

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of Mecca, Ohio Project

History of Mecca, Ohio

O.H. 159

NELLIE M. GRAHAM

Interviewed

by

Beth Hanuschak

on

May 21, 1979

NELLIE MARIE DUNCAN GRAHAM

Nellie Duncan Graham was born in 1896. Her parents, Daniel Duncan and Jennie Hedge Duncan, were originally from Pennsylvania. She was one of five children: James, Lucy, John, Nellie, and Glenn. Her father was self-employed as a blacksmith, lumberjack, and farmer.

Nellie began school in 1901 at the age of five. When she was in the eleventh grade, she was exposed to diptheria at a dance and was quarantined for six weeks. She could have gone back the next year, but she didn't want to because she wouldn't have been in class with the kids her age. For this reason, she never graduated from high school. The next two years were spent at home. In 1913, she met Frank Graham at a dance at the home of Mr. Dilly, a resident of Mecca. They were married December 24 of the following year.

Mr. Graham began a sheet metal business, which had its beginnings in Cortland. He eventually moved it to Mecca. Mr. Graham passed away in 1959.

Nellie Graham has never held a job outside of the home. In her younger years, she was an active member of the Rebecca Lodge and the Grange. Presently, she belongs to the West Mecca Methodist Church and enjoys raising flowers and cooking. She resides with her daughter and son-in-law, Doris and Ralph Donegan.

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INTERVIEWEE: NELLIE M. GRAHAM
INTERVIEWER: Beth Hanuschak
SUBJECT: History of Mecca, Ohio
DATE: May 21, 1979

H: This is an interview with Nellie Duncan Graham for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program by Beth Hanuschak on May 21, 1979 at 4:00 p.m. The subject is the history of Mecca, Ohio.

Mrs. Graham, in my research I've come across the Duncan name a couple of times and there was a Mary Duncan who was the daughter of James and Sarah. Who is that?

G: She is my aunt. James and Sarah were my grandparents. They came from Pennsylvania to Mecca. I don't know what year.

H: Mary seems to be very active in Mecca. I understand she was head organizer of the homecoming and organized the very first homecoming in 1916.

G: That's right. She was a very active person in church, went to church, walked from her home about two miles every Sunday to church. And she was the adult Sunday School teacher in the West Mecca Methodist Church for years. She took up business college in Warren, graduated from the Warren Business College and worked at the Western Reserve Lumber Company for several years. Then my grandmother, Sarah Duncan, took sick and she had to come home and take care of her, my grandmother. And from then on, she was at home and kept house for her brother, Charles, who was a bachelor.

H: Are his initials C. N. Duncan?

G: C. N. Duncan. She had a sister, Anna, who worked in Warren at the Pierless Electric Works for years. She knew and had an apartment in Warren and she would come home over the weekend and spend the weekends at home and help around the place.

Charlie was a farmer and a lumberman and then I cannot tell you what year he passed away. And then Anna lived there. My Aunt Anna broke her hip and had to come home and they lived together there until they passed away.

H: Mary died in 1941?

G: Right.

H: Okay, then answer me this: Who is D. J. Duncan? D like in David.

G: Dan, Daniel, that was my father, Daniel Genger Duncan.

H: He had two children? Is that the same . . . ?

G: No, there was five of us.

H: Okay, I found a D. J. Duncan who had two children. He was a farmer all in around 1915. Is that any relation to you whatsoever? Maybe that was your family but not all the children were born yet. That could be.

G: I'm the youngest of my family.

H: Oh really?

G: They're all passed on and I'm the youngest of them. Daniel Genger Duncan and Jenny Hedge was my mother and father.

H: Hedge was her maiden name?

G: Yes.

H: Were they residents of Mecca all their lives?

G: No. They came from Pennsylvania. My father came from Westmoreland County and my mother came from Little Washington, Pennsylvania.

H: What made them come to Mecca?

G: Well, now you know, that's something I'd like to know. I don't know. They came to Plymouth. The Duncan family

came to Plymouth in Astabula County I think that would be. And from there to Mecca--how they came I cannot tell you because I don't remember or I don't know if really, we ever got into that conversation. In the years that they came here, I don't think there was such things as going on like interviewing people at that time. So, I just couldn't tell you what made them come to Mecca.

H: What year did they come? Roughly?

G: I couldn't tell you.

H: It has been a long, long time ago then?

G: Because all of my brothers and sisters were born in Mecca. I am the youngest of the family.

H: Name your brothers and sisters for me.

G: James, Lucy, John, myself, and Glen, but he died when he was a year and a half old. So, that was the way we were born.

