

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU Leetonia, Ohio Project

Personal Experience

O. H. 1067

M. MARIE DAVIS

Interviewed

by

Paul Merz

on

November 24, 1981

M. MARIE DAVIS

Mrs. Davis was born in Washingtonville in 1896. She was a teacher in nearby Green Township during the early 1900's. She has memories of operating the local feed mill, World War I and Armistice Day, the Great Depression, and the 1940's. She was married to Lynn Davis and is the mother of two daughters.

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INTERVIEWEE: M. MARIE DAVIS  
INTERVIEWER: Paul Merz  
SUBJECT: personal experience, teaching  
DATE: November 24, 1981

M: This is an interview with Mrs. Davis for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Leetonia/Washingtonville, by Paul Merz, at Mrs. Davis's home at 590 Main Street in Washingtonville, on November 24, 1981, at approximately 3:30 in the afternoon.

Mrs. Davis would you tell me what you remember about being a little girl? Tell me about your family.

D: Well, I had six brothers and four sisters. There were eleven in our family. I was born in Washingtonville in 1896, so I am eighty-five years old. I went to the public school in Washingtonville and graduated in the class of 1913. There were three graduates in the class. After that I went to Canfield Normal School for a year. In those days, if you could get a teachers' certificate after you were eighteen years old, you could get a job.

Anyway, I went to Canfield Normal School and then I took a summer course at Kent. Then I was ready to teach. My first year of teaching was in Green Township. I got \$40 a month. The second year I got a \$5 a month raise. The third year I taught was in Greenford Public School and I got another \$5 raise. Then I got married and the next year after that I didn't teach. In 19. . . Well, I was out of school one year and my husband went into the service. They needed teachers so badly that they asked me to come back and teach. So I did, and went back to the country school up here, north of Washingtonville, the place that I had taught my first two years.

M: Number Eight School?

D: Yes, in Green Township. I taught the year that my husband was in the service. He was in for thirteen months and then the next year they wanted me to come back again, which I did. Each year, or when I was in Greenford, I think I got \$75 a month. The next year I got \$95.

M: What year was that? Do you remember?

D: It was in 1918 and 1919. It was a one room school. Some grades were missing, but I had anywhere from the first to the eighth grade.

M: You were the one teacher for all those kids?

D: Yes, the one teacher.

M: How many kids were in that room?

D: Maybe twenty-five or thirty, I don't remember.

M: In all eight grades there were only twenty-five or thirty kids?

D: Yes. A couple years I think there were a couple grades missing.

M: In other words, there weren't kids for those grades.

D: Yes. Out of my salary, I got one of the school kids to do the janitor work. I paid for it out of my. . .

M: So, you didn't have to do it, but you paid to have it done.

D: Yes. He had to make the fire and I think one of the years there were a couple girls, they were sisters, that did the janitor work. Anyway, I had to pay for it out of my salary. I walked there everyday, it was a mile up from Washingtonville.

M: To the school?

D: Yes. Sometimes I could hitch a ride with someone, or my dad would take me in the sleigh sometimes. There was a man that worked for the Erie Railroad in Greenford, it was the Erie Railroad that ran through Greenford, and his transportation was a handcar on the railroad. Sometimes he would pick me up and give me a ride and then I would walk from the railroad over to the school building.

M: Did you have to quit your job when you got married?

D: I didn't have to. I was married in 1917. The one year that my husband went into the service I continued to teach.

M: Oh, that was the Depression where married teachers had to quit.

D: The last two years I taught, I was married but they wanted me to teach because they were short of teachers.

M: I can see why, looking at what they paid you. Give me an idea, what did \$40 buy you in those days? They paid you \$40 a month, what could you do with \$40?

D: I lived at home. I guess I bought my clothes and that was about all.

M: You couldn't get rich on \$40 a month?

D: No, you could hardly save anything.

M: So, it really hasn't changed too much then for teachers. You weren't well paid then. Teachers weren't well paid in your day.

D: No, not in my day. I wouldn't call it being well paid.

M: Why did you want to be a teacher?

D: There weren't many other jobs open then, I guess. I must have thought I would be qualified for it. I didn't have any business training and what else was there to do, unless I went out cleaning houses, and that didn't appeal to me.

M: Tell me about your parents, your mother and father.

D: My parents were David and Sarah Weikart. I was next to the youngest of eleven children. My father was a coal miner most of his life I guess, I don't know. I don't know just what he did before I knew him.

M: Did he mine coal in this area?

D: Yes.

M: Whereabouts, do you know?

D: Up at the Fairview Mine, he worked up there.

M: Is that here in Washingtonville?

D: Well, it's north of Washingtonville. It was up here at the first tressel.

