

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of East Palestine Project

Resident Experiences

O. H. 784

CARRIE ATCHISON

Interviewed

by

Stephen Casi

on

May 8, 1979

## CARRIE ATCHISON

Carrie Atchison was born in East Palestine on June 28, 1887, the daughter of Johnathon Smith and Mary Andrews both born in East Palestine before it became incorporated as a city. Mrs. Atchison graduated from East Palestine High School in 1904. After attending Mount Union College, Mrs. Atchison was forced to come home after one year because of personal illness.

In 1904 Mrs. Atchison went to work for the Reveille Echo, a local newspaper. After working for the newspaper for three years she became a U. S. Postal Clerk in town until 1912.

Mrs. Atchison married her husband John S. Atchison, who was a doctor, in 1913. Dr. and Mrs. Atchison went on to have four children. At the time of Dr. Atchison's practice there were about four or five doctors practicing in East Palestine. More than today! The years of Dr. Atchison's practice are well remembered by Mrs. Atchison. Some of the interesting things remembered were the 25¢ and 35¢ office calls. Her husband used to walk to see his patients and then later on got a buggy. Whenever her husband made a night call, Mrs. Atchison always stayed up and waited for him. The year 1918 stands out in Mrs. Atchison's mind because of the terrible flu which kept her husband very busy. Very often her husband was paid for his service not in cash, but food.

The only time Mrs. Atchison left East Palestine was to be with her husband in Louisville, Kentucky at Camp Taylor where he served in the U. S. Army Medical Corps from October 1917 to July 1918.

In 1946 Mrs. Atchison's husband retired from practice and today they are residing at 54 South Market Street, East Palestine--the

same home of his earlier years of practice. Mrs. Atchison  
is a member of the United Methodist Church and is an Eastern Star.

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INTERVIEWEE: CARRIE ATCHISON

INTERVIEWER: Stephen Casi

SUBJECT: early history, general history, medical practices

DATE: May 8, 1979

C: This is an interview with Mrs. Carrie Atchison for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program by Stephen Casi at 54 South Market Street on May 8, 1979 at 3:30 p.m.

Mrs. Atchison, what do you remember about your family and parents? When did your family come to the East Palestine area?

A: We were always here. My father was born right across here on East Main Street. The house still stands. My mother was born just at the other end of town.

C: So your family was here before East Palestine was a city, is that correct?

A: Oh, yes. It was just a village. These streets weren't here. The boardwalks were very much in use down through town and up on West Martin Street there were boardwalks. My mother was Mary Andrews and she was married to Johnathon Wade Smith. They were married July 22, 1869.

C: What did your dad do for a living?

A: He had a coal mine for awhile.

C: Where was this coal mine located?

A: Down here, just southeast of town.

C: Up near Jimtown?

A: Yes, just beyond Jimtown.

C: After he left the coal mine, what did he do next?

A: He was a night watchman at the pottery over here for a long time, for years. And then from there he was city clerk.

C: What can you remember about your childhood being raised here in the East Palestine area?

A: I was born and raised and married in the same house on West Main Street.

C: Is that house still standing?

A: That house is still standing. Yes, it is. My old home. They built a new house; bought property next to it, east, and built a new house and wanted us to be married in that house. I said, "No, I am going to be married in the house that I was born and raised in." And I was. I was almost twenty-eight, twenty-five when I was married. No, I was older than that.

C: When you were a child, what were some of the things you did? Entertainment, work? Did you have a lot of spare time or did you have a lot of work to do?

A: No, I was the youngest of the family. I had three sisters and a brother older than me. One sister taught school. I think you've seen her name over there at the school, Elma Southern. That was my sister. My oldest sister, she taught school out in the country. That was after she graduated from high school. They all graduated from high school here in town and then had college work.

C: So you had three sisters who were teachers, or two sisters that were teachers?

A: Two sisters that were teachers. My brother was a Methodist minister.