H: You were born in 1896?

G: That's right.

H: 1896 and you look so good. My goodness, I hope I look that well.

G: Thank you.

H: What did your parents do for a living? What did your father do?

G: He was a blacksmith, he was a lumberman and he farmed, did several things in those days to keep the family going.

H: Did your mother work?

G: No, she died when she was 37 years old.

H: Oh, she died awfully young. How did she pass away?

G: Tuberculosis. We called it consumption in those days.

H: That obviously put a big strain on the whole family. You'd still be pretty young, you were still living at

home.

G: My sister died when she was sixteen years old, nine months after my mother died.

H: Lucy?

G: Lucy.

H: What did she die of?

G: Consumption. That was called contagious in those days.

H: Were there any doctors that they could get help?

G: No, we didn't seem to get any help at that time. The doctor was Dr. Thomas from Warren at that time. She was sick practically for two years.

H: That's very interesting. You are the only one out of your family living?

G: I'm the only one left.

H: Is that right? When did the last one die?

G: Two years ago in November, I think the 7th.

H: What was it like for you to be a child in West Mecca? Prior to entering elementary school, what did you do? What was life like in West Mecca? That's kind of a general question. Did you have to help a lot at home as a child? Did you have responsibilities?

G: My two brothers and my father practically raised us and of course, my grandmother just lived, oh; as far as from here to the next house from us. But in those days, we couldn't go to the stores and buy things like we do today. My grandmother baked the bread for us, but my father kept us all together at home.

When my mother was sick, we had to take turns staying home from school, one of us a day a week, to help stay with our mother to keep the fires burning. My father in the wintertime, had to go about two miles and made mine props and then they would get a carload and haul them to Bristol and put them on the train and ship them to Pittsburgh to the mines. Now, that was the reason you had to stay at home to keep the home fires going,

because he had to work.

H: Where was your house at in West Mecca? What street? What road?

G: It was about one, maybe two miles north of West Mecca.

H: Is it still standing?

G: It is still standing, yes, and my niece lives in it.

H: What did that house look like when you were living in it? Take me through that house.

G: My father moved that house there. It was a green to begin with. When he got married, he moved it there and he remodeled it over and we had a kitchen, a sitting room, and a parlor they called them in those days, and a bedroom downstairs. Upstairs we had three bedrooms. Then we had a porch build clear around the house, that is, on the south side and the west side. And that's about all I can say. It doesn't look like that now. It was very comfortable and real nice. We had water in the house.

H: Did you have plumbing?

G: No.

H: That was the old outhouse huh?

G: It was the old outhouse.

H: No electricity either?

G: No electricity. We had oil lamps. We always had plenty to eat and things like that. But now, to go to the store, we had two stores in West Mecca, which you know that.

H: What are they?

G: There was Chandler and Love, J. H. Love, and he had his undertaking room in the back of his store. He was our undertaker at that time.

H: Okay, I didn't know that.

G: He was the undertaker in Cortland. When he left Mecca, he went to Cortland and was the undertaker in Cortland.

H: Isn't there a Love Funeral Home in Cortland today?

G: And that was his son then. After Mr. Love passed on, his son, Neal Love, took it over. He is about two years older than I am. When Neal passed on, he sold it. He sold it to Schafer and Winans, but it still carries the Love name, also.

In the back of the store in West Mecca he, Mr. John Love, had a funeral home, but in those days they im-balmed you in your home. My mother was imbalmed in our home.

H: And that's when they had the calling hours right then and there, right?

G: You didn't have calling hours.

H: You didn't?

G: No, you didn't have calling hours. The people came when someone passed on, they came and sat up nights with you at your home. A neighbor would come in and sit. We had wonderful neighbors and that's the way they did. And years ago, when one passed on, they would come. They buried you in three days and someone different would come every night and burn the lamp all night long, use it up.

H: What did Chandler have in his store?

G: His was a general store, a grocery store. Everything, he had practically everything in our general stores.

H: I'd heard about Love, but not about Chandler.

S: Troxell had that store before Chandler, but I don't remember too much about Troxell in the store, but I remember it after Mr. Chandler bought the store.

H: Are any of those two buildings still around? They're both gone now, those two buildings?

G: Yes, they're gone.

H: You had said that your neighbors were very friendly in times of need. Who were your neighbors?

G: Everybody helped one another in those days, even in haying, butchering, when you had to make buzz piles,

they called them.

