

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Education in Youngstown

Personal Experience

O H 1063

HELEN MINTURN

Interviewed

by

Jeanne Ontko

on

April 20, 1981

HELEN MINTURN

Helen Minturn was born on January 11, 1895 in Amity, New York, the daughter of William Quackenbush Minturn and Mary Elizabeth Miller. After graduating from Warwick High School in 1917, Miss Minturn was educated at New Paltz College, New York, and received a Bachelor of Science degree from Youngstown State University and master of Education from the University of Pittsburgh. After living and working on her father's commercial dairy farm, Miss Minturn began teaching grade school in a one room rural school house in Warwick, New York. In 1936 she began teaching in the Youngstown School system. Music, spelling, history and geography were some of the subjects taught by Miss Minturn in her twenty-nine year teaching career at Bennett, Taft, Market Street and Williamson schools. She is a member of the Dutch Reform Church of Warwick and retired teachers organizations. Her life-long interest in history is illustrated by her membership in the Mahoning Valley Historical Society, where she is a tour guide at the Arms Museum, and by her hobby of refinishing antique furniture.

O This is an interview with Helen Minturn for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Education in Youngstown, by Jeanne Ontko, on April 20, 1981, at 892 Truesdale Road, Youngstown, Ohio, at 7 15pm

Miss Minturn, can you tell me something, a little bit about your background, your family, how many brothers and sisters you have, where you were born?

M. Well, I was born in Amity, New York I had three sisters and a brother living at that time

O How long did you live in New York?

M I came to Youngstown in 1934

O Why?

M Well, my parents were gone and my brother took over the farm from my dad, so I came to Youngstown because I had a married sister here

O Who is that?

M Mrs Lewis G Raver I lived with her until I bought this place here

O When did you buy the house here?

M In 1953, but I did not move here until 1954 I was teaching and I wanted to have work done here I could not teach and supervise the work here at the same time So, I did not move here until 1954, in June

O You lived on a farm as you were growing up?

M Yes, I lived on a farm.

O What was it like?

M Well, I pity children of today who have never lived on a farm

O Why?

M. Because they think it is all work and no play That is not true You had more experiences on a farm The children have no idea what it is like Now today, they take kindergartners and first and second grade children out on the farm areas on tours to learn about animals Living on a farm as a child, I learned all of this I never had anything to do with cattle or barn work at all, but still, I knew about it

O. How big of a farm was it?

M. Over 100 acres, I am not sure how many

O. Was your dad a commercial farmer? Did he sell his crops?

M. He was a dairy farmer and raised chickens and eggs to sell. He also was a fruit farmer

O. Orchards and things like that?

M. Orchards, apples, peaches, pears, berries

O. What was your responsibility growing up on a farm? What did you do?

M. My greatest farm work, if you want to call it farm work, I helped take care of the chickens. I also mowed the lawn and took care of the flower beds. Now if you call that farm work for a girl, that is what I had to do. Helping in the house, also

O. You had one brother is that it?

M. I had one brother living. I had a brother and a sister who passed away

O. Were you still on the farm?

M. Well, I do not remember them. That was before I came into existence

O. Okay, are you the youngest?

M. No, Mrs. Raver was younger than I am. But, the others were so much older than Mrs. Raver and me

O. Was this house a farm house at one time?

M. This was the Truesdale Farm House

O. I do not know about them.

M. It was also a legal slave home where the slaves would stay all night on their way to Canada.

O. You mean underground railroad?

M. Yes. This house, and there is another house out toward Canfield that was underground railroad

- O This is the Kyle Farm?
- M The Kyle Farm, that is right
- O The Truesdale's? I am not familiar with them Who are they? Do you know anything about their history?
- M All that I can tell you is that Mrs Phoebe Truesdale Smith used to own this property It was her grandfather's property What I know about the family she has told me In fact, she came here and told me The house goes back to at least 1835, but I know it is older than that because it is in two sections This main part of the house is the oldest, and then where you came in through the library is the second or added section
- O This main part then would be older?
- M This is the main part She has told me about the place She told me about it being an underground railroad.
- O Well, then it would be her grandfather who was involved in it, or her grandmother?
- M Her grandfather owned the property and then her ancestors back, but how far back I cannot go?
- O This is like a museum then to the house. It has a history It is very lovely I think it is very nice You came to Youngstown in 1934?
- M Right
- O What did you do before that, before you came to Youngstown?
- M After I finished high school, I wanted to work, but I was the last one at home -- the last girl at home -- and my mother needed my help But, I could teach and be at home at the same time to help her, and that is what I did
- O What do you mean you could teach?
- M Well, I went though teacher's college at that time at New Paltz, New York
- O How do you spell that?
- M New Paltz N-E-W P-A-L-T-Z
- O That is in New York?

