Addie Gilbertson Interview, 1977

Addie Gilbertson
I'm in Clontarf, MN talking to Mrs. Addie Gilbertson and today is July 27, First
time. I'd like to ask to when you were born and where?

right here in Clontarf.

Q: Did you live in this home?

No., no on a farm.

Q: On a farm?

North of Clontarf.

Q: North of Clontarf?

Pope County.

Q: And did you live there all your life as a child?

Yes.

Q: What were your parents names?

John and Clara Daniels.

Q: John and Clara Daniels? How long did they live in Clontarf?

My dad lived there since he was 3 years old. My mother lived here after they were married.

Q: What kind of work did your father do?

Farmed.

Q: Farmed, All his life?

All his life.

Q: I see. How about...

Until we moved here in town, when he retired and then he just of old jobs.

Q: Did he sell the farm then?

Yes.

Q: What kind of crops? Was he a dairy farmer or did he raise...

No, no. As I remember he had quite a few hogs and he did milk cows, and well, what the average farmer used to have.

Q: I suppose. How big was the farm, do you remember?

280 acres I think.
Q: Did your grandfather own that farm then before...

Yes, first.

Q: So he settled the farm?

He settled the farm, yes.

Q: Where was he from?

They were born in Canada, then they moved to Waverly, MN. There was a big French settlement there and then they took oxen and came up here in a covered wagon.

Q: From Waverly?

From Waverly. I remember my dad telling that they settled up north of town here and it was about a mile from the river and there were Indians at the river and the Indians used to come up for milk and eggs and they'd trade beads and stuff, you know.

Q: For milk and eggs?

Yes.

Q: As I understand a lot of the French settled North of town, is that correct?

That's right, yes.

Q: When they came here, did they know anyone else?

No, they didn't.

Q: Do you know why they decided to come here?

I don't know why, unless, I really don't know.

Q: Now this is your grandfather...

Unless they heard of this settlement from Bishop Ireland. He got quite a few people up here.

Q: Now this is the grandfather on who's side? On your father's side?

My father's side. The grandfather on my mother's side, they were from Glencoe, and they moved to Hancock for a few years and that's where my dad met my mother.

Q: So your mother's from Hancock?

Yes. She was born and raised in Glencoe and then went to Hancock. Then after they were married awhile, then my grandparents sold the farm and went back to Glencoe.

My grandfather, they lived near the Twin Cities, let me see, what would it be called?
There was an Indian there I ink. He was just a little fellow and he was crying, he wanted to go back to that little kitten. I remember that so well. He finally went back and got it and that got away with them Glencoe.

Q: You don't remember when that was? You have no idea?
No, I did, it was one of the last winters there, but I can't remember what year it would be. But I remember so distinctly because of that kitten.

Q: Do you know what part of Canada your grandparents came from?

Quebec

Q: From Quebec? Your other grandparents, what there are?
Chavelier, they were French, too. His folks came from Canada too, but I don't know so much about them. My grandmother was a Jarvis, my Grandfather settled here, that was my mother's maiden name and she was a Jarvis and they came from Henderson. They were both French, too. My grandparents on my father's side lived with my folks a lot and when I went to school, I spoke completely French.

Q: Oh, really? Were there a lot of people that spoke French?
At that time and in that settlement, yes. But they've kind of drifted off nowadays.

Q: Yes, I'm sure. So did that cause any problems for you?
No, my mother used to know the teacher.

Q: I see. So you went to school here in Clontarf?
I went to gradeschool out there and I think 1 year here.

Q: So you attended gradeschool in Clontarf?
1 year.

Q: One year? and then where?
I worked here and that's as far as I got. We were too darn busy farming you know, farming. I was the only child and I helped my dad on the farm and always there to help in the fall and I was too involved in everything. I didn't want to start high school about a month or two months late. Grade school didn't make a difference because

Q: Now your grandparents lived with you quite a while? Did they ever talk about Canada at all?
Oh, yeah. I was in Canada in '34, '33 and '34 my husband bought straw. Those were the years it was so dry and he was buying from the states. Well, any how my French all came back because they talked French. I stayed up there at St. So Winnipeg is nice. It's going on.

Q: Has it?

In the last few years.

Q: I was up there about 4 years ago on a type of a band trip through or high school.

