

Roy Simpson and Frieda Simpson
Narrators

Lee Tempte
KMRS
Interviewer

1977

Interview done for the Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota KMRS Feature



The transcription of this oral history was made possible in part by the people of Minnesota through a grant funded by an appropriation to the Minnesota Historical Society from the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. Any views, findings, opinions, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the State of Minnesota, the Minnesota Historical Society, or the Minnesota Historic Resources Advisory Committee.

- LT: 00:03 This is Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota, a Saturday KMRS news feature. We're talking today with two people, which is a little bit unusual for our Reminiscing program, but there are some mighty fine people who live here in Wheaton at the Traverse County Nursing Home, Roy and Frieda Simpson. And Roy, let's start with you, what town did you come from originally? Where were you born at?
- RS: 00:27 Janesville, Iowa.
- LT: 00:28 Frieda, what about you?
- FS: 00:30 Janesville, Iowa.
- LT: 00:32 So in other words, you both came from the same town.
- FS: 00:34 Same town.
- LT: 00:35 Okay. And how did you meet?
- FS: 00:37 Well, in schools. Went to the same school, town school that is, in the town of Janesville.
- LT: 00:46 Okay. In fact, Roy, you even sat pretty close to your wife way back then.
- RS: 00:52 Yeah, I sat back of her.
- LT: 00:54 But only for a little while, I understand they moved you.

RS: 00:57 Yeah, I got moved, too.

LT: 01:02 Okay. Frieda, I'm sure that you probably remember, I think all young brides remember the day they got married. When did you get married and where?

FS: 01:10 We got married in Wisconsin.

LT: 01:13 And what year, what was the date of that?

FS: 01:16 February 18, 1899.

LT: 01:19 So way—before the turn of the century. Well, Roy, after you married, you moved back to Iowa, or I guess you were still living there, and you started farming. What kind of crops did you raise or what kind of livestock?

RS: 01:35 Oh, my father had several farms and he put me on one of them. I had everything.

LT: 01:43 What kind of crops?

RS: 01:44 Oh, corn, oats, and barley.

LT: 01:47 What about livestock?

RS: 01:49 Oh, we had cattle and hogs, all kinds of stock on a farm.

LT: 01:57 Okay. When you—just after you got married, what kind of equipment did you have or what kind of machinery?

RS: 02:03 Oh, it was a little shorter machinery, but—

LT: 02:09 Was it horse-powered or oxen-powered or what kind of a—

RS: 02:13 Three of us boys, and we had quite a lot of—among us, we had a lot of machinery.

LT: 02:21 So between your brothers and your dad, you shared a lot of the equipment then?

RS: 02:24 Yeah.

LT: 02:24 And was everything horse-drawn?

RS: 02:26 Yeah.

LT: 02:27 Was it a lot of work? Did you mind the work? Was it sun up to sun down during the planting season?

RS: 02:35 Oh, yeah, but we didn't mind it. You had to do it.
Somebody had to do it.

LT: 02:42 Well, Frieda, I know that farmers back around the turn of
the century were working pretty hard, but farm wives, they
weren't sitting down either. What was it like to be a farm
wife in 1899?

FS: 02:57 I didn't get your question.

LT: 02:59 What was it like to be a farm wife? What kinds of work did
you have to do as compared to the farm wives today?

FS: 03:04 Everything.

LT: 03:06 Okay. Well, let's talk about some of the common things
like food. Did you have to put up food for the whole farm?
I mean, during the summer for the whole year?

FS: 03:16 Well, we tried to save all we had raised, canned the
vegetables and fruit, what we had. We canned that to save
it.

LT: 03:27 What about meat, how did you preserve that?

FS: 03:30 Let me see.

LT: 03:32 Did you have—

FS: 03:32 Some of it—canned some of the meat.

LT: 03:35 And I suppose during the wintertime then, you could keep a
carcass hanging somewhere, couldn't you?

FS: 03:41 Um-hum.

LT: 03:43 What about washing clothes, how did you used to wash
clothes?

FS: 03:48 With a washboard and tub.

LT: 03:52 Is that kind of a long process? Did it take you all day, for
example, to wash clothes?

FS: 03:57 If you had a big wash, it would.

RS: 03:58 The machine we had was a little Western.

LT: 04:02 Okay. Well, tell us about that Frieda, how you—about that first washing machine. What was it called and how did that work?

FS: 04:08 Western. It had a long handle on the top of it, and you just worked it back and forth over the top.