- M Yes I graduated from New Paltz I could teach in a rural school which was right near me There were two rural schools, I could teach in either one
- O What did you teach?
- M First grade through first year of high school, junior high
- O What was this school house like? Was it just one room?
- M One room school
- O What subjects did you teach there?
- M Everything, everything
- O How much training did you have at New Paltz College there? How long did you go?
- M. That was a two year course I did part of it in summer school Then one year, I had to have at least one year at the normal, at the school It was a state college thus now a university At that time I had to have at least one year which I did I graduated that year with the courses that I had that summer.
- O Well, what time did you teach? Was it September through June, would that be it?
- M. September through the first week of June
- O At what hours of the day?
- M Oh, I had to be there at about 7 45, but school did not pick up until 9 00 From 9 00 until 12 00, and then from 1.15 to 3 30
- O: Do you remember what the first subject was? Imagine that you are back there teaching Now, tell me what your curriculum would be, what you would start, what your first subject would be if you would start Or did you start with a prayer or with the Pledge of Allegiance?
- M I always started with music, then the Bible reading and prayers, then more music
- O Music What kind of music?
- M. It was an organ

- O. Oh, you played the organ?
- M I played an organ
- O What kind of songs?
- M All kinds of songs
- O Do you remember any particular one?
- M Hymns they had in those days, and songs that the children had But, we always had the Bible reading, the Lord's Prayer and the salute to the flag
- O Then what did you start with? What subject would be first?
- M Well, I would usually start with the lower grade subjects, so I could get the little people thinking and working on something, because the older children, they would have a carry over from the day before They could work at their work, whereas the little people could not until I could get them going So, that was the way I would work those classes Now you take English classes, I combined all of the classes That was the first grade right straight through, because you cannot give those children too much English It was just as simple and easy for them to learn, even the first and second graders As it was, they had to wait until they got to third, fourth, or fifth
- O How many students would be in each class?
- M Oh, I have had as many as 18 in all grades.
- O Oh really You mean you would have 18 per grade?
- M Oh no, 18 all together Maybe there would be two, three or four in a grade
- O I see This was in a farming community?
- M A farming community
- O Okay, what was the name of the area, the Ridge School?
- M Yes, it was near Warwick
- O Warwick?
- M I was born at Amity, but I lived on a farm outside of Warwick Warwick

was about 25 miles west from West Point on the Hudson

O This was upstate New York then?

M No, it was not upstate. It was only about 30 or 40 miles north of New York City. I was near the New Jersey border.

O I have got my geography now

M You got it?

O Yes. That was Warwick?

M Yes

O Do you see any advantage to teaching in a one room school house? Did you enjoy it?

M Very much, very much.

O Why?

M Oh, I do not know. The children were so receptive in every way. They never seemed to try to take advantage of a teacher the way children do here. Now many and many a time, I could not get to school unless I walked because the snow was so deep. So, I would walk and take the dog with me and a sled. Then at the noon hour, we would all go coasting. We would make the dog pull the sled back up the hill.

O What kind of dog was it?

M German Shepard

O What was his name? Do you remember?

M Banion

O Banion?

M B-A-N-I-O-N, Banion. Now, you could not do that with children today, never.

O Why do you think the children were more receptive then? I know it is a difficult question. Do you have any ideas?

M I do not know how to explain it. The children wanted to learn. I have not found it

that way so much here in Youngstown

O How is it different?

M It is quite different. To begin with, it was a farming community and we did not have as many different ethnic groups. I think that made the biggest difference.

O Really? In what way? Language wise or culture wise?

M I think the majority of the children were of a higher class of people, because that was a high class farming community. One of the students that I had was exceptionally bright, and was in the lower classes. She would listen to the older classes and when it came to that work she already knew it. She went from the rural school to high school, through college, through the university and has been teaching in Elmira, New York, until the last two or three years, when the schools had to cut down on their French. She majored in French. Then the school had to cut down on expenses. They let some teachers go and she was put into the junior high English work as well as French, because there were not so many French students. Now, that is the type of children that I had in the rural school. Well, I have had several like that here in Youngstown, but not like I did there. They were all those kinds of students.

O I can see the difference now.

M Can you see that? Can you understand the difference?

O I can understand it.

M. I do not mean to discredit the children here. That is not it at all. I have had some lovely children here. I could not ask for a class to behave better or do more for me or any teacher than they did when I broke my ankle.

O When was that?

M Here in Youngstown.

O What school were you teaching at then?

M I was at Market Street School. I broke my ankle. Now, I was not sick. I asked my principal if he would object if I came to school on crutches. He said, "No." I did not have to lift my hand to do one single thing, not even to put work on the black board. The children did it.

