

Mrs. John Jackson
Narrator

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KMRS
Interviewer

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LT: 00:00 This is *Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota: a Saturday, KMRS News Feature*. Today, we are talking with Mrs. John Jackson of Morris. Mrs. Jackson, have you always lived in Minnesota?

M.JJ: 00:13 Yes, I have.

LT: 00:15 But you were born in a different state though?

M.JJ 00:17 Yes, I was born in Iowa.

LT: 00:20 How is it that your family happened to moved up to the great State of Minnesota?

M.JJ 00:24 Well, they thought the land was so much better here.

LT: 00:28 Probably a little bit cheaper too, I bet. You were about how old then when you family moved?

M.JJ 00:37 Seven years old.

LT: 00:38 Do you remember back when you were seven years old?

M.JJ 00:41 Not good.

LT: 00:44 How did family move in those days?

M.JJ 00:46 Well, we came by train; the men came by freight with the livestock.

LT: 00:54 Didn't they call it immigrant cars or something like that?

M.JJ 00:58 Yes, they did.

LT: 01:01 So where did your family settle then?

M.JJ 01:06 About three miles south of Donnelly.

LT: 01:10 You lived there for a few years, then you moved over to close to Alberta?

M.JJ 01:15 That's right.

LT: 01:16 Do you remember anything when you were growing up? One of the things we were talking about is picking mustard. Today, you see mustard and, of course, they've got all these chemicals and they come by with a plane or a big sprayer and it takes care of that real quick. But back when you were a girl, a little bit different.

M.JJ 01:34 Yes, we had to pick it by hand.

LT: 01:37 One time you tried to take a shortcut.

M.JJ 01:40 Yes, we did.

LT: 01:43 Why don't you tell us.

M.JJ 01:44 Well, my two sisters and I were picking, and we had so much mustard in one place around a slough. She says, "Oh, I know a different way." I says, "What is it?" She says, "You got to lay and then you lay next to me, and then my sister. Then we roll and roll and roll until we get to the end of it, and then we'll take another path and roll back." Then she says, "It will all be dead by morning."

LT: 02:16 As it turned out, it wasn't dead by morning.

M.JJ 02:20 No, my dad had to go to Donnelly for something, and when he came home he said to my mother, "Oh, I'm so disappointed." She says, "What happened?" He says, "Well, those kids had picked that field so nice and clean there wasn't a mustard in sight, but now this morning it's just full again."

LT: 02:40 You eventually told him though, didn't you?

M.JJ 02:42 Yes, we did, and he thought it was a big joke.

LT: 02:46 You got a pretty big family?

M.JJ 02:48 Yes, it was 10 of us.

LT: 02:51 I suppose the older ones help take care of the younger ones and everybody had their own responsibilities?

M.JJ 02:57 Yes, we all had our own work to do.

LT: 03:01 In addition to picking mustard, I suppose on a farm you had lots of other things to do too.

M.JJ 03:05 Yes. Milk cows and herd cows. That was another job I didn't like very well.

LT: 03:11 How long did it take to milk cows? I suppose doing it all by hand—

M.JJ 03:16 Yes. Oh, I suppose it took a couple hours when I had to do it alone. The rest were all in the field because there was 10 of them you had to milk.

LT: 03:26 Living on a farm then I suppose you didn't have grocery stores real close by, so all the food was raised right there on the farm.

M.JJ 03:36 Yes, we did. I think most of the farmers raised all their food and meat, and everything.

LT: 03:46 Even though it was a big family, nobody went hungry.

M.JJ 03:48 No, we sure didn't.

LT: 03:51 You lived on the farm, you mentioned by Donnelly, and then they moved to Alberta. You were through school by then?

M.JJ 03:57 Yes.

LT: 04:00 You lived on the farm until you were married then.

M.JJ 04:03 That's right, in 1914.

LT: 04:07 Then you moved to where?

M.JJ 04:09 Morris.

LT: 04:10 You've been here just about all the time since then?

M.JJ 04:13 Yes.

LT: 04:14 Tell us now. Your husband had some kind of interesting job. You mentioned frogs, and you mentioned there was a write-up in the paper. I didn't see it; I hadn't heard anything about the frogs. Tell us about what you and your husband used to do for a living.

M.JJ 04:28 Well, we used to catch frogs and sell them. We'd catch them and dress them and sell them. Then we went to Lisbon, North Dakota, one year and did that. Crops were so poor there and everybody was hard up, so they wondered if they could help us to do something.

04:47 So my husband told them, yes, they could catch all they wanted to and he'd buy them. So then, by the time it was time to come home, we went home but we had to promise them we'd come back next year and buy. So that's all we did. We just bought them and dressed them and sent them.