A: Where you from?

Q: I'm from St. Paul originally. So your grandparents didn't really know anyone when they came and settled in this area?

No. No they didn't.

Q: But there was a group of people, wasn't there, that came in and settled with the French?

There was. It seems to me that there was quite a few from Waverly but I can't remember whom all... because my grandmother helped build a house there.

I remember my dad being that.

Q: You say your grandfather farmed all summer?

he was deaf and she did a lot of the work, my grandmother.

Q: You said that your father farmed that farm?

Yeah, farmed that farm.

Q: Did your husband farm, or what did he do?

My husband was Norwegian, he's from Scandinavia over there. He settled in the French settlement and Norwegian. He farmed most of the time.

Q: So he was from outside...

Pope County there.

Q: Was that any problem as far as him being Norwegian and your being French?

Oh, no. He joined the Catholic church. His folks were out there, he was born and raised out there. He came off the farm and built the Elementary Club.

Q: He built the what?
The Club over here, he ran it for 10 years, The Clontarf Club.

Q: The Clontarf Club?

Yeah.

Q: Oh really? So you did that. Do you remember what years that was? They sold it in '42 no '41 and we sold it in '50. I worked hard and I got a heart attack.

Q: What did you do over there? What it is? I have no idea what the Club is? We had food and just like your Four Seasons and stuff.

Q: I see. So it's a diner club?

Yeah, supper club.

Q: Is there a supper club in town before?

No. It was the first one.

Q: How did you ever decide to?

I don't know. We just wanted to go into something.

Q: Something different?

Then after that heart attack, we had to sell and he farmed over at Brooten, he had a lot of land over there, then he sold that and we bought 4800 acres north of Mille Lacs Lake. We were there for 7 years and we sold that and came home and then he passed away here after that.

Q: So then you've lived in this house ever since?

Yes. We lived in this place when we had the club, and we went to Mille Lacs Lake in March and we'd come back in December. So we had the house the way it is.

Q: So do you remember, was your grandmother fairly French, I mean, did you pick up any of that at all or French-Canadian?

Yes, they couldn't speak English. That's why I spoke French.

Q: Was there a lot... Did you have a lot of French-Canadian foods, did you notice?

Pea soup and stuff like that.

Q: A lot of soup?

Oh yeah. They're great for soup and she was a great cook she'd make... she'd make her own, very good. My mother was a great soup maker.
Q: Was she? And I'm sure that she was somewhat the same way, she had a lot of the French-Canadian influence, too?

Oh sure. Yeah.

Q: Let's see. I guess, the next thing to do would be to talk about maybe some social organizations in town. What were some of the big organizations that people...

In town here?

Q: Yeah, like there used to be an Ancient Order of Hibernians that built the hall here. Do you remember them at all?

No, I don't.

Q: How about Knights of Columbus?

Oh yes. My father and Bill Shinnick were one of the first to join.

Q: And were they pretty active in town?

Oh yes. They'd go to Benson for meetings.

Q: That was the local chapter? What types of things did they do? Do you know?

Golly, I don't know. I know they always would go to the meetings and they'd have card games, little suppers and stuff.

Q: Were there a lot of dances in town?

Yes, used to be.

Q: All the time?

Yes, there used to be.

Q: Where did they hold those then?

At the town hall.

Q: What kind of entertainment did they have at the dances? Would local people play?

Oh yes. Local and otherwise. Years ago we'd used to have dances and charge a dollar per couple and so forth but we'd get people from all over.

Q: So that was one...

One of the entertainments.

Q: What other types of things did people do?
Years ago they used to have those box socials.

Q: A lot of what?

Box socials they used to call them where people'd bring their pretty baskets. Basket socials, I think it was. They used to have a lot of that.

Q: Can you explain how that works?

The women would fix a pretty basket and put a lunch in, you know, but nobody could tell who's basket it was.

Q: So they auctioned them off?

Yeah, and the auctioneer would get up there why you know.

Q: They auctioned.

Yeah, they auctioned it off. See the highest bidder got it. Sometimes they slipped and they'd wanna somebody to pay because they'd know that he'd want to get that girl's basket.

Q: So the men would bid on the basket?

Sometimes they went pretty high.

Q: I'm sure. Depending on whose it was.