- O Well, I think it shows that they respect you, also.
- M Yes, they did, but it has not always been like that I told you about this boy who was going to shoot me just because I would not listen to him
- O Now, I am sure there are many good experiences in teaching and some bad ones, too
- M I had so many student teachers while I was teaching, from the Youngstown University here I had one student teacher, she was marvelous As a rule, I would never leave my class with a student teacher for any length of time Now, it happened several times, maybe I would get called to the office But, I told the children that the student teacher would be there I told them what I expected of them I said, "I will be right here in the back of the room at all times If you start anything, I will not hesitate to step on you right in front of the student teacher If you do not like it, it will be your own fault " Only twice did I ever have to step in for that teacher
- Well, before she finished her weeks with me, this was in the fall, I had to go east for a funeral, a family member She was so good, I asked my principal if I could have her to substitute for me, to stay there the whole day, because it would only be three days I would be leaving on Wednesday It would only be Wednesday afternoon, Thursday, and Friday because it was their Christmas vacation He said, "Yes," that he would arrange it. So I told her, and I told the children that I had to leave and that she would be in charge and I was going to ask for a report from her And I expected a good report If I did not get a good report, they would be responsible afterwards to me Well, while she was there, she did a beautiful job
- O Do you remember her name?
- M I do not remember her name While she was there, her supervisor from the university came up He was there quite a while When he left, he called me out in the hall. He said, "If you do not teach that girl anything else, I want you to teach her discipline " She had no trouble She asked me one time if she could try something new in spelling I asked her what is was and said, "Go ahead and try it " She did a beautiful job The children liked it
- O What did she do?
- M She would make them spell. She would ask them the meanings of words, then use them in sentences She would give them a trial spelling test on Thursday The spelling test was always on Friday every week She would give them a trial test and those who had 100 on the trial test would not have to take the test on Friday It worked

O When you were teaching back in New York, what were some of the things that you did, for instance, to teach spelling or to teach arithmetic? Did you have drills or things of that nature?

M As much as I could, because when you have three, four or five grades and all of the subjects, it was a question of time I had to teach for the New York Regents System at that time You do not have it here in Youngstown At the end of the school year, I would have the test exams from Albany Well, I had to stick to those subjects I would always have enough time to drill each group of children in each grade, as much time as I really should They would have to study by themselves They had to do a lot of studying by themselves, because I had to spend a lot of time with the first, second and third grades Now the fourth, fifth, and sixth and on through the eighth and first year high, they could study for themselves a whole lot I would give assignments and they would have to work on that by themselves

O Your children, I take it, would bring their lunches to school?

M Oh, everyone brought their lunch, everyone

O What were some of the things they did at recess time, besides coasting on the sled? Do you remember other games they played?

M Oh, they played games like children play ball now Kickball, jump rope, play marbles, ring games, and so on

O What made you decide to become a teacher?

M Because I could work and be at home at the same time, mornings and evenings and on the weekends to help my mother My mother really had two families. Two older sisters and my brother and the two that passed away Then, my younger sister and I came along My mother always said that it never seemed as though she had a very large family See, that made five children, seven children with the two that passed away, because there was so much difference between the ages. When you have got 15 years difference between your children, that is quite a difference That is the way it was with the older ones and between my younger sister and myself

O Your sister did not become a teacher then, Mrs Raver?

M Yes, she did

O She is a teacher?

M My oldest sister was through college and teaching before I even started to school

O Oh really? How about your mother? Did she do any teaching?

M Yes, my mother and father both taught before they were married.

O Where? In New York?

M Yes, in rural schools near there homes

O. How long has your family been in the United States? Have you ever done a family tree?

M My ancestors were English They came over on the Mayflower in 1620 with the Pilgrims. But, I have no record, only back to 1710, when Minturn's were in New York City

O What kind of family background?

M There was a break in between there Someone did not keep records I am sorry. I have the records here from 1796 to present time The Allentous, my ancestors, came over on Mayflower

O It is good that you know that

M I know that for a fact.

O As a single woman teaching, did you ever meet any kind of hostility when you were working, that you did have a career in the early 1900's What I am thinking of is like the suffrage movements in the early 1900's Did you ever hear of Stanton, Elizabeth Cady Stanton? Do you ever remember reading about them about these women suffragists? They were pushing for suffrage

M No

O Did you ever get involved in that?

M No What I first remember is when I first voted

O What feelings went through you?

M Well, I do not know whether my father objected to it or not, but he thought it was very funny for women to go to war

O Did your mother vote then, too?

M Yes, we both voted

O Do you remember, was it a presidential election?

M It was a presidential election

O Presidential? Do you remember which one it was?

M I do not remember It has been quite a long time

O When you were teaching, how did you respond to, or did you talk about, current events in your classroom?

