up and pull her end of the plow again.

Among the earlier settlers was the Andrew Benson family. They left their home in Boston, Mass., and came west to Minnesota in 1874. He had been in an older ship between Boston and the Scandinavian countries for many years and developed rheumatism and arthritis and the doctors advised him to go west.

He settled in 1872 in Lake Crystal and stayed there for quite a few years. He came to Traverse County in 1877. They settled on the shores of Lake Traverse on the present site of the Benson farm seven miles north of Browns Valley. The first winter the family lived in a dirt dugout in the side of a hill near the present location of the farm home. The following year lumber was hauled by team from Morris to build a small farm home, a log house. And it is still on the farm now in fairly fair condition.

At that time there was no railroads between Morris and Browns Valley. All the building materials had to be hauled

from Morris or Herman. At the time Andrew Benson settled out here on Lake Traverse his closest neighbor was a Shipley family. They came into this country in 1871. They had a Tenney family living to the south of them. Both families lived on the shore of Lake Traverse.

One of Andrew Benson's sons, Howard, went to Alaska as a young man and spent his entire life in Fairbanks mining for gold. Charlie spent most of his life in Browns Valley and Edward remained on the home farm and continued to operate the same until the time of his death. Edward was survived by his wife, Clara Benson. She was formerly Clara Johnson.

Her father's name was Hulver Johnson. His son Robert Benson now lives in California and a son, Leland Benson, with his mother lived on the home farm. In addition, he left a daughter, Mrs. Squire Reynolds who lives in Wheaton.

Another son, Joe Benson, spent his entire life in the Browns Valley area. He homesteaded a farm a mile over the hill from his home farm which is still owned and operated by his son, Cliff Benson. We all remember hearing of Cliff Benson. He was our senator from this district and also a lawyer at Ortonville.

Earlier in my story, I was telling about the early settlers in Boisburg. South Dakota was dry at the time. Right across from the river on the Minnesota side they had a saloon in Boisburg. Of course, they got quite a bit of patronage from the earlier settlers from the South Dakota side.

Back in the older times when they first had saloons the liquor would be shipped or brought in, the whiskey especially, and wines. They were brought in in barrels and they would be back underneath the bar. They had plugs that you would drive in or take out, and you'd put in a wooden faucet.

They generally put one in at each end of the barrel. Then those who wanted a 15 cent drink would get theirs out of one end of the barrel, and those who wanted a 10 cent would do the same thing that the other end of the barrel. The one who was drinking a 15 cent drink thought he was drinking something a little better than the other fella had. But it was all coming out of the same keg.

After Traverse County voted the option to go dry alcoholic beverages were shipped in from other towns in the state counties that were wet at the time. The Moorbacher brothers from Cologne, MN, were doing quite a business. I know most of our folks who wanted some stuff shipped in just called up on the phone and it would be up on the next train. The money would usually be sent down immediately, because if you didn't pay for it, you didn't get any more. And a drinking man usually paid his booze bills first.

That's the way they handled it until we got a law, I think it was the 18th amendment, that voted the whole United States dry. That was possibly one of the biggest mistakes that was ever made. The moonshiners down in the hills of the southern states just made a killing, and there were big underworld characters who went into the thing wholesale. It

didn't stop drinking any for those who cared to drink. They just had to pay that much more for it.

The federal government made it universal over the whole nation and after a few years they found out it was costing them more than they realized, trying to enforce prohibition. It was the racketeers who were really making the money. So President Roosevelt got in there and decided to endorse a bill to leave it optional for anybody who wanted to build a liquor store or go into the liquor business to go ahead and do it legally.

During prohibition we had a young county attorney and also my brother George was the sheriff at the time. They figured that if the law said it was supposed to be dry, it was supposed to be that way, so they made a special effort to try to curb that business. But it was being hauled in and brought in.

In a way it was an unjust law because there was nothing in the U.S. Constitution that said you couldn't eat or drink what you felt like at that time. Roosevelt felt that as long as the racketeers were supplying the thing, and the United States was losing its revenue on this booze, they might just as well make it legal instead of pouring out millions and millions of dollars trying to enforce a law that seemed to be unenforceable.

I remember a trial and court case here in town one time. They brought in a lady for selling booze, and, of course, they thought they had evidence enough to convict her. They had a court case and they had this lady up on the stand. They questioned her and had witnesses in the crowd who they figured would testify that they had bought illegal booze from her. There was nobody ready to convict her because times were tight at the time and they were having a heck of a time making a living as it was. They thought that if she could pick up a few bucks here and there and make life a little easier, they weren't going to be the ones to do her harm.

They started to ask her questions, but didn't get too far with it. They were calling up witnesses and there wasn't anybody who admitted that he had ever bought anything from her or knew anything about her selling it.