Yes, that's right.

Q: Anything else? Was there bingo?

Oh yes, and they still have bingo.

Q: Do they? Is it like once a week?

Every Saturday night. Keeps our cemetery going. The cemetery is very pretty, have you ever been out there.

Q: I've seen it, yes, it's very nice.

Father Cooney is very good.

Q: Would they have bingo once a week.

They have it every Saturday night.

Q: Any social things that you did when you were growing up like did they have anything in town?

When I was growing up, well, I was the only child in the family and I was alway crazy about
horses, ever since I can remember. I wasn't that high when I had a pony. My entertainment on Sundays was riding horses or breaking the neighbors horses in or breaking my own in and I broke my leg one time.

Q: Did you?

Yeah, we were making a bet and we were going away from home and this pony had a colt and I guess she heard it and I was looking back and I looked back and wasn't paying attention and she through me and put me against the post and broke my ankle. But it wasn't long when I didn't have my cast when I was back on the horse.

Q: Oh, sure. I did the same thing skiing.

Skiing?

Q: And I was back on the skis.

I don't we used to get together more years ago when I was a kid. The neighbors would get together.

Q: Were there a lot of French people in your area?

Yes, there was. Then we associated with the Scandinavians there too. That's how I met George. We'd go ice skating and stuff like that.

Q: Where did you go ice skating, just on the pond?

Ponds, yeah. When I was a kid, we entertained more ourselves because we didn't have the cars, you know, like they have now. Well, we came to town, and that's how.

Q: But you did more of the entertaining?

Yeah.

Q: At home or type stuff because?

Years ago, too, I don't know if your parents have told you or your grandparents, they go from house to house and have house dances.

Q: I don't really know what a house dance is.

Well, they'd go to one, for instance, I had a dance here a couple years back in my home, dancing in the kitchen and soon.

Q: Then people would come over and dance?

And they'd have lunch.
Q: What types of... Now there were people in town that were musicians that would play, is that correct?

Yes, there were people through the country.

Q: Was there a local band?

Not at that time, afterwards there was. How many years ago that was... I A bunch of people through here, because I know because I played the piano. Now that would be, it was before we had the Club, I suppose that would be 35-40 years ago.

Q: Did you have any entertainment over here at the Club that would come in?

No, not at that time, we had just the music box.

Q: I see.

We had it for 10 years.

Q: How about spelling bees?

When I went to school there we had spelling bees.

Q: There were spelling bees in town.

I suppose they were through the country too, because my mother made a lot of quilts.

Q: Did a lot of needlework.

In fact, she made one for my baby. Little blocks like that, little tiny blocks to quilt and then they quilted it, little stitches, took them a long time.

Q: Could you tell me something about New Years, I know that was a big...

Oh! My father was a singer. They'd have to have Uncle Johnny, everybody used to call him Uncle Johnny, my dad, Uncle Johnny, he knew the French songs and they'd have to have Uncle Johnny go with them and the thing was 2 years ago when my father went around and everything, everybody'd have to go with him and they'd go from one place to another and sing these songs and have a little nip or have some coffee and a donut and then they'd go off to the next place.

Q: And these were French songs?

Yes. All French songs. And my dad did it clear up to 2 years before he died, and every year. But it got so that some younger ones would drink too much and...
I get tight and it wasn't so much fun then.

Q: I heard that they don't do it any more because nobody knows the songs, is that? That's right.

Q: So your father knew the songs?

Yes, and he tried me some. I had a granddaughter in New York, that he taught French songs to. She's quite a singer. She's still singing at Carnegie Hall and she was in Washington D.C. over the Holidays in a play, musical play, and she sang at St. John's, New York and Hunter's College and Metropolitan Quartet Band or Jazz Band or something and was soloist there at Hunter's College. She, the girl that knows the French songs now. I know a little bit of one.

"Put on your Little Green Hat."

Q: Now the hat was involved in this too.

Q: There'd be a certain point in the song and then...

You heard about that?

Q: I heard kind of what was going on, but there would be a song and they would reach a certain part in the song and take the hat.

It was kind of fun.

Q: The hat would go around and everyone would... And these people went from one house to another...

From one house to another, you know there were their friends.

Q: It was mostly French?

Well, French, yeah, like for instance if you go over to Scandinavians, you know... You'd go to.