M Oh sure, yes indeed

O Could you think of a particular instance like during the Depression? How did you talk to your children about it, or World War I? Would you have been teaching during World War I?

M Oh, I was teaching, but I was in Warwick then To tell you the truth, we did not feel the Depression, like I have heard about here in Youngstown

O Why?

M We were living on a farm and we raised so much of our own food and it was preserved during the summer Of course, we had it then clear into winter And fruit, fresh fruit and canned fruit, we had it The whole area around there, in Warwick, we never heard too much about the Depression The worst that we felt was that we could not have all of the sugar we wanted I think it was that attitude throughout Warwick Warwick did not have the poorer class of people to take care of It was strictly a residential town. They did not want factories of any kind It was a residential town, many people worked in New York City They tried to have a knife factory, but it did not last They were a wealthier class of people I will have to put it that way, Jeanne

O Okay, that is fine I understand what you are saying

M The children were that class of children, so we did not realize what the real poverty was

O How about when you came into Youngstown? You came in the 1930's?

M I came in 1934

O. And you started teaching right then?

M No, I did substitute work the first two years.

O In the Youngstown Schools?

M Youngstown Schools I finished out the term in the Taft School I do not remember the teacher's name, but I was there from before Easter until school closed That is when I got my certificate for my position to teach here in Youngstown, after the closing of school

O Because you were done with substitute work, is that it?

M I had been doing substitute work for the city schools When they interviewed me for the position, they wanted to know what kind of certificate I had Well, I had the New York Life certificate They said if I did not have an Ohio license I had to wait until I got an Ohio license I said, "I will " At that time, Ohio did not accept a New York license We had to pass regents, but Ohio would not accept that even

O Did you move to Pittsburgh?

M I went to Pittsburgh, yes I took summer classes the whole summer, besides taking extensive courses here in Youngstown at the University When I went down to Pittsburgh to stay for the entire summer, my advisor said, "Well, why do you want to take so many subjects?" I said, "I would rather get it over with as soon as possible " As it turned out, I had over credit for a Master's I already had it from New York, and the university in Youngstown so the subjects I was taking in Pittsburgh were my choice I could take what I pleased

O A lot of work, Miss Minturn, working for school

M Yes, but I graduated Then I went a whole year and drove down to Pittsburgh every Saturday for the whole school year I was teaching here and going down to the University at night

O How did you do it? How did you get the energy to do that?

M I do not know I guess my farm bringing up, really

O Your farm bringing up? Do you think that helped?

M. Oh yes Oh, I know it I have two nephews living here One who lives on Warner Road He is in charge of all of the school cafeterias outside of Canfield on Palmyra Road They were my sister's sons They were both

married. Their wives cannot begin to do what I do in a day. They have come right out and admitted that.

O I think you have me beat, Miss Minturn. I think you do more than I do, too.

M The only way I can account for it is I was used to being outdoors all the time. Taking care of mowing the lawn and working in the garden.

O I think that is why you are so effective a tour guide, because that is a lot of energy you need at the Arms Museum.

M Horseback riding, good exercise.

O Do you like doing that?

M Yes, and skiing. Many a time I would go to school in my skis. A lot of outdoor work.

O So it is almost like living in two worlds for you then, right? You grew up in the rural farm community, and now the difference in an urban setting.

M Yes, that is one reason that I bought this place. There were no houses on this street except the house on the corner, the house down here on the corner by Sheban Drive and Mill Trace. Those were the only two houses on this street. It was all forest from my place right on down Truesdale. All the areas had woods. I just loved it here. But now, it is all built up around here. Across the street here, is a swamp. There is a stream that goes down there, right down to Lake Newport.

O Oh really. You are that close then to the park, to Mill Creek Park?

M. Oh yes, yes.

O That is an ideal location.

M That is why I like it. I have about an acre here, not quite an acre, but almost an acre. I can feel free. I can feel as though I was back home on the farm.

O What was the first school that you taught at here? Was it Taft or Market?

M My first school was on South Avenue.

O Do you know the name of it?

M I do not remember

O Was it an elementary school?

M Elementary

O Elementary, okay

M Then I went to Bennett. Then, the Market Street School

O How long were you at Market Street? Were you there the longest?

M No, I was at Williamson School, Williamson Avenue School, the longest

O How long were you there?

M From the time it opened I do not remember when it opened

O How long have you been teaching all total? How many years?

M All total, counting from New York and Youngstown, 29 years

O 29 years? Have you worked with many of the tour guides at the Arms Museum? I know quite a few of them are retired school teachers Did you ever work with any of them?

M No, because they were teaching before I was here in Youngstown.

O Oh right, yes

M They apparently must have been in most of those schools most of the time When I was teaching, Jeanne, I never had the time All I could do was to just keep up with my school work and working on my degrees

O Then you have a Bachelor of Science, is that it?