C: What did you do as a child for fun? Who were some of your friends? Where did you go?

A: I was home. (Laughter) I didn't go very far. There was a girl across the street that I neighbored with quite a bit. We did bike riding. I had a bicycle and I rode that until the doctor ordered me to stop. It was too much for me.

C: What stores did your family use to go to here in town? Do you remember some of the clothing stores and food stores?

A: We didn't have stores like that here in town at that time. Now we had two grocery stores on West Main Street. William Ryan and Wright, they had a grocery store. The Ryan store had yard goods too.

C: Did your family raise a lot of their own food?

A: Oh, yes, lots of it. They buried some of it, what could be buried for the winter, celery and things like that. We had a smokehouse. Dad would get two six week old pigs and then we would raise them from that time on until butchering time in the fall. Then we would smoke that meat. We had a smokehouse for that. In the summertime, I used it for a playhouse. We lifted the boards in the floor for smoking the meat, but when I went to use it for a playhouse we put the floor down.

C: So a lot of the food you ate, you raised yourself?

A: Oh, yes, potatoes, beets, lettuce, and onions.

C: What foods did you buy at the store? Flour, salt, sugar, coffee?

A: That's about the extent of it. Molasses, we got the molasses at the store. It was ground out of a big cask. Milk, we had a cow for awhile.

C: How about your clothing? Did your mom make a lot of your clothing?

A: She did. Mother made a lot of our clothing. Not just for me, but she made for all of us.

C: What about shoes?

A: From the time I was able to wear shoes, I wore sample shoes. My feet were little and the shoe fellow gave me the sample shoes to wear. We had a fairly large house at home. Dad and mother built our house. Will Rowe and Howard Todd . . .

C: The two men that shold shoes in town?

A: Yes.

C: Was it a shoe store or did they come to you?

A: They had a store. The store was divided. It was one side for the shoes and the other side was for groceries. Skerball had a clothing store down here.

C: Do you remember the prices of any of these things that your family had to buy? Could you happen to recall some of the things they paid for?

A: They weren't the prices that we have to pay now. I did have a grocery book of my mother's, but it got misplaced. Salt would be five cents a bag.

- C: When you were growing up in town here there were very few stores?
- A: Oh, yes. There was the Ryan Store and the Wright Store on West Main Street. And then there was a drugstore here on the corner. Skerball's store was a clothing store.
- C: Were there any banks?
- A: No, I don't believe there were. MacIntosh and . . . They had a Building & Loan.
- C: How about the school? What year did you start school and where did you go to school here in East Palestine?
- A: Right over here on Wood Street.
- C: What year was that, do you remember?
- A: I think it was 1893.
- C: What was the name of the school on Wood Street? Was it called the Wood Street School?
- A: Wood Street School, yes. There were four rooms on the first floor and four on the second. Four on the second and the office. That was the first school over there on Wood Street. Baker was the superintendent when I started school.
- C: Do you mean it went from first grade to high school in that one building?
- A: Yes.
- C: And that was the only school building here in East Palestine?
- A: Yes.
- C: That was it?
- A: That was it.
- C: So everybody went. Just from the East Palestine area?
- A: The first school in town was a school on East Main Street. That was where my sisters went. Then this building was built and they came over here.
- C: What do you remember about some of your teachers and the subjects? Were the teachers strict?
- A: Yes, I had some good teachers. I started school in the first grade. I was in the first grade six weeks and I was promoted to the second grade, B class. I was in the B class six weeks and was promoted to the A class. I was a smartie! Then I

stayed with that A class until the class was moved to third grade.