When you take an oath you are supposed to tell the truth, but I have been a bailiff at the courthouse for 15 years and I found out that this swearing in that you're going to "tell the truth and nothing but the truth" is a big farce, too. I know a lot of the witnesses who used to get up and testify and with the first question they were already lying. They didn't take this all very serious. It was that way back in the prohibition days, too. Finally the county attorney asked a certain witness whether he ever got anything from her. The subject was selling moonshine to start with. He kind of misphrased the question and this guy figured this was an opportunity to get a good laugh out of it and so he says to him, "Are you still talking about moonshine?" Of course, the whole courthouse was full of spectators who wanted to see how this thing was going to turn out and it was just in an uproar. The judge called for 10 minutes recess and he went to the judge's quarters. He came back and after the thing had dragged on

for hours and hours it seemed they weren't going to get anywhere anyhow, so he said that from what evidence they had he didn't think they had any evidence to convict her. He called it a mistrial and set her free.

When we were young boys, too small to haul bundles to the threshing machine, the field pitchers and other help around there would stop in at the saloons which weren't very strict about who they would sell to. They would send a quarter along with us and get a full quart of half alcohol and half whiskey for twenty-five cents. Of course at that time they didn't have all these heavy federal taxes attached. During prohibition you could still get alcohol through a doctor's prescription. And most of the medicines on the market at the time contained a certain amount of alcohol. Even stuff that you could buy in the grocery store, like lemon extract, and at the drug store you could buy liniment. That stuff was marked on the outside 60 percent alcohol. There were many people with a drinking habit who would buy lemon extract and liniment, mix that with water and drink that.

I happened to be down in Graceville as a patient in the hospital one time when they brought in a guy that had drained the alcohol out of someone's car and drank that. He didn't last until morning. He passed away during the night, but you never heard such commotion as was going on at that time. He was just a wild man. He was in the utility room with the dishes and pans and stuff rattling and you could hear him all over the hospital. They called for help and finally got the people who brought him over from the Valley area to kind of hang around. They kind of subdued him and tied him to the bed but all the alcohol already got into his blood and he only lived on til almost morning.

I was at a loss as to where the court house business was conducted in Traverse County after Traverse County moved the courthouse from Browns Valley to Wheaton, which was in the year of 1886. State law required that a courthouse had to be in a platted village or town and Browns Valley wasn't platted at the time. They removed the courthouse material from Browns Valley to Wheaton. The first time they tried it they were driven off. The Browns Valley people were desperate and they came out with guns and were shooting back at the people. They had to pull out and give up their attempt the first time. The second eleven wagonloads of people went down there and that was a little more successful. A few of the guys took rifles along with them so when they started shooting, they started shooting back and, of course, those guys all went for cover down in Browns Valley. So they continued to load up their equipment and bring it up here to Wheaton.

There is a lapse of about six years in there and I was checking in trying to find where in the world they kept courthouse materials after they did get it to Wheaton. I got in touch with people who are a hundred years old and that still have all their facilities. None of them seem to know anything about that. Then I got to digging back in a little further into the history of the county and it showed that before Traverse County became a county its official business was handled

over in Fergus Falls, Grant County, and in the later years over in Stevens County.

I can remember my father telling about a case where a fella had killed his wife. That was while F.J. Stidle was judge of Traverse County. I think at that time we had a courthouse because the first courthouse building was built in 1892.

In 1936, back in the depression days, some of the commissioners and citizens of Traverse County felt that being that we could get DWA labor to build a new courthouse. But most of this work was more technical work than the common laborer could handle. Frank Bauer, one of our good commissioners, was in opposition to building a new courthouse. His vote was enough to kill the idea of building a new one. He came up with the idea that they could build an addition to the one they already had. The complete job of refurbishing the courthouse amounted to \$13,000.

It seems that the building is ample for what we need it for at the present time. The population is decreasing all the time and the same amount of land is here, but the farms are in bigger units and I can't see that there should be that much difference in handling the business than there was to that time. Of course they have a lot of new things coming up, like the state has lots of different things that you have to do different than we had back in the time when I was assessor. That was 29 years as I mentioned previously. I got quite familiar with what was done locally and became interested in what was going on at the county seat.

At that time the assessor was obligated to go from one place to another and get his best estimate of what they had in personal property. The land was pretty much of equal value in Croke Township with the exception of some which had a creek going through them. The land was assessed quite equally and it was all good land and valuation was about the same. So that wasn't such a big project to go through the real estate appraisal at that time. We had to take deductions off for the railroads and all and, of course, we had grain elevators for personal property.

There were times back in the depression when with the small salary that the assessor was getting to do the township assessing work and I also had the village of Wheaton included, I'd get \$60 a year for it at the start. At the time I quit and moved to town in 1959 I was getting \$250. It had gone up some and other townships paid more, but even that was a help back in those days.

I've been told at one time there was a stagecoach that was stationed at Fort Wadsworth over in South Dakota. They had several routes going out, hauling passengers to Denver and places and at one time, in 1879, there was a route from Fort Wadsworth (Sisseton) to Herman. It met the train and people going farther would take the train from Herman. There was a building near the Tom Torgerson farm that was what they call a half-way house. Passengers would come from Fort Wadsworth as far as there, stay overnight, and go from there to Herman the following day. Of course it was all with horses in those days. There are just so many miles in a day that you can take on.