M Bachelor of Science and Master's and Ohio Life

O When you were going to Youngstown State, what was it like? What did it look like, the campus, the physical?

M Well, it was what I call Jones Hall, and I think that was the only building If there were any other buildings, I was not in them, because I went to night school down there, both when I was working on the Bachelor's and working on the Master's One year I took classes during the summer in the day time, and I will never forget I had to take English, a class of

English and grammar I had it all prior in New York but I had to take it over again. The professor was discussing the use of words

O. You were discussing the use of words

M We were discussing the use of words and the word "ain't" came up There were two or three of us who were a little bit older than the rest of the girls in the class, the rest of the students I will say, because there were boys as well as girls We kept still for the professor said that it was perfectly proper to use the word "ain't" There was one other teacher and I, she was a married woman, who could not agree The students started nagging him The professor said, "It is perfectly proper to use the word "ain't" if the majority of the people in the locality where you are living use that word. No more was said at that time. Then it came to a test On the test, that question was put on the paper I was provoked, so I answered the question just the way he told us to use it in class. Then when I had it all finished, I added, "I still am going to teach against the word "ain't" I expected he would flunk me He gave me an A on the paper

O Can you remember who the professor was?

M I do not want you to ask me his name, because I am afraid you would know him

O All right

M I had the same professor for a class in literature. He had given us different books that we were to read This one book I did not like at all.

O What was it?

M Please do not ask me and please do not ask me the professor's name He asked me why I did not like it Well, I said, "You know how it is going to end I do not like that kind of book " The professor wanted to know why I said, "You know how it is going to end " So I said, "Why read it?" He laughed and said, "I take it you like biographies better " I said, "Yes, I do " This was not a biography It was a novel I did not care for it at all

O It sounds like the two of you got along though, eventually?

M I did not have any trouble getting along

O Did you enjoy going to college at Youngstown?

M Yes I did, very much

O Why?

M Well, I like to study. I like to work. I had another class that was in science, nature study. Oh, a little bit of everything. There was another girl who sat next to me. She was teaching, too. We both worked so hard in that class. I liked the professor. He was from State Rock.

O Slippery Rock?

M Slippery Rock, and he came over. I will never forget one night. I was paying close attention to the work, but this girl sitting right next to me, something happened. I turned to look at her and she almost passed out. I grabbed her, and the professor saw there was something wrong. I asked, "May I take her out in the hall?" He said, "Yes." So, I took her out in the hall. Pretty soon he came out to see how she was getting along. Well, by that time I had kind of brought her to. He dismissed the class and came out there and was with us for quite a while. Do not ask me what the professor's name was. I do not know whether I should put this in or not.

O How long were you there at Youngstown? How many years at Youngstown College did it take you?

M Two.

O It took you two years?

M It took me two years. I could not take more than two classes in an evening and three nights a week. And then add one night a week for Pittsburgh.

O Plus you were teaching during the day, right?

M Plus I was teaching.

O How long was it? What were the school hours with teaching? What time did it start? What time did school end?

M Youngstown, here?

O Yes.

M I had to be there at 8:15 and stay until 4:00. The nights I was not going to the university down here, I was tutoring after school.

O So much work. You told me when you were back in New York how you started your school day. You said you had an organ and you played.

music How did teaching in Youngstown differ from your teaching in New York? For instance, just a typical school day? You said you had all of the grades from first through almost high school What was a typical day like teaching in Youngstown? How did it start?

M Well, when I first started in, I would always have music I mean some opening song

O This is in Youngstown, right?

M Youngstown Then, a selection from the Bible, prayers, and a salute to the flag Then I would have my regular music period after that, just a regular music period Then I would start in with my regular days work

O What would be your first subject that you would start teaching? Do you remember, or did it vary?

M I preferred to take arithmetic first, when I was not doing music for some other class When that started in, then I had to change my way of teaching. It just seemed as though every school where I would be teaching there would be some teacher who could not give the music, children's music Then, they asked me to do their music Well, then they would have to take some of my classes, because if I did the teaching of their music, then they should do one of my classes Well, we usually worked it out I would take the music and the spelling of that class and that teacher would do all of my gym work

O Oh, I see

M Of course, we had to arrange a schedule so that they would fit in each other Then, that changes my regular school days work every time I will never forget down there at Williamson School off of Market Street, I was doing Joe Allaretto's music Do you know Joe?