Q: Everybody was French on New Year's?

Yeah, everybody was French on New Year's, that's right.

Q: This is New Year's Eve, they did this, right?

The next day, when my grandparents were living they moved to town and lived over there, everybody would go there New Year's Day. When they passed away, it seemed that my uncle, Jerry Chamberlain, he was Irish, and he married my dad's sister, we'd go over there and then my mother had them after all.
Q: So that was more of a family gathering type of thing?

Yes, but everyone could come in they were welcome. (Like a)

Q: New Years Dinner?

On New Years Day. My mother's house was open to everybody.

Q: How about St. Patrick's Day, now this was a big thing in town too, right?

Oh, yes, the Irish used to say years ago that they would chase the French across the river.

Q: But all the French would be Irish on St. Patrick's Day, right?

If they wanted to get the Irish mad, they wore yellow.

Q: Not many wore yellow?

Yeah, that was quite a day. It still is, they still do it now.

Q: They still have something going on St. Patrick's day. How about 4th of July, was that a big celebration?

It used to be, but it's been many many years now since there really are any celebrations.

Q: Can you remember any 4th of July?

Oh, I was pretty young then, they'd have quite the races and...

Q: Horse races?

Horse races, ball games and what not.

Q: Baseball was really big in Clontarf.

Yes, it was.

Q: They used to play a lot?

They started again with the younger ones you know.

Q: Are they?

Yeah. Clontarf you'd have they used to play Morris, Benson, DeGraff.

Q: Were they in a league?

They were in a league, yeah, they were. They had a club, they were going good.

Q: That was another league I suppose? It was a league...

No, it was a league. Where did they go? Did they go to St. Cloud? I can't remember if they went to the Cities, seems that they were there too. They were a good team.

Q: I suppose there were some pretty good rivalries with some of the local towns?
Oh, Benson and DeGraff. Louis, do you know him? He used to be catcher for the Minneapolis Miller's was that.

Q: Oh, for Minneapolis Millers?

Yeah. Then he used to come out here and catch. He got to be a good friend of ours at the club. He was telling me not too long ago, he stopped in, he was umpiring a game at... it's by the Cities, south, somewhere. He said he made a mistake by taking his children, his boys, you know, young neighbors fellows. They'd holler "Kill the Umpire!" "Kill the Umpire!"

Q: And he was umpiring? Yeah. They gave him a bad time.

Q: I suppose. So, how was the relationship with the French and the Irish?

Fine.

Q: Was it good?

Sure, lots of times it was there was a little... That was many years ago. Now they're all nationalities here.

Q: Now, I'm sure. I don't think people think in those terms.

They mingle more.

Q: Right or they had because the generations that have gotten away from it. I'm just curious about. Did there used to be some tensions?

There was a little bit of rivalry.

Q: I talked to someone else who said there was a problem with the French marrying the Irish, back a while ago... I never heard of it.

Q: So that didn't make a difference?

Not that I can remember. I can't say I know many of that. There was a little problem with Scandinavians on account of the church.

Q: Right, but that was more of religion than nationality.

Affirmation. Nationality was OK, more of religion in those days, when I was married. It wasn't like it is now either.
Q: Everybody. Somebody had to switch?
Yeah, Scandinavians were pretty much against Catholics but they've gotten over that.
Q: That's good to hear. So the school. There was a school in town until...
It was out toward where this other kid lived.
Q: And that was functioning until when?
I don't know, I used to tell my dad talk about it. When he was a kid he used to
haul there, when he was a young...13 - 14 years old. I used to hear my dad
talk about it, I never knew much about it. There's a young fellow by the
name of Charles, he married one of my cousins, my first cousin, he was
brought up at that school. He was an orphan and he went to school.
Q: I see, so he was brought up there? Was there any problems with Benson being
the bigger town?
No, I don't think so.
Q: Relationships between those towns were pretty good?
Yes.
Q: Some of the people in Benson spoke Scandinavian for a long time? Some of the
businesses and stuff? Did that?
I think that's broke away, I don't hear it any more.
Q: I'm sure.
I don't hear it any more at all.
A lot of those Scandinavians were like my grandparents, they couldn't speak
English.
Q: So they... Would that cause problems when a lot of people would have to go to Benson
to a bank or...
Oh, no, there was always somebody there to speak English. My husband broke away from
it. The last few years of his life when he didn't speak Norwegian, he had forgotten
it. It got away from him so long, that he'd stutter.
Q: It just wasn't there. He didn't use it?
No. He didn't.
Q: So the relationship between the two towns? Clontarf is pretty dependent on Benson for some of its goods or...