There was no bridge at the creek so they had to ford the creek. The water was deep lots of times, too. The horses would swim across with the passengers aboard the stage.

I remember all those gumbo spots out in those fields when I was a boy. My dad was a blacksmith and he kept our plowshares sharp and tapered so that they would dig going into the ground. But in the dry years the gumbo got so hard that when you hit one of those spots the plow would come right up out of the ground and right across the top, and you would have to go on the other side again where the ground was mellow and loose. Sometimes it would only be a rod and sometimes it'd be two, but hardly ever were the patches any larger than that. The plow would drop down into the ground again and away we'd go again turning over the furrow.

There wasn't a thing you could do about it. You couldn't keep the plow in the ground once you hit those gumbo spots. It was just like hitting a concrete block.

But over the winter the thawing and the freezing would kind of mellow up the gumbo a little bit and in the spring you'd get out there with a drag and drag those low spots. In a wet year when we'd hit those low spots where we couldn't get in with a drill, we'd seed them by hand and then work in as far as we could from the side with a drag and kind of drag as much of that grain under as we possibly could. Our dad showed us how to do it because that's how he had to seed down his first crops during the first years he was out here before they had drills. It was all sown by hand.

After we got the plowing done in the fall, we'd leave it lay rough and then in the spring we'd drag the field once — that would be all — ahead of the drill. Sometimes we'd come to those spots with those old shoe drills that we were using at that time — they didn't make much of an impression — and when we did we'd just make an extra round or two to work out some of those hard spots. With the drag we'd loosen up an inch or so on the top so we could get the seed in the ground.

Then after the drill came along, it could scratch enough of a track in the gumbo so that we could get most of it covered. But we always "dragged after," as we called it. After we were through seeding, we'd always go and drag the fields again, and sometimes go across those gumbo spots again with the drag to get a little dirt on top, especially if we were seeding wheat.

Wheat liked heavy ground, and there was plenty of it. That was our main crop out there. We put in about 600 acres of farmland per year and at least 300 of it was wheat.

Later on they came along with what they called the "disk drill". It ran a little bit on the slant and cut a better groove to put the grain into the ground than the old shoe drill did. They also converted the shoe corn planter over to a disk corn planter.

The first time I ever cultivated corn we planted it on the square. You'd make a homemade contraption with two by sixes or eights nailed below and you'd make a track going one way and come back the best you could going the other way. Then you'd plant on the square. Before we had the riding

cultivators we had a one-horse cultivator. One horse would go down between the row and you'd walk behind the cultivator with your hand on the handlebar just like you do on a walking plow. You could regulate the depth and you could swing it a little bit one way or another wherever you saw weeds. You could work tight close up to the corn too.

We didn't have a big acreage at that time. Thirty-five acres was considered a big crop of corn if you had a section of land. Corn was something new in this part of the country at that time. Lots of times when the corn got a little weedy, there were a lot of us and Dad had plenty of hoes around the place, there'd be five or six of us going down to the field at one time. We'd hoe the weeds that were next to the corn that you couldn't get to with the cultivator. Sometimes there weren't too many weeds and you could go along pretty fast. We could do five or six acres a day.

It reminds me that you see quite a few Mexicans working in the beet fields with their families out there getting the beets. We probably did the same kind of work with the corn. They have short handles and we had long handles on our hoes so we didn't have to stoop as low as the Mexicans.

They used to have what they call husking bees back in those days. If people had an extra room in their house they'd haul in a few loads of snapped off corn. Once in awhile you'd get a red ear among the whites and yellows. The name of the game in those days was the boy and his girl, everytime they'd find a red ear, they were supposed to kiss each other. That was amusing in those days. Kissing girls hasn't gone out of style from what I see today. I know it was quite common in my time.

There was a time before my time when you didn't have much say as to who you were going to marry. My dad told of some families around here who would be friends and get together on Sundays and one family would have a daughter old enough to get married and the other a son old enough to get married. They would decide between them that so and so was going to marry this girl on a certain day. You'd tell the kids about it and if there seemed to be no objection that is the way the older folks used to match up the kids. I'd like to see them try that today. I think the kids would tell them in a hurry where to go.

I know several families that were matched up like that by their parents. This was a surprise to the kids when their parents made all the arrangements. It seemed to work out. At least they stayed there together all their lives, raised their families and had nice families. But I don't think I'd recommend it. If I had to be a participant I don't think I'd like that.

A young fella asked his dad one time what he said to his mom when he asked her to marry him and he said, "I never asked her to get married." The son asked why he got married to her then. He said one night they were sitting on the couch and she leaned over and whispered something in his ear. He said to her, "The hell you are!" — and they went and got married.

Back in the early 1880's when the railroad came through