O No

M He is a principal over here at Sheridan now Then he was teaching at Williamson He had a fifth grade class and I had a fifth grade class There was another teacher that had a fifth grade also -- I do not remember who she was. So, Mr Allgretto always took all of my gym everyday and I would do his music and his spelling He would bring his class down to my room, and he would take my class out to gym I had a piano in my room. In that particular class this one year, there was one girl who had the most beautiful voice that you ever wanted to hear She was a black girl, a beautiful girl Not only in looks but her voice, her attitude beautiful There was another girl in the class who could play the piano So this one day I

was called to the office for something, so I said to Alice, "Now Alice, I am putting you in charge of the room." I told the children they had to do exactly as she said. Then I asked the other girl, I cannot remember her name, to play the piano. Now I said, "Alice, there is no reason why you cannot go right on with the music while I go down to the office." So, I left and when I came back I could hear them singing as I came down the hall. But, it was not rowdy. It was not screeching and yelling. So, I just stood outside of my door and listened. They were doing it just as well as if I had been in the room. That is another experience.

O Very satisfying

M Nice children

O Did you have a background in music then? Had you taught it? Did you sing, or how long did you take music?

M A background in music?

O. Yes That you could teach music classes

M Yes At home, I was taking vocal lessons when I was in high school. I was in the choir in church as long as I can remember. Well, in my last two years in high school, I commenced to go down. The doctor said, "You either have to stop that music or stop your high school." He said, "You cannot do both." Well, of course I had to drop the music. But, I had a good background.

My teacher had been a soprano singer in some opera in Italy. She was of Italian background. I think she sang also in the Metropolitan. She was not the organist, but the choir director. She was older. She was too old to sing in the opera any longer, but she still had a lovely voice, although she never sang in our church. But, she could give vocal lessons. So, I had to stop my vocal lessons. I finished high school, but boy I was ever sick. It took a couple of years before I even dared to try to do anything. Then I started in teaching.

When I was at New Paltz, I had to take music. Well, one of the professors there at New Paltz went to the board there at the college and said that she felt that I was doing too much, and that I ought to at least drop music. So, I was called to the office. They wanted to know how much time I was spending on music. Well, I said, "I am in both the junior and the senior classes there at the college." Then they said, "How much time do you have to spend at home studying?" I said, "I am not spending any time. The only time I work on music out of class is when I have to hand in some written work." I told that was all. "All right," the professor said. That is all I said to him. But, the music teacher commenced to call on me in class time and time after time. If she called on someone else and they could not do it, she would ask me. And I could do it, every bit of it. I do not care if it was soprano, alto, bass, or tenor, I could do it.

That was all the work that I was doing in music. I was not doing a bit of studying at home, I mean, where I was living I was living with this professor. She was a professor at the university. She thought I was doing too much.

Well, I did not drop the music. I was called to the office again. They said, "You may continue with your music." I was not spending any time other than just class period. I would not have been doing it then if I had not had to take it for credit. That was required and I knew all of it.

All the time I have been teaching here in Youngstown, I have always had to do work for some other teacher. Of course, I could only do work for one teacher at a time because I had the rest of my own work to do.

O Did you ever put together any concerts?

M Did I ever do what?

O Put together any concerts for the children, or get them to sing together in Choruses?

M When I was up at Bennett, all of the city schools here from at least the fifth grade up, I do not remember about the lower grades. All of the school put on a concert down here at South High in the field house. I was in charge of all of the schools.

O That would be a lot of work.

M You are telling me.

O What were some of the songs that you put together for the concert? Do you recall any of them?

M I do not recall them, Jeanne. That was quite a while ago. That was shortly after I came here to Youngstown. Most of my teaching here in Youngstown was at Market Street and Williamson. I went right from Market into Williamson when Williamson School opened.

O You mentioned that you lived with your professor. This was a New Paltz College? You lived with your professor?

M One of the professors.

O How long did you live with her?

M A year.

O A year? How did you end up living with her?

- M Because my sister happened to live with her when she was at New Paltz
- O Did you enjoy living with a professor?
- M Very much.
- O Why?
- M After that affair with the music, she was all together different She came to me and she said she did not realize that I was not spending any time on music there at the house The only time I spent any music was during the class period, not at home
- O Were you boarding with her, was that it?
- M Rooming with her She would not take anything off for meals, and yet I suppose I spent at least one or two meals a week with her She was very nice, after that trouble with the music
- O What was your favorite class teaching in Youngstown? What grade?
- M Which grade?
- O Yes
- M Either fifth, sixth, or seventh.
- O Why those grades?
- M Why?
- O Yes
- M Because of the history History and geography
- O Oh really Why did you like those subjects?
- M I do not know, unless it is my background I was so fond of antiques and I like history
- O Did you read history books when you were little?
- M Yes I was especially fond of anything on Lincoln that I could get a hold of You see that picture up there?
- O Of Lincoln?