My first teacher was Wilma Young. Me second grade teacher was Bessie Curry, Bessie Todd. My third grade teacher was Ida Kives. My fourth grade teacher was Clark Southern. My fifth grade teacher happened to be Ida Kives again. Then I had Ida Bolds. Ida Bolds used a piece of rubber hose for correcting the children. There was a boy sitting in back of me on a chair, the last seat of the row. He worked. His father was dead and he worked to help his mother. This one day he had fallen asleep. Ida Bolds was the teacher. She was sitting and saw him asleep and she had that piece of rubber hose and she started down the room. I could see where she was making for and I put my hand in back of me and I pulled John Pepper's hair to wake him. I almost got the rubber hose, but John didn't get it. I saved him from getting the rubber hose.

- C: Could you describe your classroom? Where did you sit? What type of books did you have? Did you use pencils or slate? How was it different than today?
- A: I don't know what it's like today.
- C: How about telling us about what it was like when you went to school.
- A: We had slates. We didn't have many examinations.
- C: Did you have a lot of books?
- A: We had a reader, an arithmetic, a grammar, and a geography book. That was it, in the grades.
- C: Did you use a McGuffey Reader?
- A: Yes. Then when we got up into high school we had rhetoric and astronomy, physical geography. I think that was the extent of it. Our books were limited.
- C: Did you have a recess period at school? Did kids go out and play?
- A: In the lower grades, yes. But after we got up into high school we didn't go out.
- C: Did you bring your lunch to school?
- A: No. I went home at noon.
- C: How about heat in your building? How was the building heated? Did the children have any responsibility in helping?
- A: No. We had a caretaker, Zeb Meek. Uncle Bud we called him. He was a good one. He tended to the heating. When I first



started school up here, we had outdoor toilets. Then they remodeled the building and put the toilets inside, downstairs.

C. L. Mervin was the principal of the high school and he was a good one. He was quite a piano player. We had an organ in the room. He would say, "Lay your books down." He would sit down at the organ and start to play and get us all up and marching around the room. Then he would say, "All right, take your places." Oh, he was a good one. I worked for him down at the Leader office. He had the Daily Leader that he put out down here. I worked for him there.

C: When did you graduate from high school?

A: In 1906.

C: Then after graduation what did you do?

A: I went to Mount Union College for awhile and then I came home from there because of sickness. After I got straightened up from that, I went to work for Mervin at the Leader office and worked for him for quite awhile until I got my hand caught in one of the presses and that stopped me. Then I went from there to the post office and I was a clerk in the post office.

C: What was it like working at the Daily Leader? Could you describe it?

A: I worked in the office quite a bit. I would go to the station and meet the people coming in, going out. With weddings or deaths, they would sometimes send me to get the information. I didn't have any one particular job.

C: What changes after graduation did you notice about East Palestine? Did the town seem to be changing a little bit? Were more people coming to East Palestine, more businesses?

A: A lot of Italians came in at that time. When I was at the post office, we had a busy Saturday. They would be making out checks to send over to Italy.

C: Why did they come to East Palestine, the Italians?

A: There was a brickyard down here, east of town, and they worked down there at that brickyard.

C: And they came without their families? They came to make money here and then send it back to Italy?

A: Yes, they did. Then in time, some of them did bring their families here. But not for quite some time.

- C: What other nationalities were in East Palestine? You mentioned Italians. Most people were probably what nationality here in town?
- A: I think English.
- C: A lot of Germans?
- A: Not a lot.
- C: Mostly English?
- A: Mostly English.
- C: Scotch?
- A: Yes.
- C: We're talking about now from 1900 to about 1910. What businesses can you remember? Was there a pottery still here in East Palestine?
- A: Yes, the pottery was here; the one pottery over there at the west end of town.
- C: Was that the W. S. George Pottery?
- A: W. S. George Pottery. My dad was night watchman there for several years and we would go over--my mother and my sister and my nephew--there in the evening. My older sister that was a school teacher, her husband died when her child was only nine months old and then she and the child came and lived with us. She was there when they started the night school. They started a night school and hired her because she had taught country school before that.
- C: When did you get married and what did your husband do for a living? Maybe you could tell me a little bit about your husband.
- A: He went to college.
- C: Was your husband from East Palestine?
- A: He sure was.
- C: And his family was from East Palestine?
- A: Yes. Both my family and his family were from East Palestine. He went to Pittsburgh after he graduated from high school. We weren't hard of money at that time and he wasn't either.