M: That is at Garfield Road. I know where you mean.

D: Yes.

M: Do you remember anything about the mine in those days or about mining?

D: Oh, I don't know anything about it.

M: How about your mother, what do you remember about your mom?

D: Well, she was a housewife all the time I knew her. They were married in 1874. She was born in Hammondsville, Ohio. She came from England and she was born in Hammondsville a couple months after they got here. She was born in a log cabin.

M: Born in a log cabin in Hammondsville?

D: Yes.

M: In what year did he buy this house? Do you know about what year?

D: About, maybe around 1915 or 1916. I just don't remember. He paid \$340 for the house which was terribly run-down, and the lot next to this house on the west. That was all. . . It was called an out-lot. He paid \$340 for it, but then he put more into it than that. There were four rooms and it has been remodeled since then.

M: What did your husband do for a living?

D: He worked in Mullins. He worked there when we were married and when he went to the service. Then in 1923, I think. . . Oh, he worked where the Delmore Mine was, down towards Franklin Square.

M: That is your husband?

D: Yes, he worked there after he quit Mullins. He worked down there and then he bought the feed store down here.

M: You mean in Washingtonville?

D: Yes.

M: Ungerford's Mill now.

D: He bought it from Orlando Weikart. He continued to work at the Delmore Mine and he hired someone to run the feed store for him for a while. He didn't mine coal but

he worked outside. Then he bought the feed store and hired someone to work there. If there was any delivering or anything to do, he would do that. We bought a little truck. Most of his customers were over in the Mennonite area. Don't ask me how much he made the first years that we worked because he had to borrow money to buy the mill. I don't know what year he started to run it himself, in the middle 1920's probably. He had that until 1951.

M: Let's go back to World War I. What do you remember about World War I?

D: On Armistice Day, I guess I cried. It was a rainy, foggy day and the whistles started blowing early in the morning. I think it was on a Monday, November 11th. We didn't have a radio but the bells all rang. Well, there was lots of excitement. When you got a chance you went to Salem where they had more activity. You just had to wait for a chance for someone to ask you to go along because we didn't have any transportation. I guess maybe my brother had a little car, but anyway. It was all excitement and everything. Whistles blew and bells rang and that was it.

My husband went to Camp Sherman in Ohio down in Chilli-cothe, close to Columbus. He was drafted and got \$30 a month, I think, and \$3 extra because he was married and had a wife. Then he never got a furlough to come home after he was drafted. He went on April 1st, I think, and in two months he was sent overseas. He never got a furlough to come home. Once we went to visit him. We went on the train. I think his dad, brother. . . We got on the train in Salem. We got down there and got a place to stay. We stayed in somebody's house. He got a pass to visit with me and his relatives that went along. I don't know if we were just there for a day. He was living in the barracks but he got a pass for one night. Then he went back to the barracks and I stayed in the home where we got lodging.

M: Did you know the people that you stayed with?

D: No.

M: You just rented a room from them or something?

D: Yes.

M: Just like a boardinghouse?

D: Well, it was just a private home. There was a lot of people coming in.

M: To visit. Tell me about the 1920's. What do you remem-

ber about the 1920's? They were supposed to have been pretty good years.

D: 1920?

M: All through the 1920's, that whole ten year period.

D: We didn't go to very many dances after my daughter was born in 1921. We just had club meetings and social clubs, mostly just our own family and friends, of course. We had a Saturday Night Club, we called it, once a month.

M: Would you play cards at club?

D: Yes.

M: Games or just cards?

D: We played card games mostly.

M: How about the Great Depression, what do you remember about it?

D: When was that 1929? It just struck us the same as it did everybody else. People, our customers, sometimes thought that they couldn't pay for their feed that they bought. I suppose I cried when the banks closed.

M: Did you lose money in the banks?

D: I think, we didn't have very much to lose. I think they sold soup at the church for about \$.25 a quart.

I remember one thing that happened. There was a man up the road here who couldn't pay for his feed for his pigs or something, that he had to get feed for. So, my husband said, "Well, get what you want." This man had to go to a sanitarium or something and he said, "Get what you want and pay for it when you can." He got back from the sanitarium and wanted to know how much he owed. Of course, we kept track of the feed that he bought. He told him how much he owed and he said, "Is there anything off for cash?"

M: Cash was in that short of supply? Most people didn't have cash?

D: No, but he meant if he paid for it. . . I don't know how he intended to pay for it, but he wondered if he would pay for it all, if there would be anything off.

The Ku Klux Klan came in in uniform at the Lutheran church.



M: In Washingtonville?

D: Yes.

M: This would have been in the 1920's?