- M Lincoln signing the emancipation, when he freed the slaves
- O The Emancipation Proclamation?
- M The Emancipation Proclamation
- O From where did you get the picture?
- M My father gave it to me. There is a book that goes with it
- O Oh really?
- M It has everything in that picture
- O Okay, now you said you are related to William Seward?
- M William Seward He was from Florida Florida is a town about half way between Warwick and Goshen You know where Goshen is?
- O No
- M Goshen, I would say is about, oh, maybe 20 miles west of West Point along the Hudson River
- O Was he on your father's side or mother's side? Do you know?
- M Mother's
- O What did you enjoy most about teaching in Youngstown?
- M Enjoy most?
- O Yes
- M I think teaching history, geography and the music I liked the music classes
- O We were talking about the changes in students from New York to Youngstown, but do you think overall students have changed generally? Even if they are still living in a rural setting Do you think that they have changed?
- M In the rural sections?
- O Yes All over
- M Well, of course, there was a terrific contrast from teaching the children here in

Youngstown and the ones that I had in New York

O. How did you adjust to the change?

M How did I adjust?

O Yes

M Do you know my greatest problem?

O What?

M When I first began teaching here in Youngstown, the children acted so strange. "What is the matter?" I said "Well, we cannot understand what you are saying " Do I talk so differently than everyone else? But, they seemed to think that I talked so differently I have been told that so many times since Up at the museum, when I have been taking people around and then when I had finished they would say, "You are not from Youngstown are you?" I would say, "No " I said, "Why do you say that?" They would say, "Are you from New York?" I said, "Yes." Well why?

O I do not know You do not seem to have an accent. I cannot tell.

M Oh, they seem to say I have an accent of some kind. Even the guides have spoken about it, but they are so used to it now they do not think anything about it

O Have you seen any major changes in the educational process here in Youngstown? So you see that teaching has differed now than it did in the 1940's, or 1950's, or 1960's and 1970's? When did you retire?

M In 1965

O For instance, let us start with PTA [Parent-Teacher Association] Were you involved in the PTA at all?

M Oh, yes

O. To what extent?

M. Only as a teacher I never held any position I did not want any.

O What were PTA meetings like?

M Oh, sometimes there would be a speaker First, teachers always had to put on a program

O What kind of program?

M A class program of some kind

O I do not understand The students would do something?

M Yes, the students That was quite an ordeal to ask, I felt, to ask a teacher to put on a program for the PTA, when she has to do all of her other work She had to put on a good program I would like to tell you the greatest difference I have seen here in Youngstown since I have been teaching The change came while I was teaching I did not like it, but there was not anything I could do about it That was when we were not allowed to read either a selection from the Bible or some Bible story and then have our prayer and the salute to the flag. They dropped that Bible program That I did not like I can tell you right now there was a big difference in the attitude of the children when that was stopped Having just those few minutes at the beginning of the school period seemed to have a quieting effect on the children They would come into the room, noisy and I would have to stop them After that introduction, it had an effect on the children I do not care what anyone else says Who is that woman who went to Congress?

O Madeline O'Hare.

M Well, I think it took away some kind of Bible work or Christian work, whatever you want to call it That into the schools for just a few minutes, if it is nothing more than just having the children sit silently with their eyes closed and absolutely quiet, if nothing more than that should be brought back

O Well, how did you find out you could not talk about the Bible?

M The principal stopped it The Board of Education stopped it I had to put on a Christmas program for the entire school down at Williamson on year Do not ask me the principal's name I had the program all ready and it pertained to the meaning of Christmas, the birth of Christ It was not a long program. It was not the kind of a program, oh, that is nothing but religion and that is all that you are giving It was not either that kind of program I think about two weeks before I was to give the program my principal told me I could not give it. I would have to prepare something else

O What did you do?

M. I had to prepare something else without even a Christmas song. I could not see any sense in that

- O Well, what happened that made the Board of Education issue that directive? Do you know?
- M Have you not read about this women who went to the Congress in Washington and raised such a ruckus that Congress finally passed a law that schools must be separated from religion completely? Well, that was the result. It was from then on, maybe you do not remember this, but it was from then on that your discipline and so much vandalism and everything else commenced to happen I tell you, it had an effect on the children
- O Another case by the Supreme Court was Brown vs the Board of Education that dealt with desegregation Was there a problem on any of the schools that you taught with desegregation?
- M No, that is why I could never understand why the black community complained because of segregation, and there was not It was not down at Williamson Well, I just told you about that beautiful girl, black girl I think it was the last year that I taught, the nicest boy that I had in my room that year, the boy whom I could depend on The boy that if I had to send someone to the office for duty work I was on the first floor at Williamson School The only upper grade on the first floor The office used to call me over the PA system to send a boy to the office for this or for that or for some errand This one boy was the one that went I could depend upon him. He was a black boy, an A student Well, there was no segregation at least not that I could see in any of the teachers or in any of the classes or anything
- O Were there ethnic divisions at all in your class rooms?
- M They were never separated, never All I can tell you is about the gun
- O What? Really? In the classroom? Well, there is something I want to ask you about field trips Did you ever have a circus day in Youngstown when the students were to go? Or a circus they could take off in class? Did they ever have that when you were teaching?
- M Well, they never called it a regular circus day for the children They had tickets that they would give out to the children If they went during the school hours, well, that was up to them They were absent They had to be reported as absent They would be given tickets They were given tickets to go to the Canfield Fair
- O Oh really?
- M Of course, that was before school opened But, on that particular day of their ticket, they could go free I believe that is the way it was with the

circus, but not on a school day. If they went on a school day, that would mean they were marked absent and they could not be given credit.