We had a bank here, though.

Q: You did? Until...

Oh, heavens, what when was it that the bank went out? Billy Perry's went to Benson and run the bank.

Q: Probably during the depression? 

No, it was before the Depression.

Q: It was before that? Were things pretty hard around here during the Depression? Yes.

Q: I'm sure. I'm hard as others have said. Did a lot of people have to give up their farms? I imagine they did.

Q: Do you know what type of things, what did people do when they lost their farm?

Did they move into town?

Moved into town, I suppose. You know...

Q: Were there any work assistance at that time?

No, not at that time but there was assistance at some time, I guess, I'm sure. You know, you'd be surprised, in later years now, how many young people have gone to the Cities. Now I've raised 5 children, that wasn't mine. The girls married and lives over in Brooten but all the rest of the kids are in Minneapolis or St. Paul.

Q: A lot of kids that are moving to the Cities.

Yes. It seems to be, of course a lot of the kids are coming back to the farm now.

Q: Are they?

I think. I think they're getting more interested in farming again.

Q: It's hard to get into unless you...

And everything is so high, you know, machinery, for kids to start unless they have some help.

Q: Right, unless they inherit it or take it over from someone.
yeah, that's what I would say.

Q: That's the only way you can do it any more.

It's pretty tough.

Q: But you think there was some type of assistance during the Depression though.

I'm sure there was. I never had any but it seems to me there was some type of assistance at the time, because I don't know how they lived.

Q: Did a lot of the French lose their farms, do you know?

No, not too many that way.

Q: So they managed to at least hang on?

Yeah, but there weren't that many French out there left.

Q: I'm sure.

There were the Boute's, the Chavelier's, out there. But we were still there. What they had and there... But they aren't as proud of being French as they used to be.

Q: That's just a matter of generations turning.

Now, the French you can see with me.

Q: So most of the French didn't farm out here right away.

Yes.

Q: So were most of the businesses run by Irish people?

No. The Boute's had a hotel and then they sold it to Chavelier. It was a mixture of the French and the Irish.

Q: The Irish farmed too, west of town.

West of town.

Q: But there was this type of division between the French and the Irish.

Yes, they did. Irish always seemed to be on that side of the fence and the French...

Q: So was there any problems with that at first?

No, I don't think so.

Q: It was just a matter of people settling with people who had their same nationality...
They all would be. I don't remember too much fluid in them, a little drinking or something.

Q: The ones who drank a lot?

Yeah.

Q: It was more of a good nature type of thing if anything?

Oh, yeah.

Q: Do you remember any plays in town?

Yeah, we used to go to them.

Q: And who put on the plays?

Oh, a bunch of us would get together and put on a play and they were pretty good.

Q: There used to be some plays that used to travel out of town, if I remember right?

Yeah, we did, there was a couple places. It was fun.

Q: Was it all local people, that would get together and just do a play?

Yeah.

Q: Who would organize something like that?

Oh, some of the teachers or something would help, you know.

Q: It was a school function more than anything?

No, I wouldn't say so. I would say it was through the church.

Q: The church was always pretty important?

Oh here, the church was pretty important.

Q: It still is, I'm sure.

Of course, we had little plays at the school, too.

Q: Did the priests ever get involved with the plays or different activities?

I've never heard of them, he's very good. Did you ever meet him?

Q: Yes, I know him, Father Cooney?

He's a nice person. He's so interested in the younger people. I have a lot of friends over there, Scandinavian, when I was in the hospital the last time. A couple years ago I had a cancer operation and some of them would come and see me and said something about what a nice person he was. Then we had a doings last Sunday and those people
flocked in here.

Q: You had your Summer Festival? Did a lot of people come back for that?

Yeah. I think next year is our 100th isn't it?

Q: Yeah, I think that's what I heard from someone else. Somebody said they had a two day affair in the workings?

In the workings? Oh dear,

Q: That's what I heard. So that could be pretty exciting.