LT: 04:17 So in other words, it was like an automatic scrub board.

FS: 04:19 Something like that.

LT: 04:21 Did it save you some time?

FS: 04:23 Oh, yes. I see.

LT: 04:26 Well, when did you folks move up to Minnesota? What year was that?

FS: 04:30 In 1908.

LT: 04:34 Okay. And that was near what town?

FS: 04:38 White Rock.

LT: 04:39 White Rock, South Dakota. Roy, what do you remember when you first came up here to White Rock? What was the town of White Rock like as far as business was concerned?

RS: 04:48 Oh, it was a lively town.

LT: 04:51 How many elevators or saloons, or what—

RS: 04:55 There were seven elevators.

LT: 04:56 Seven elevators. And I imagine there are stores of all types then.

RS: 05:01 Yeah, that was quite a big store. The biggest store, Western City, White Rock had.

LT: 05:11 Okay. A lot of grain coming through, how did all that grain get into White Rock?

RS: 05:16 Horses.

LT: 05:18 Okay. And there are some teams that came from quite a distance.

RS: 05:20 Oh, yes. Sometimes 20 teams stayed overnight.

LT: 05:24 So in other words, they came in one day and then they went out the next. Where'd all that grain—how did it get to where it was going from White Rock?

RS: 05:32 On the railroad.

LT: 05:34 So lots of grain coming through. Well, Frieda, when you first came up here, how did you happen to move to White Rock? Your folks had lived up here, wasn't it?

FS: 05:45 My folks, my parents lived up here and were farming. And we thought we'd like it up here. See, we were living in Iowa.

LT: 05:55 I see. You did move around a little bit and you lived—well, actually, you did—most of the farming years were right here in Traverse County though.

FS: 06:04 In Traverse County, that's where we spent most of our years then.

LT: 06:09 Well, Roy, this year, they're talking about what a dry year it is, and I think that's the truth that it's chalking up to be kind of a dry spring. What about the dirty '30s as they call them, how bad was farming? Did you get any kind of a crop back in those dry years?

RS: 06:28 Not to amount to anything.

LT: 06:30 For livestock and that, where did you where'd you get feed for them?

RS: 06:33 Well, they went pretty—didn't have much for livestock.

LT: 06:39 Do you remember anything about the years back then? Does this year look like it's going to be that type of year? What do you remember about the springs back then in the '30s?

RS: 06:48 No, this ain't near as bad as it was them days.

LT: 06:53 Well, that's encouraging because I think there's a lot of people that are pretty worried this year about the spring. Roy, what was a big farm back then when you first moved up here in 1908? For, let's say a big farmer, about how many acres would he have?

RS: 07:08 Oh, section.

LT: 07:11 Section will be what, 640 then?

RS: 07:13 Yeah.

LT: 07:14 And would that be somebody that had a pretty big family or pretty—lots of machinery?

RS: 07:19 Machinery and boys.

LT: 07:23 Well, Frieda, I don't think that there are many people that I've talked to, and I don't think anybody that even heard of that have been married for 77 years, that's just wonderful. What do you attribute your successful marriage of 77 years? What's the secret?

FS: 07:39 Keep busy.

LT: 07:42 How'd you get along with Roy for so long?

FS: 07:45 Okay. Whenever we thought we was going to have an argument, why, it's only just one.

LT: 07:50 Just one talking. So in other words, it takes two to quarrel.

FS: 07:53 Yeah. Takes two to quarrel.

LT: 07:55 So sometimes you just take turns stocking then, huh? Well, Roy—

RS: 08:02 She's always the boss.

LT: 08:03 Who was the boss?

RS: 08:05 She was the boss.

LT: 08:07 Okay. Is that true, Frieda? She's laughing so hard, she can't talk. Well, I always end these interviews and I ask the people being interviewed their ages. Now, how old is Roy?

FS: 08:21 He is 97 years old. He'll be 98, September 27.

LT: 08:29 Okay. And you're quite a bit younger, right?

FS: 08:33 I'm 95.

LT: 08:36 Very good. Anything else that you like to mention? You're living here now in the Traverse County Nursing Home, do you enjoy living here?

FS: 08:45 It's fine here.

LT: 08:46 Very good. Roy, do you enjoy living here?

RS: 08:48 Yeah, it's a fine place.

LT: 08:50 Thank you very much. We've been talking with Roy and Frieda Simpson who are living here at the Traverse County Nursing Home, on Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota, a Saturday KMRS news feature.