O Did they ever do any field trips? The Arms Museum would not have been opened, but the Butler would have been.

M. Yes, Butler was opened. We used to take them to Butler. I went with them -- the children's concerts. I had to teach the music for the children's concert and I had to teach that to my class, and whichever class that came in. I used to go. Of course, the teachers had to go with the children, but often there were children who did not go to concerts because they could not afford to. I think they had to pay, if I remember. I just cannot remember about that. Anyhow, they were the children who would not be going to the concert, so there had to be at least one teacher to stay at the school while the rest of the children went to the concerts. I went once or twice with the children at the concert. Then, the principal said if there was any teacher who would prefer not to go to the concert with the children and would be perfectly willing to stay here at school and take care of the children. I was the only one who was willing to do that. I did not like that way the children acted up there.

O At the auditorium?

M At the auditorium, so I always chose to stay put at the school. I took care of all of the children in the upper grades that did not go.

O One question about dress codes. Have you seen them change throughout the years?

M Yes.

O In what way?

M Well, they did not wear, maybe the first graders did, but the rest of the children did not wear slacks. I did tell the children, this is when they first commenced to wear slacks.

O Now what year? In the 1960's or late 1950's?

M In the early 1960's. During the winter when it was so bitter cold out, I said, "Children, girls, if you want to wear slacks, why do you not wear them right over your dress and take them off after you get to school?" That is what they did. Now our principal did not put out any rules, at that time. Later they did.

O What were they?

- M Of course, not teachers, and all of them wear slacks
- O. What do you think about the sports, the emphasis on sports nowadays? Did they have that when you were teaching here in Youngstown?
- M. Well, what do you mean in the grade schools?
- O. Yes, the grade school, like baseball, or even in the high schools, too Do you know anything about that?
- M I do not know about the high schools But in the grade schools the children played baseball and football But not in scholastic teams, like they do now Of course now, you know, they have high school baseball, football, track, basketball and so on But not in the grade schools Not in the classes when I was teaching
- O. Is there anything that you can think of that I may not have thought to ask you about teaching in Youngstown? About any of your experiences?
- M If the teachers were more strict on discipline It can be done, but they never try It is hard I know, but after you once get control of them, you will not have any trouble.
- O How about physical punishment? Do you believe in that for people?
- M I think it all depends on what the offense is You take that child that was throwing those tantrums that I would you about. If I had tried to punish her, get her up in the seat, she would have kicked me and done everything else She was that nasty So, I just ignored her Well, that was worse than anything, then, taking that hall duty away from her for the rest of the school year.
- O. Right, that is punishment That is good
- M That was the punishment. That was worse than anything I could have done Had no trouble with her for the rest of the year
- O So in other words, the punishments fit the crimes?
- M That is right Let me tell you another case The children came in at noon time and they were so excited I said, "What in the world is the matter?" They said, "So an so," and they called a boy by name, "has a gun " I said to him, "Do you have a gun?" "No," he said "Did you have one?" "Yes " "Where is it?" "I hid it " "Where did you hide it?" "Outside " And he was going to get a boy after school He had threatened another boy I said, "You are sure you do not have it here in the room?" He said, "Yes " Of

course, I did not try to search him. I know you are not supposed to do that. I said, "All right." So I went right on with my afternoon's work.

When it came to dismissal time, I told all of the children, "You are all excused. I want you all to go home, except you," that one boy. He looked at me. I said, "You sit right still in that seat." He was as big as I was. He sat still. Pretty soon he commenced to cry. I said, "What are you crying about?" He said, "That other boy will get my gun." I said, "That is your fault. You had no business to threaten him." I would not let him go. I kept him after school until I was sure that all of the children I told to leave the playground and go home were gone.

O I guess that is one of the more unpleasant things about teaching them? Were there any labor difficulties with the teachers when you were teaching? Any strikes?

M No, there was not.

O Were you in a union? Did you have to join the union when you were teaching?

M Have to do what?

O Join the union?

M They asked me to join the teacher's organization, the YEA, Youngstown Education Association. Well, I did, but there was not the trouble then about unionism like there is now.

End of Interview