That would be pretty much work.

Q: Was the priest always fairly important in town?

Oh yes, there were, Father King was the only one, couldn't drive a car or anything and he was very musical, but all the others seemed to get around.

Q: And he was probably very respected person in town?

Oh, yes.

Q: He was from Ireland?

Q: Who was? Father King?

Yep.

Q: Were most of the priests in town Irish then?

Quite a few, we had Father Kenny here for a while and he was as Irish as he could be. Are you Irish?

Q: Yes.

Casey. We had a Father Casey here too.

Q: Yeah.

Isn't he related to you in any way?

Q: I don't think so. He could be from way back.

And Father Lance and Fr. King. I guess they were both Irish at that.

and Father Gooney, and other priests.

Q: Now sometimes in certain areas they'll have problems with German and Irish Catholics, where they'd have a German church and a Catholic church, was there any...

No. My mother tells about in Glencoe, they each had their own church, did you know?
that, in Glencoe.

Q: Well they do that in a lot of places in Southern Minnesota too. But they never had any problems with...

Here, no.

Q: Now, most of the children here go to school in Benson, is that right?

Yes, go to school in Benson.

Q: There's a parochial school there, is that where most of them go to school?

Quite a few do.

Q: When the school closed here now, there was a public school until seventy-something, right?

What?

Q: When did the school in town close?

Was it 2 or 3 years ago? Time flies you know.

Q: Yeah, I know.

Not too long ago, about 4 years ago.

Q: Were there a lot of children going to the parochial school in Benson at that time or not?

I can't remember, there probably were a few.

Q: Was that sort of a big deal when they closed down the school here in town? People got pretty excited I'm sure.

Yeah.

Q: Was there any move to try and stop it?

Yeah, in a way.

Q: It was just one of those things that was going to happen, one way or the other. Were there a lot of social organizations or was the school pretty important in town as far as getting people together and things?

Yeah, parents teachers.

Q: They probably had school functions too, right?

It seems to me that they always had a great big picnic, you know, the kids.
Q: Did they ever have any plays or did they put on any recitals or that type of thing?
No recitals.

At Christmas time the kids used to put on a little play. Once in a while the mothers
used to put on a little play for the kids.
Q: There was a mothers' club that was associated with the church?

With the school.
Q: Or with the school, excuse me. How about politics, did your parents talk about politics much?

No, they didn't. Me and my husband used to be in politics.

Q: Are people pretty politically minded in this area?

They used to be, some of them are yet.
Q: Not as much as they used to be?

Oh, there's some around yet.
Q: So, is it more local politics do you think?

No, some state and federal...
Q: National?

Some national. Well, they got upset about Phillip... the Village Council once in a while.

Q: Did people ever talk about political conditions up in Canada or about conditions...

I haven't heard any.

I was up in Canada not too long ago. I was at the Shrine Circus up there, beautiful. Oh, I think Winnipeg has really grown. It's grown since the last time I was up there. I was there about 15 years ago.
Q: So people didn't talk about Canada that much?

No, no I don't think so.
Q: That was something... I know with the Irish, people kept...

Ireland.
Q: Right. xxx... and people worried about Ireland and England and I was wondering if there's anything of that with the French?

No, you see all the older French...are gone.
Q: How about... Did Chontaré ever have a newspaper?

No.
Q: No, they didn't.
Newspapers are something to gossip with.

Q: Put they had a column in the Swift County Monitor?

Oh yes, Local news.

Q: And did your family receive any other periodicals or newspapers, magazines, anything that you can remember?

No. Well, my grandparents used to get some French paper from Canada, I remember that, that was so long ago.

Q: That was written...

In French. One of my husband's relatives used to get the Decarla Posten (Norwegian)

Q: A Norwegian paper?

Yeah. Decarla Posten

Q: Did your husband's parents speak Norwegian?

Yes.

Q: Your husband spoke Norwegian?

Yeah. That carried over a lot.

Q: I'm surprised.

Are you?

Or Yeah, a little bit. 40 mins...

Well, you see when he moved in here and got in here and got away from that, then he, and especially after his folks passed away, then he didn't talk so much. Then in the later years, he tried to talk Norwegian he'd stumble all over himself.