H: What is that? I don't know what it is. (Laughter)

G: A buzz pile is you get up a pile of wood. You go to the woods and cut your wood and haul it up to the house and you, oh, get a big pile higher than this room. And then you get a buzz saw and an engine and the neighbors would all come in and buzz you up, maybe 25, 30 or 40 cords of wood. That's what you burnt in your stoves in those days. And we had about eight neighbors around there and they'd all help one another. We'd do that for each. And every one grew older.

H: Who were those people that helped? Can you name me some names?

G: John Case, Sheldon Smith, Frank Palmer, John Kecker, Billy Case, that was two different families; Palmers.

H: Nora Palmer?

G: Not Nora, but Frank, her husband's father.

H: She told me that you were just a little girl when she got married and for me to ask you about that and you are to tell me about her also. She said, "She knows me pretty good." I said, "I will ask her about that." She's a delightful lady.

G: Awful hard working girl.

H: From what she has told me, yes she was. So, she was a Palmer.

G: Her husband's father was a Palmer, Lathrop Palmer, who was one of the men that would come and help.

H: What year did you begin school? Probably about 1902?

G: I went to District School. That was up north of our place and I think it was District Five. They went by numbers. And I started to school before I was really five years old.

H: So, that's probably around 1900, 1901 then, right?

G: Yes, I would say so. But I didn't learn much. They just sent me as the people of today send their children to kindergarten. I wanted to go, so my sister

always took me. But we only had about six months of school.

H: Oh really? Why?

G: Well, they didn't have the money in those days to pay the teachers. Then the teacher would have to go and board in the community amongst the people around the school.

H: Had your home ever had any boarders like that?

G: No, we didn't take any in. We really didn't have the room to do it.

H: Did you graduate then?

G: No. Then in 1904 we were centralized and then I started in first grade there. They called the grades intermediate room, primary room, and high school. That's what they called the rooms in that school. I went to the eleventh grade then I got quarantined in with diphtheria. So I didn't . . .

H: Couldn't finish?

G: I could have went the next year, but I didn't want to then. I could have went back to school, but I didn't want to because I had already started in with ones my age.

H: Did you ever regret that?

G: No, I don't think I ever have. Not in them days, because I couldn't have ever went to a college. I had to stay at home and keep house for my father. Had some pretty rugged days going to school as it was.

H: Like what? What had happened?

G: Well, I'd get up in the morning, pack three lunches for the rest of them to go to work and get myself ready for the kid wagon. We had wagons in those days.

H: What was a kid wagon?

G: That was a wagon with a big top over it. It had the top and the side curtains on it and all. And when the weather was good, we'd roll the side curtains up. We had seats in it, not crossways, but length-wise.

And that's the way we were hauled to school with horses. And as I say, I had to get around and get myself ready for school. Many a mornings I never got the breakfast table rid of or anything. I would have to come home and then at night and build my own fire in the cook stove, nobody at home. And then start supper and get supper. That's the way my school days went. But, I don't regret them because I did have a good time going to school. I had good friends and we had a jolly time.

- H: What's a good time? Yes, sure, tell me more about that.
- G: In those days, when we went to school, we had recesses at noon. We had an hour for our noon. When the weather was nice, we went out. The girls played baseball. The boys played baseball. We each had a separate one. In the wintertime, we had a nice basement in our school, and we would go down in the basement and play Drop the Hankerchief, Skip to My Lou, and all those kinds of games which kids of today really don't know what they are.
- H: No, they don't. I have no idea what Skip . . . What was that again?
- G: Skip to My Lou.
- H: What is that?
- G: Well, we would all get in a circle and then we'd sing; had a song which had Skip to My Lou in it and we'd all go dancing around in a big ring and then they say, "Skip to My Lou." And then one would take a partner and then we'd skip all around just like they would dance. And those were the kinds of games we played. We always looked forward to recesses and our noon hours at school.
- It's funny Mr. Benton didn't tell you.
- H: Who was in your class? Who were some of the people you went to school with? How many were in your particular grade?
- G: Well, I think Frank Benton is about the only one living that was in my grade.
- H: Who were some of the names of the people you went to school with?

G: Lillie Wallace, Mabel Morrell, Johnny Armstrong, Clod Schafer, Paul Troxell, Nina Winans, but they're practically all passed on.

H: Sure. Where was this school located?

G: Mecca. The tavern is over there.

H: Can you describe to me what that school looked like? Can you give me a description of that school. How many rooms or can you remember what's in a room? Was there anything outstanding to you?

G: There was three rooms. We had primary, intermediate, and we had a big hall that had shelves in it for our dinner buckets and up on the way, a place to hang up all of our coats for all two of those rooms. We called it a cloak room. That was what we called it at that time. Then we had a nice stairway and a nice banister where we could go up two at a time together, always marched up when we were in high school. We always had a drummer.