His grandfather had a store right across the street here. The grandfather was delivering goods one morning and went up here to cross the railroad and he was hit by a train and killed. Then his father took over the store. He and a sister. They ran it for a long time. Then the daughter-- John's sister--went into the store.

C: That was a grocery store?

A: Grocery and dry goods.

C: How did you meet your husband? In school?

A: In school. A Halloween party was my first date with him.

C: How long did you date each other before you got married?

A: Twelve years.

C: Twelve years?

A: I didn't know him.

C: And he finally convinced you.

A: He went to school at Pittsburgh College and then his dad took sick and he had to come home from college and help out, help the girls. After they quit the store, he went to Ohio State and finished his medical course and then took a year at . . .

C: Why did he want to become a doctor?

A: I don't know. He just seemed to be inclined that way. Miami University, he took a year there. Miami Valley Hospital, that was it.

C: That's where he did his internship?

A: Yes, his internship.

C: Is that out near Miami, Ohio near Dayton, Ohio?

A: Dayton, yes.

C: Were you married at this time? When he went to medical school, were you married to your husband?

A: No, we didn't get married until after he got through with his medical education and came home.

C: What year did you get married?

- A: In 1913. We lived down on East Main Street for about a year and a half. Then we bought this property up here and we lived in the house that was here; it was a double house and it wasn't as we wanted it. So we tore it down and moved half of it over to the next lot. We bought that part too. We put the half over there and we lived in that and then we started building this house. It was 1922 when we moved into this house.
- C: In 1922. And then they set up an office in this house right here?
- A: Yes. In the other house across here, he had his office there.
- C: How many doctors were in East Palestine? When your husband was here, were there any other doctors practicing?
- A: Yes. Doctor Hartford was right across the street. Doctor Rawlin was here, Doctor Hawes. Previous to that there was Doctor Grenameyer and Doctor McKaskey.
- C: Do you remember going to some of these doctors when you were a child?
- A: Oh, yes. McKaskey was our family doctor. Then Doctor Hughes was here. After Doctor McKaskey left town, then we took over Doctor Hughes.
- C: Actually there were more doctors years ago in town than there are today?
- A: Oh, yes.
- C: And there were a lot less people.
- A: A lot less people.
- C: Why would you say there were so many more doctors?
- A: I don't know. Now dad [husband] made his first calls on foot, his house calls. We didn't have a car but he would buy a horse and rent a buggy and make some of his calls on that. When he would go to the country to make some of his calls, he would usually come back with potatoes, or apples, or chickens. He always brought something.
- C: In other words, very often you got paid with goods and not money?
- A: Yes, that was it. Office calls were 25¢ and 35¢.
- C: Twenty-five and 35¢?

- A: For an office call. A house call would be probably a dollar or a dollar and a half.
- C: When they came to the office, do you remember some of the medicines that used to be given to patients?
- A: No, I didn't pay attention to the medicines.
- C: Did the office calls include medicine?
- A: Yes.
- C: It did?
- A: Yes.
- C: That's a little cheaper than today, isn't it?
- A: I'll say.
- C: What are some other things that you can remember about your husband's practice in the early years? Some things that might stand out in your mind. Did people come in the middle of the night sometime?
- A: All hours of the night, they would come and ring the bell.
- C: And your husband had to be ready to go?
- A: Yes. He would call out the upstairs window to them. It was right above this porch. He would call out to them and find out who it was and what they wanted. Then he would come downstairs to the office.
- C: Were there certain emergencies that seemed to be more prevalent than others that people back in those days would want your husband to treat them for a particular type of ailment?
- A: I don't know. Dad took very few people to the hospital.
- C: Where was the hospital located?
- A: Salem.
- C: In Salem. Before cars, it would take quite a long time to get there, wouldn't it? Did you ever make some trips with your husband to the hospital?
- A: Yes, I did. But when I went to Salem I had an uncle living there and I was with the uncle while he was at the hospital.
- C: How long did it take to get to Salem, do you remember?