Q: But there were a lot... Now did his parents speak English too, or just Norwegian?

His mother spoke English and his father spoke pretty good, you know.

Q: Now are they from Norway?

They were both from Norway.

Q: and do you know how they happened to settle over here?

No, I don't. You see the Norwegians up around Glenwood, they settled up there, Glenwood and Starbuck, that was all Scandinavians. Isn't that funny?
Q: People spoke Scandinavian in Starbuck for quite a long time, I guess?
Yes. They still do, some of the older ones sometimes do here. Then you go a little further east and it's all German.
Q: It's just interesting on how people settled in areas and that's why you'll find different types of communities coming up, that type of thing.
Yeah.
Q: Do you remember any sayings that your grandparents on either side had or any...

My dad's father says, "[French], I don't know what that meant."
Q: He used to say that all the time?
Yeah, "[French]", what that means I don't know.
Q: It usually meant "Stay away" or...
Yeah, oh heck" I guess.
Q: Did you have any traditions around Christmas time, were there any special things that you did?
No, New Years was the big day.
Q: New Years was the traditional holiday?
Yeah, right.
Q: What kinds of foods did you eat at Christmas time?
I'll tell ya, my grandparents would make this sausage, you know, they lived over here and they had a box made on the north side, you know you could keep stuff and that thing would be full with sausage and everything.
Q: So they used to make a sausage?
Yeah, especially sausage. I don't know, turkey of course and pies and tarts. That was French.
Q: Cherry tarts?
Any kind, they made those tarts. Donuts, a lot of donuts and pastries, they were good pastry cooks.
Q: I'm sure, a lot of them are. Most of the songs you sang were French songs, and those were the ones your father knew.
That's right. Oh, he used to sing. I wish it would be now, I would record some of those, it was wonderful. He tried to teach some of us kids around here, like I said, my granddaughter, my granddaughter was sick, she had _______ and traumatic fever when she was 4 years old. The doctor said she had to go to the hospital or stay here and had a voice. Fine then.

Q: And that's when she learned those songs?
Yeah, at that time.

Q: That's kind of the [underlined] tradition died because the Franks songs left town, is that right?
Nobody to sing, where you going to go? Poof!

Q: And the person who knew those songs was pretty much the leader of the whole thing too, I'm sure. Had to get things going.
My dad was a leader.

Q: nice to think

When I was a kid I used to get scared and I would cry. When I was about 4 or 5 years old.

Q: Cause you didn't know what was going on?
Yeah, cause I didn't know what was going on, everything was so loud.

Q: Now, there was bad fire through here one time?
Yeah, there was quite a few years ago, but I didn't know what year that would be.

Q: But there used to be a lot of businesses on the other side of town.
You mean in Clontarf? Oh, yeah. Wasn't that one Christmas?

Q: Christmas Eve or something like that?

Q: The whole one side went, yeah. Boy that was terrible.

Q: Then didn't most of the businesses kind of fold up?
Most of them did. A few of them built [underlined] again.

Q: Has this town become a little more popular or has it been this size for quite some time? (4/19) 45 min

About the same.

Oh no. The bigger towns get bigger and the smaller towns get smaller, don't you think.
Q: That's what seems to be what happens. A lot of times there's that get to a certain point and stay there.

I think people are kind of pepping up a little bit now. We both know that I think some people in town that are pretty wide awake.

Q: I know there's people in Alberta, which is just outside of Morris, there's a lot of that, people trying to get people to stay in town, to keep them out, get a business going here, that they feel that the town needs and this guy has a business in town and they'll try to keep him in town. I think it's a good sign.

Q: I got that body shop in here a few years ago and that's going pretty good and Fennell's trying to get a cafe and grocery store built.

Q: Now he had that fire. He showed me the place.

You know where the fire hall is, that's where the bank used to be.

Q: I see. Now who ran the bank?

Bill Perrizo.

Q: Most of the people used to do their banking in town?

Yes, this used to be the biggest hay shipping in the world.

Q: That's right. Then everybody stopped growing hay. That was quite a big deal, I guess.

Oh yes, it was. They'd be fighting for box cars to put the hay in.

Q: Really?

Yeah, they couldn't get enough box cars when they wanted to sell the hay.

Q: Was the railroad pretty important at that time?