H: A drummer?

G: A drummer to drum for us, "Right, left, right, left," And go up the stairs. Two always marched. If we were outside, they'd ring the bell. We had to line up. We had a porch like this and a banister around it and four steps to come up. We were outside playing, we had to get in two's, like here and here, and march in. And the ones that went upstairs marched in, two by two, and up the stairway. They rang the bell and were to go, two by two, upstairs.

Now, the upstairs had the same thing, a cloak room the same size as the one we had downstairs to put their dinner buckets and their cloaks. And they then would march into the rooms. And into each room we had a rostrum built up like that, oh, as wide as that. And the teacher then, had a desk and his chair set up on that. And that's what our room looked like, but we had double seats, two in a seat, two sat together,

Then they had a classroom, which was probably as big as the kitchen and this. And he'd come in and they would take us in there for our reading classes and our-- we called them languages. Our language would be grammar at that time. They called them language classes in the grades and when we got up in high school it was

- called grammar. And they'd take us in there for our arithmetic classes and grammar and our reading classes. See, we had reading in those days until we went into the tenth grade in school. Reading, writing, and spelling, and arithmetic and geography. Those were our studies. History, reading, arithmetic, spelling, geography, and writing was our main subjects. When we got into high school, we had algebra. I never did have any other kind of studies like they have it today. No, that was our studies we had.
- H: Was there a gymnasium in that building?
- G: No, we didn't have no gyms or nothing.
- H: Did you eat in a room when it came to lunch time?
- G: We had to sit at our desks and eat. We'd march out just to get our lunch buckets. The teacher had one of these little bells and when it would come time for noon, she'd tap that bell. We'd stand up at the side of our desk and then she'd say, "One, two, one, two." And then we'd march out into the cloak room and get our dinner buckets and march back to our seats and eat our dinner. That's how we would do it when I went to school.
- H: Was there any discipline problems? You hear today kids are doing this and doing that.
- G: No.
- H: Did they use hickory sticks, so to speak, on the kids in your time?
- G: No. I never, in my time, ever saw a kid get a paddling, but I've seen them get shaken up. This Johnny Armstrong and Clod Schafer sat in front of Nina Winans and I, and Johnny would get a shaking up about every day, but it wasn't because he was mean or ornery. He would whisper and talk and kind of get into mischief that way.
- H: The teachers would come up to them like this?
- G: He took the top off the desk one day, but outside of that I'd never seen anyone until we got into high school. And we had pretty big boys in high school and a couple of them got to chewing tobacco down in the basement at noon hour. Arnold Clark was our professor at that time and he went down in the basement and caught

them. And he brought them two big boys up. I can see them yet, as scared to death, one in each hand and took them up and made them sit in their seats. Now, that was the kind of discipline we had when we went to school.

H: Do you think that was good?

G: Yes I do. You need some of that in this day and age I think.

H: It didn't hurt you, in other words, to be disciplined? It just didn't hurt you, you needed it?

G: No. They knew they needed it.

H: You told me then, about recess and about the two boys. Is there any other incident that stands out in your mind, going to school, that you can really remember and look back and say, "Boy that was something"?

G: Well, no. I loved my teachers.

H: Did you?

G: I think everybody did. I don't think there was a student in the first or second grade . . . We had first, second, and third in the primary room. It was all three grades and this one teacher taught us. Now, there was probably thirty or forty kids and this one teacher had them grades, and everybody loved her, everybody loved her. And I think it was the same way in the other.

When we were in the primaries, we weren't allowed to go into the other intermediate room or go upstairs to the high school. We had to ask if we wanted to go. We didn't ask to go up those steps or go over into Miss Davis' room or anything like that. We had to stay completely in the hall or go in our own room.

H: You had to quit then, in eleventh grade, so that would bring us probably up to around 1911, 1912?

G: 1912.

H: 1912, okay. You said that you came down with diphtheria?

G: I didn't. I was exposed.

H: You were exposed?

G: Yes.

H: So, what did they do with you?

G: I stayed home.

H: You just had to stay home?

G: Yes. I couldn't go to church, couldn't go nowhere,

H: How long did that last?

G: I think that was six weeks.

H: Did you go to the doctor and everything?

G: No.

H: Is that right?

G: They come and quarantined, put a quarantined sign on our house. And my father was practically the only one outside of that. He went to work, but the rest of us had to stay in. If I'd have come down with it, why, then I . . .

H: Did you ever have any symptoms or anything?