D: I don't remember what year it was, but they came in uniform and they gave the preacher I don't know how much money. They gave him a gift and he built his chicken pen out of what they gave him. I don't remember enough about it. Maybe they gave him money because they thought he needed it. I was old enough to know not to get scared.

M: What do you remember about Leetonia back in those days?

D: The schools were consolidated and we didn't have any high school here then. After eighth grade, the ones that wanted to go on to. . . Well, I guess most of them went on to Leetonia to school.

I remember when they had the coke ovens down there.

M: What do you remember about the coke ovens?

D: I remember seeing the smoke from them, that was about all I knew. When we would go past there to Leetonia you could see the fires and so on. We didn't work there or anything.

There weren't a lot of stores here. There were a couple grocery stores and one of the stores sold dry goods. There was a shoe department and a couple millinery stores.

M: How about saloons?

D: One year they voted saloons out of Columbiana County. There were about six, at least six. Well, that was earlier though. That was before 1920. Different ones, I remember a saloonkeeper from Salem that came down here and started a business. They were just on this side of the street. . .

M: This is Mahoning County here.

D: This is Mahoning County. There were about six saloons. The Y & O streetcars ran every hour or, I don't know how often, every hour I think. Loads of people came in to go to the saloons here.

M: From all over Columbiana County they would come here?

D: Yes, however they could get here on the electric line or anyway they could get here. They would come. I think

the last car ran at 11:00 or maybe the saloons had to close at 10:30 maybe. There were just loads of people that went down to Stop Eleven that was down there on the road to Leetonia. It was called Stop Eleven. The electric line ran from Salem to East Liverpool. That was another thing after 1917. . .

This man from Salem that moved his family down here and had a place, his name was Reddinger. I think there was Dagden. I don't think there were any crimes committed or anything.

M: What kind of people went into the saloons? You said you didn't go into the saloons.

D: It didn't affect the townspeople too much because they were used to having saloons, but they weren't all in Mahoning County. I don't think there were many women in there. They could carry out beer if they wanted to. I didn't associate with any of the people that were in.

M: What do you remember about World War II?

D: Just what anyone would remember. I read the papers and that was about all.

M: Were you frightened by it? Do you remember how you felt, were you afraid of what might happen?

D: No. You had to have food stamps to get different kinds of food.

M: Do you think people were pretty good about the rationing? Do you think people were pretty fair about it?

D: Well, I had to have stamps to buy gasoline. If I ran out of stamps and anyone had any that they weren't using they could give them to you.

M: Were you involved in the operation of the feed market at all? Did you keep the books or anything like that?

D: Yes.

M: How was business? Did your husband make money at it?

D: We had a pretty good business. We put in machinery which they didn't have in the mill when we bought it. The mixing was all done by hand. We put in an electric grinder and mixer and built it up until we could hire someone to work with him. I did most of the book work.

M: How did that work? Did farmers bring grain and sell it to you, and then you mixed it or ground it and then sold it again? Is that how a feed mill works?

D: Ground it and mixed it and he paid for the work.

M: Oh, then he got it back?

D: He got the feed back. We bought different things by the carload.

M: Railroad carload?

D: Yes. We had a siding up to the mill.

M: Did they come in like a tank or in a coal car with a closed top or in a boxcar?

D: A boxcar.

M: Did it come in sacks?

D: Yes, in sacks.

M: And your husband had to unload that boxcar?

D: Yes, and pile it up in the mill. The farmer paid for his grinding and we sold to him the other ingredients.

M: That would go into it. Did you have a hard time collecting money from the people that owed you money?

D: Yes, we still have some that owe us some. Some of them, but some of them paid regular.

M: Some you will never collect.

D: No, it has been so long now.

M: What do you remember about working in the feed mill?

D: I didn't work, I only. . . We built an office on and I was there in case my husband had to go out. Sometimes he had to go out and pick up their grinding and bring it back. Then he would grind it and mix other feed with it and then he would have to deliver that.

M: When you worked in the office at the mill, what do you remember about that, about working in the office?

D: I was there to answer the phone or to make out bills.

M: How much was postage then?

D: During the war it was \$.02 to send out a first-class letter.

M: World War I was \$.02?

D: Yes, then it went up to \$.03 and \$.05.

M: Did you travel at all, other than seeing your husband that time. Did you travel around to other cities or go on a vacation or anything like that in those days?

D: Not much, but when the war was over in 1936 they paid a bonus to the soldiers.

M: That were in World War I?

D: That were in World War I.

M: They collected in 1936?

D: They paid a bonus and we took our first trip to California.

M: How much of a bonus did your husband get?

D: He got over \$1,000, I don't remember just how much it was.

M: That was a lot of money then.

END OF INTERVIEW