A: Oh, about a half hour.

C: Is that with a horse and buggy or train or car?

A: By car. Then he would take some to Pittsburgh.

C: I guess the people in town came to appreciate him, didn't they?

A: Yes, they did when the flu was on.

C: 1918?

A: 1918. Oh, that was terrible.

C: Did a lot of people die in East Palestine?

A: Oh, yes. There was one Sunday in particular when eight or nine or more died. Doctor Johnson--right up here on West Main Street--died that day. We had a lot come to the house. But that one Sunday was a terrible Sunday; so many died.

C: How did your family keep from getting it since your husband was always around these sick people?

A: He gave us shots. None of us but dad's brother Walter--he wasn't in town at the time; he was in Chicago--got the flu. But the rest of us here in town, none of us had it. Dad just gave us shots.

C: What did you do when your husband went out on a night call?

A: I would get up and either do embroidery or sew or iron. I always did something. I didn't just sit with my hands folded.

C: You didn't go back to bed?

A: No, I didn't. I stayed up until he came home.

C: Your husband must have been tired quite often?

A: Yes, he was. He was tired.

C: What were his office hours? How many days a week? Did he have a set time or could you come anytime?

A: They came anytime. He was supposed to have no morning hours. Just afternoon hours from 1:30 to 4:00. But they would come any time between 4:00 and 7:00. They would come anytime.

C: How many people did he used to see in one day?

A: Oh, I wouldn't know. He was gone a good part of the day. At night, no sooner would he turn the key in the door here and

- come over to this side, we would hear a rap on the door. It was the same man that came every time, after office hours; he didn't live very far from here.
- C: Where did your husband perform surgery, at the hospital?
- A: Yes.
- C: Did he ever perform surgery here at the office?
- A: No. Oh, minor surgery, something like a cut or something.
- C: Did he deliver a lot of babies in town?
- A: Oh, yes, he certainly did!
- C: And he had to go to their house, didn't he?
- A: Yes, he had to go to the house and deliver them there. He did very little hospital work; took very few cases to a hospital.
- C: Do you happen to remember what the fee used to be for delivering a baby, offhand?
- A: Fifteen or twenty dollars. He was lucky to get twenty-five. So we didn't build a house on the money that we got from babies.
- C: Would you say doctors lived comfortably, but didn't make nearly as much as they do today and didn't live like they live today? They were a little bit better than the average worker.
- A: Yes.
- C: But not way ahead of everybody.
- A: No, they weren't.
- C: Not like today.
- A: Now the other doctors in town . . . We had a doctor right across the street from us, Doctor Hartford. His prices were rather high. Doctor Rawlin was just up across the railroad and he was just normal, but his prices were more, I think, than dad's. Dad came from an economical family. He knew what it was and he treated his patients accordingly.
- C: How about your family? When did you have your first child?
- A: Marian was born in July of 1914.
- C: That was your first child?

A: That was the first one.

C: And you had . . .

A: I had four girls.

C: Do any of them still live in East Palestine?

A: Louise. I had Ruth in October of 1916; Louise in 1920; Evalyn in 1923. So they weren't all bunched up on top of one another. (Laughter)

Ruth lives in North Canton; she's married to Arthur Moore. Marian, the oldest one, married a doctor. She went to St. Luke's Hospital and then she married a doctor. They live in Richmond, Indiana. Evalyn was a school teacher; she went to Baldwin Wallace College. Then she taught school in Ashtabula and married up there. Her husband died and she has three children.