G: No. I went to a dance and got exposed to it and this lady that had it, why, died with it. So, I said I got what was exposed . . . could kill you. Another girlfriend of mine was quarantined at that time, too, the same time.

H: What did you do then? Here you are, seventeen years old, eighteen years old maybe. You didn't go back to school. Then what? What was in store?

G: I got married in 1914.

H: That was to Frank?

G: Yes.

H: Why did you get married so young?

G: What else did I have to do with my . . . I had stayed at home to keep house for my father. I thought, well, as long as I had to stay there or had to be at home; after I got married, why, my father asked us to

come and stay there and keep house for him and I did,
And I had a very enjoyable time,

I met my husband at a dance. I loved to dance. That was one of my prides and joys in my life, was to dance. We went to dances every Saturday night. They were house dances over to the homes of people. We went places. He had a horse and buggy, and in them times, when I went to church, I had to walk, so when we went to church, we went together. And as I say, we went lots of places together where I probably wouldn't have went if I would have been stuck at home. Didn't have automobiles in them days.

H: Was your father upset that you decided to get married? Now, all of a sudden you have a husband you have your own responsibilities.

G: No. He accepted Frank, very generous and liked him and we lived at home there up until 1932.

H: Then what happened?

G: Well, I suppose you will ask me how I met my husband wouldn't you?

H: I certainly will, yes.

G: Well, I think this would fit in. I think that after I was married, my husband worked for Mr. Chandler driving a grocery wagon for a dollar a day. He worked some time. I can't tell you just how long a time. Then he worked for Mr. Dilly putting in cement bridges for about a year. Then is when I met him at a house dance at Mr. Dilly's. That was in November and then in the following year, 1914, we got married December 24, the night before Christmas.

Now, what was the question again?

H: How did you get here to where you're at now? In 1932 you moved here?

G: Then we left over there in 1932,

H: West Mecca?

G: West Mecca. My husband was in the sheet metal business,

H: How did he get in that?

G: He worked for John Casterline and John Buckner at the hardware store in Cortland for a couple of years and learned the sheet metal work. He stayed in Cortland. The roads were so bad and muddy that he couldn't drive back and forth. He boarded at John Love's house, this undertaker in Cortland, because he knew him before he left Mecca over there. And then he quit and went into business for himself in Cortland on Main Street. And that's when we moved to Cortland in 1932.

H: So, the first shop in sheet metal was in Cortland, was his first shop that he had?

G: Was his, yes.

H: Then you moved to Cortland? Not here, but to Cortland?

G: Yes. We moved to where Biggin's Furniture Store is, in that house, the part where they have their terrace in the front there. There is where we lived when we lived in Cortland.

H: When you got married, was it a big wedding, house wedding?

G: No.

H: What does, "no" mean? Who married you?

G: The Reverend Hager at the Tod Avenue Methodist Church in Warren.

H: And that was it? You just went there?

G: No, my Grandmother Hedge lived on Tod Avenue in Warren and my mother's three sisters lived in Warren. So, we had to go to Warren to get our license. You didn't have to get your license like you do today. And they went to Tod Avenue Methodist Church and there's where they wanted me to go. And then we was married and my grandmother had a dinner for us, her and my aunts and their families were at the dinner. That was our wedding.

H: Did you go on a honeymoon?

G: No!

H: Why "no"? Weren't honeymoons . . . ?

G: They wasn't in those days. No, I don't remember of any-

one ever having a honeymoon in those days, not even Nora Palmer and them when they got married. No. Did she ever tell you?

H: No. See, that's news to me. I didn't know. I just assumed you went.

G: No.

H: So, you just kept on like normal?

G: We stayed all night with my grandmother. When we went to Warren, my husband got a livery rig, a horse and buggy, and they called them livery rigs at that time, but they were horse and buggy. And they had livery stables; that's what they called them. He went and got that horse and buggy over to Bloomfield and brought it to my home and got me and we went over to Bristol to the station and took the train to Warren.

H: Continuing with our discussion about your marriage, one thing I do have to ask you, did he court you? I hear that term so often. Did he court you? What does that mean?

G: Well, in those days, yes, they courted you. They would come on Sunday evenings mostly it was in those days, and of course, on a Saturday night we would go to a dance. They had house dances in those days. We went to the peoples homes and had a piano and a fiddle and we square danced.

H: In the house?

G: Yes. They would take up their carpet. In the winter months would be about four different families and they'd invite you in and you'd go and set a night to come and we would dance till 12:00, 1:00.

H: Did your husband have to ask your father if he could marry you?

G: Yes.