It was at that time, boy. Somebody had a couple of elevators and they burnt down.

Q: that was mostly for shipping hay and that type of thing?

So people in town worked on the railroad? (Tape #2 - Side #3)

Yes, they did and then years ago, there were a lot of Italians. They'd have these extra clothes. Box cars and box cars of them, you know.

Q: Of people?

A: Yeah, that would work on the railroad too.
Q: Did that cause some problems sometimes?

No, they were paid pretty well. McDermott's had their store at that time.

Q: Well, it was a pretty nice to get some income into the town.

I remember when he sold overalls out one time. (I'll tell you about this later.) But that was kind of cute. This Italian was buying these overalls and he kept looking and looking and finally said, "What's the matter?" He said, "Hey, how do I look from behind?" I never got over that, that was so cute. Chuck did too. The little Italian boy, he was about 3 years old.

Q: Did some of the people farm during the summer and work on the railroad during the winter?

No. It wasn't that big a deal.

Q: How about passenger? Was that an important of transportation?

Yeah, it was. I remember a passenger would go east to Benson about noon and would come back about 4 o'clock and a lot of people would take the train back and forth.

Q: I see. How about to the Twin Cities and that type of thing?

Oh, yeah, that was a big deal, until the buses began coming. I remember the first automobile I seen, I was a little tot, that was many years ago. We seen some lights down the river, my folks and I, we were coming with the horses and couldn't figure out what that light was, they got stuck by the river, and I was so scared you know. My dad had one of the first cars, they called it the "Brush", you'd sit there, the engine was there and you'd crank it on the side and this way you'd steer it this way. Oh, I think I have a picture of it! It was quite the deal. They'd go "Chug, Chug Chug," the fastest they'd go was 25 miles an hour.

Q: How were the roads, I'm sure the roads were bad?

Oh, they weren't so bad, we used to go to church. Bicycles could go faster than it did.

Q: You used to bring you bikes in?

No, but I'd say a bicycle could go faster. It was quite a deal. I think I still have a picture of that yet. My dad with his big cigar...
Q: And his car? I'm sure there weren't many cars at that time?

Oh, no. Then he got a Model T Ford. I think they had steps here, they didn't have no doors and you just sat there.

Q: Just sat inside the car and made sure you didn't fall out?

Yeah. He and Swanson got each one of these. The railroad was very important at one time here, believe me.

Q: That was for like taking grain and taking hay?

Of course between here and Benson it and taking passengers. Because at one time there would be just flooded. We'd have a hard time getting through with a team of horses.

Q: What would it be flooded from?

The river. They straightened the river out finally. They dredged it, made it deeper.

Q: That used to cause a lot of problems, I'm sure.

So they straightened that river out. I suppose that was 60 years ago.

Q: And that took care of that problem. So getting through was almost impossible. Yes, it was. It was very bad.

Q: In winters was... Now how far were you out of town?

6 miles.

Q: So in the winter you would get isolated out there?

Oh, we had a team of horses. I had a pony. I used to take music lessons when I was 14 years old and we had a little sled farm and I'd come to town with my pony and my sled.

Q: Did you have a sleigh?

Yeah, many sleds. Cutters, you know. When we were in Winnipeg on, maybe you don't want to hear this.

Q: That's alright.

I was staying at the hotel there and it was right on the river. Have you ever been up there now, lately? Well you know where the river is.

Q: I know where the river is.

It was so pretty, you could hear the sleigh bells coming with the horses and a cart.
It was beautiful. Then they had a lot of dog sleighs.

Q: Dogs?

Yeah, I got pictures of those. My husband had his picture taken with a dog sleigh. Yeah, because at the place we were at they had a couple big husky’s, they used to look beautiful.

Q: So the people, in the winter, got around pretty much then?

Oh yes.

Q: Not so much of a problem?

No. They had big bob sleds and they’d cover up, they’d heat bricks to keep your feet warm.

Q: Put them down on your feet and keep warm.

When you stop to think about it I’ve kind of forgotten those things.

Q: That’s just interesting because I’ve never ridden in a sleigh and ...

No!

Q: No. But you’d see them all the time and you’d know the fun.

Oh yea, I’ve ridden many times.

Q: O.K. I can’t think of anything else. Thank you.

End.

10/11/77

5 35 min