C: What was it like raising a family in East Palestine during the 1920's? All of your children were born in the 1920's. Maybe you could describe raising a family.

A: Raising a family?

C: Yes. Was it difficult?

A: No, I didn't consider it such.

C: Parents today think it's difficult and they give up.

A: I didn't consider it difficult in raising them.

C: A lot of work?

A: Yes. We kept a tab on them; we kept them at home. We didn't let them run wild like lots of children do nowadays. They stayed right at home. They had fun at home. We would all get in a room and they would have their fun right here at home. There was no running around like some children do nowadays.

C: I skipped something that I would like to go back to. It's about World War I. Did any of your relatives or family members serve in World War I? Did your husband have to go?

A: Yes. He went to Camp Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky.

C: He was a doctor now?

A: He was first lieutenant in the army down there. I had the two children, Marian and Ruth, and we lived down in Louisville,



Kentucky while he was in camp. He was a captain, first lieutenant.

C: Then you came back after the war to East Palestine?

A: We came back for my mother and dad's wedding anniversary. We were just going to come for that occasion and then go back, but when the officers at the camp found out what we were coming home for, they gave dad his leave to come home, his discharge. I have all his clothes hanging upstairs.

C: You came home and had a family now in the 1920's in East Palestine. Does anything stand out in your mind about the 1920's in East Palestine? Any new developments or anything new or different about East Palestine during that period?

A: We didn't have the stores like we have now. Some of our walks were boardwalks. At the time that we were married we didn't have the cement roads.

C: Let's go to 1929. The stock market crashed and it's the Depression. What was it like in the Depression in East Palestine? Especially, what was it like for your husband who was a doctor treating people who didn't have money? Not everybody could pay your husband in farm products. So what was it like not only for your husband and his practice, but what was it like for your family?

A: Oh, I don't know. I can hardly say just what we did do.

C: Would you say that your family survived the Depression pretty well and you had food on the table?

A: Yes, we had. Whenever we had money to spare, it was put in the bank so that when we needed it we could have it. He was a good provider.

C: Did people have a hard time paying their bills during the Depression?

A: Some of them had a hard time.

C: It was pretty hard to demand money, though, wasn't it? They just didn't have it, did they?

A: No, they didn't have it. Now the country folk, they came up with vegetables and fruits, chickens; I canned chickens.

C: Everything went pretty well in the 1930's for your family. Your husband was still practicing?

A: Yes.

C: Your husband worked during the 1940's, is that correct? What was it like during World War II in East Palestine? Is there anything that stands out in your mind about World War II?

A: No, I can't say that there is.

C: And your husband was still practicing in the 1940's. Was he getting ready to retire soon?

A: Yes, I think he was.

C: I think I read that he retired in 1946.

A: Yes.

C: How old was he when he retired? He wasn't too old when he retired, was he?

A: No.

C: What did you do after retirement? Did you do some traveling?

A: No. He didn't travel a lot. He just stayed at home and gardened. We went around to visit the children, occasionally.

C: What did your husband think about all the improvements in medicine that were taking place? Did he think they were good?

A: He didn't have much to say about them. He was a man of few words.

C: In other words, once he was out of medicine he didn't pay much attention, but he did keep up on the medical profession?

A: Oh, yes. He kept up on the medical journals. He kept up on that.

C: How did he feel about having to go to see a doctor himself? After all those years . . .

A: He went very peacefully, I thought. The day that he fell, I fell at the same time. I was trying to help him and he got the worst of it. I got hurt, but I didn't say anything about mine. I still have trouble with my side; I hurt. I didn't say anything about it because I knew he was hurt worse and he needed more attention.

C: Looking back on your life in East Palestine, if you could make any changes or if there were any changes to be made, what would you have liked to have seen changed in East Palestine? Is there anything that you would have liked to have seen changed?

A: No, I don't think so. Now when I was growing up, we didn't have this street up here. There wasn't any street there. There