H: After you moved to Cortland, how many years did you live in Cortland then? His business was there. How many years did you live in Cortland?

G: Two years.

H: Then where did you go? Out here?

G: Moved out here,

H: And he built the shop?

G: No. That was Ralph's. See, we moved out here, we all lived together when we moved to Cortland. Doris and Ralph got married.

H: That's your daughter?

G: Yes, and we lived in a double house when they got married. And then Ralph bought here and we moved out here and lived with Ralph in this house. I didn't remember how many years we lived here with him. Then we bought the place next to them. Then, after my husband passed away, I came over here and lived with Ralph and Doris. So, that's how I happened to be here. I still own that place though. I rented my place.

H: Oh really? Who lives in it now?

G: The Bierces.

H: Had you ever worked in your life? Did you ever work? Were you ever employed by anyone?

G: No.

H: Had you wanted to?

G: Well, I didn't have much time to do any work. You didn't have the opportunities that the young people have of today in my day.

H: In the early teens, 1914, 1915, what had all this area looked like? You said you were from West Mecca. What did all that look like?

G: We had lots of wood and timber.

H: Can you remember the Center, Mecca Center here?

G: Over there or here?

H: Oh, was there a Mecca Center in West Mecca?

G: No. We had a Town Hall, two churches and two stores in Mecca at that time. That was about it.

H: In your time, when you were a youngster, was West Mecca

and East Mecca involved in that problem, the feuding so to speak, that went back and forth?

G: Yes, mostly just being divided by Mosquito Creek.

H: What is your version of that? Why did that occur?

G: In my days I've always heard that, and I couldn't say what the reason was of that.

H: Can you remember the cyclone of 1917?

G: Sure can.

H: Tell me about that day. Can you remember what happened that day?

G: Well, it was south of us, but I could see it in the air.

H: What were you doing?

G: I was ironing at that time and I could see the things flying in the air. And the roaring of it was a terrible roar and then all of a sudden, they said there was a cyclone and different buildings was torn down. After it got kind of quieted down, we got in the horse and buggy and drove down around to see what damage had been done.

H: Had it destroyed any of your property?

G: No, it wasn't that close to us. It went right through the Center. It started over on Park Avenue and went right straight through to East Mecca.

H: Had it destroyed or left some destruction at the Palmer household in East Mecca? They owned two places.

G: Oh yes, not over there at West Mecca, their household over here. At that time they were living over here, East Mecca, but it destroyed their house here. But it didn't destroy the house that Nora was in.

H: Speaking of Nora, and I do want to ask you, she has mentioned to me that you could tell me about her. What can you remember? What do you know about Nora Palmer? She said that you were just a little girl and that you could still remember her and she said that you could tell me everything, more than what she could.

G: Well, I don't know if I could do that. The main thing that I can remember of Nora is when I was small I used to go down there a lot to Palmer's. And her mother-in-law was very, very particular.

H: Jenny Boone? Yes she was.

G: She looked like she just stepped out of a band box. At home, in her kitchen, you would be surprised, they ate on linen tableclothes every day of the week and was immaculate. It was the old cook stove, but that cook stove shined.

But Nora had a potato patch up close to our place. There was just a line fence between our farm and theirs. And she probably had out about three quarters of an acre or maybe not that much, of potatoes. And she would come up there with her hoe and hoe potatoes day in and day out until she got her potato patch hoed. And I would take her down water. We had a little round dinner bucket and I'd take along a tin cup and take her water to drink. It would be real hot weather.

Then she'd get out and bunch hay. Now, I don't suppose you know what bunching hay is? Well, they mowed her hay and they'd rake it with a rake, a horse rake and then you had it in rows, which you would go out and make piles, not quite as big as this table, and bunch it up. Then they'd come out with the horse and wagon, hay rack they called it. And she would build the hay on the wagon and her husband, Frank, would pitch the hay up to her and she would build the loads.

H: Is it true that Nora did mostly all the work outside and her mother-in-law did everything in? She more or less ran the household? Is that true? It seems to me that she was very rich, wealthy I should say.

G: Well, she was well-to-do in those days.

H: Yes.

G: But Nora had so much work to do. She had the milk things to take care of and had certain parts of work to do in the house, but did lots and lots of work outside.

H: Why did she do all that work? Did she have to do it?

G: Yes, it had to be done.

- H: Because that's how they made their living as farmers.
- G: Frank, her husband, never did work away from home. No, he never worked away from home. They milked cows and sold their milk and that was what money that they took in. And they had to raise their crops to feed these cows.
- H: Very interesting. You were just telling me that Mecca had never had a post office and then one was built.
- G: No, they had a post office in Mr. Love's store, and they took care of the mail. You'd take your letters down there and we'd go there to get a paper if we wanted to have a paper. But we didn't go to the post office over twice a week. We had to walk or take the horse and buggy. Then when we did go, we'd pick up all of our neighbor's around there, four or five families, of their mail; and they would take turns of picking up the mail and bringing it home to us.

Then how they got this R.F.D. [Rural Free Delivery] I can't just tell you how that got started, but our mail then came from Cortland. Robert Chandler was our mail carrier and he came in a wagon, four wheeled like a buggy, but it had a top built up on it and then it had places in front of it that you'd put your mail, your letters and things like that. And he was our first R.F.D. mailman. We had to put up mailboxes at the road for him to put our mail in.

My grandfather, at the time, would give me and my brother a penny a day to go down to the mailbox and pick the mail up and bring it to the house.

And he was our mail carrier for several years. You had very bad roads, mud roads. In the wintertime your wheels would be just all full of mud and frozen tight. Maybe he wouldn't make the whole trip in one day.

- H: Had your husband or your family been involved in World War II?
- G: No.
- H: Why was that? He was never drafted?
- G: No, only in World War II he was drafted into Packard, that is, into his work. And he worked at Packard then.

- H: You mean they drafted people to work here during World War II?
- G: Yes, in whatever was their trade. He was a sheet metal worker so they drafted him at Packard. He worked, well, going on fifteen years here. He retired after he took sick. He worked at the Packard for fifteen years.
- H: Had West Mecca had the homecoming? Your cousin was in the one in August of 1916. Had that involved both West Mecca and East Mecca?
- G: No. Do you mean my aunt?
- H: Your aunt rather. I'm sorry. Your aunt.
- G: No, that just involved West Mecca.
- H: Did you get involved with any of that?
- G: Oh yes. We'd have an entertainment and we'd have our dinner. The first one was held in Hattie Pray's Orchard.
- H: How many years did all these homecomings take place? They don't do it now do they?
- G: They haven't in the last two years, but they have had them. They went together, but I can't tell you what year that they were called the Mecca Centralized, but that was after you'd seen our school consolidated together.
- H: Where was the first homecoming? Whose orchard?
- G: Hattie Pray's.
- H: The 1920's hit Mecca, and from the people I've talked with, not a whole lot changed during that time. Had things changed? It ended World War I. Had things changed out here?
- G: Since World War I?
- H: During the 1920's, did people have more money to spend?
- G: Oh yes, definitely.
- H: Really? So, you saw the change and that people had money, people were spending more. You saw that here?

G: Oh yes.

H: I see. When the stock market crashed in 1929, all of a sudden the world is into the Depression. Did that affect you?

G: In a certain way I was used to it. It didn't affect us like a lot of people because we had what we wanted to eat and such as that.

H: When they rationed food, were things hard to come by?

G: Well, not much more than what we were used to having, outside of maybe sugar or something like that.

H: So, it really didn't bother you? Nothing had really changed that much?

G: No, not in that way because we weren't used to having things like you do now.

H: When did you get your first car? Had you and your husband owned and used it out here?

G: Oh yes. I would say probably in 1917 or so. It wasn't a new one.

H: How many children did you and your husband have?

G: One.

H: Doris. After the 1930's, Mosquito Reservoir was built. What are your feelings on that? Most people I've talked with--not too good. They did not like to see it come. Had you wanted to see it built?

G: Well, no.

H: Did it take any of your land?

G: Yes, but we didn't own our place at that time. We just rented it at that time, but it took some of the property. It made it quite an exciting time for people. It made work for people.

H: Which is good, which proved very good then.

G: This was all woods and everything.

H: Did you play in the creek before [the reservoir was built?]

G: No.

H: You had had the old swimming hole?

G: We did at our home over in West Mecca. We called it the Mill Dam. We had a place where we went back and could wade in the water. And we also had a gravel bank on our farm.

H: What is a gravel bank?

G: Well, they built roads out of it. It's gravel and they built gravel roads out of it. The trustees, in those days, had to take care of all the roads, the building of the roads. And they had to work out poll tax in those days. There was a poll tax to help keep up the roads. You had to keep your ditches cleaned out and keep the brush in your road sides cleaned out; and which the county and things do nowadays. The owner of the farm had to do that, take care of the front of his place. And then, if they didn't, some of them wouldn't do it, why then the trustees would hire someone to go and work it out. They called that poll tax.

H: When you bought this property out here, what was the price. Can you remember any prices of things? How much was land going for when you moved out here in the 1930's or when you bought it? Do you have any idea?

G: Well, it's much higher now, very much higher. I would say, maybe, fifty dollars an acre.

H: Has the appearance of Mecca when you were growing up and now, has that changed tremendously?

G: Oh yes, very much.

H: How? What has been the biggest change?

G: Well, in population, in buildings, and road building, building of the roads. This was all mud roads now there again. It has changed very, very much in schools and churches.

H: Do you think it has changed for the good? Do you like to see all these people coming out? Let's face it, there's people moving into this area.

G: Fast.

H: That's right.

- G: Well, I don't know whether it's for the best or the worst.
- H: It's your own opinion.
- G: The people of today are not like they were years ago and you don't have neighbors like we used to and everybody is for themselves nowadays. It will probably, in time, be all filled up soon.
- H: Do you belong to any organizations?
- G: I did.
- H: You did? What did you belong to?
- G: To the Rebecca Lodge.
- H: What is that?
- G: Well, do you know what the Odd Fellow Lodge is?
- H: I had heard of it. Explain to me what the Rebecca . . .
- G: The Rebecca is a branch from the Odd Fellows. You had to have one in your family or your husband belong to Odd Fellows; IOOF is what they call an Odd Fellow. And then the Rebeccas had a branch, an organization, a lodge.
- And I belonged to the Grange; did, but I don't now.
- H: How many years were you involved in the . . . it was called the Rebecca Lodge?
- G: Yes.
- H: How many years?
- G: Oh, probably eighteen years.
- H: Is it still around?
- G: Not the one that I belonged. I belonged to the Cortland, but they broke up. The Odd Fellows had to go leave because they went to Warren. The Odd Fellows, I think they just broke up.
- H: Then you did belong to the Grange. About how many years did you belong to that?
- G: Oh, probably twenty years, maybe more.

H: Did you enjoy it?

G: Oh yes, very much.

H: What did you do for example? What did you do in the Grange?

G: We met and they elected their officers.

H: Were you an officer?

G: Yes, on the drill team. I helped suppers and social affairs they had.

H: Do you belong to a church?

G: Yes, I belong to a church.

H: Which?

G: West Mecca Methodist Church.

H: Do you still belong?

G: Yes.

H: Are you active or just more or less going?

G: I just go now. I used to be, but . . .

H: Have you ever left Mecca?

G: That is to live?'

H: Yes.

G: No.

H: Never other than Cortland?

G: No. That's all.

H: Would you like to have gone someplace else or do you think this is home folks. I stay home, this is it.

G: I have traveled, been to Arizona and I've been to Washington on tours like that and enjoyed them very much. I went to Pittsburgh and Philadelphia and Gettysburg.

H: But this is still home? You're very comfortable here?

G: I've been to Florida a few times, but I still like Mecca.

H: Still like it? What drives you back here? What is here for you other than maybe your immediate family?

G: Well, not only that, but when you're born and raised in a place . . . Of course, my old friends are practically all gone, but still, I know where I'm at. The places and things have been lost in the homes the lake took and all that, but still, it is home to me. I wouldn't go back over to West Mecca and live again.

H: Why?

G: Well, I like it much better over here because there's nobody over there anymore that was there when I lived over there. And, I like it over here.

H: It seems that your daughter and your son-in-law get along so well and it's just very nice. It is home. That description fits you well, very good.

Is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion, anything that you think would be interesting? Any outstanding events that have happened here?

G: No, I don't think so.

H: Then we've covered a good portion of things?

G: Yes, I think so. I probably could think of something. No, I think we've covered it all pretty good.

H: Is there anybody else living that you think that could help us with this project other than Frank Benton and Nora Palmer? Do you know of anybody else?

G: No, I don't really know.

H: Most of the people have passed away. The old homesteads aren't here as they used to be.

G: No, no they're not.

H: So, you really can't think of anybody else who has been around for awhile, who can remember what Mecca was like?

G: No. I really don't know of anyone. Of course, there's

older people living over in West Mecca than Frank Benton was and Nora, but they had just moved in recently from other townships. I think Frank Benton is probably the oldest one. He is 83.

H: Oh really? Do you see him a lot?

G: He goes to church. Yes, I saw him yesterday at church.

H: Do you two reminisce?

G: Oh yes.

H: You enjoy that huh?

G: Yes.

H: Well, I want to thank you very much for helping me with this project. I wish you good health and happiness.

G: Thank you.

H: I hope you live for many, many more years.

G: Well, I thank you very much and I've enjoyed it, too. I hope I've done you some good.

H: You most certainly have.

END OF INTERVIEW