LT: 05:09 To me, catching frogs—is there any trick to that? How come no one else was doing it? Were there other people in the same business?

M.JJ 05:17 Well, there was a few started but I guess they were not very successful. They didn't know just how.

LT: 05:24 So there were a few tricks to catching frogs?

M.JJ 05:26 Yes, you usually have to kneel on one knee and then always put your hand in front of them not toward them. You put your hand in front of them and they jump right in your hand.

LT: 05:37 It's kind of like shooting a duck. You have to aim ahead a little bit.

M.JJ 05:40 That's right.

LT: 05:41 Where did these frog legs go?

M.JJ 05:45 Well, they went to Chicago, near Newark, and different places.

LT: 05:50 Was it considered a delicacy? I guess today, it's still considered a delicacy. It's something in good restaurants they have frog legs.

M.JJ 05:58 Yes, I think it was.

LT: 06:02 Yeah, that's kind of an interesting way to make a living. How did these frogs get shipped out then?

M.JJ 06:09 We had to dress them; we just sent the legs, but they had great big barrels and they lined them heavily with paper and then put big chunks of ice in them. As we dressed them, they threw them in ice water, then washed them through another tub of ice water. Then we sent them in the barrel.

LT: 06:32 Stayed pretty cool then by the time they got to Chicago?

M.JJ 06:34 They were still frozen when they got there.

LT: 06:38 Your husband was involved in some other things too that were kind of interesting. The Mormons, he worked for a while, then buying furs, and buying metals.

M.JJ 06:47 Yes.

LT: 06:49 During World War II when the big drives run for everybody turning in metal?

M.JJ 06:55 Metal and iron, even if you had any gold pieces and everything that's gold.

LT: 07:03 It was the patriotic thing to do.

M.JJ 07:05 Yes, it was.

LT: 07:07 Did they have any ways to—I think I've heard some people that tried to hoard and this type of thing. Did the sheriffs department, did they arrest them if somebody was doing that?

M.JJ 07:20 Well, I really don't know. We gave ours up what we had. We had a few gold pieces because thought if it would do any good, we better give it to them.

LT: 07:32 The things that you remember, I suppose there was just about every conceivable type of shape and size that came in. Do you remember anything really unusual? I think I remember the World War I cannons from the legion club. They came in and they were all scrapped.

M.JJ 07:48 Yes.

LT: 07:50 Any other unusual things you remember that were melted down?

M.JJ 07:53 See, all we did was just sold the whole thing. There were so many places, I guess, where they melt it now, but they hauled them out by truck.

LT: 08:05 You lived in Morris, since 1914—that's a couple of years. What things have you noticed that have changed over the years? Certainly, there has been lots of changes here in Morris.

M.JJ 08:20 A lot of new buildings and stores. Morris here has grown.

LT: 08:26 One of the big things—that's the reason I got in town—the campus, the University of Minnesota Morris. You remembered a couple other things.

M.JJ 08:38 Yes. The university used to be an Indian school.

LT: 08:42 In fact, when you were living by Donnelly, you recalled an incident that happened.

M.JJ 08:46 Two boys ran away from the school and they landed at our place.

LT: 08:53 Kids will run away. They still do that on occasion, I guess. The stores, it used to be—when you came to town, it's quite the deal. Some people used to only come to town once a week or something. Today, people leave and go to town five times a day. When you were growing up on the farm, coming to town used to be pretty exciting, didn't it?

M.JJ 09:16 About once a week, sometimes twice.

LT: 09:20 When you were a kid, I suppose you had to ask dad for a little bit of money. How much did you get and what did you get?

M.JJ 09:26 Picking mustard we got 15 cents a day.

LT: 09:30 When you came to town then to spend that money, what could you get for 15 cents?

M.JJ 09:35 Of course, we could get something for it, especially when we got the dime stores in Morris.

LT: 09:43 Do you remember anything that you bought?

M.JJ 09:45 No, I don't. I suppose there is all such foolishness that we got.

LT: 09:48 I suppose it went pretty fast just like it does today, right?

M.JJ 09:52 Yeah.

LT: 09:54 Well, you are living in Morris, and you retired from raising your family and just kind of enjoying yourself. Any hobbies that you enjoy doing?

M.JJ 10:05 No, really. I've just done a little fancy work where I used to be quite busy. I always helped my husband with everything he did. Then when my son went into the Service, he was mostly alone, then I worked a while in restaurants, not too long, with a pastry cook.

LT: 10:28 Being a pastry cook is quite a skill. There is nothing that smells better than fresh pastry.

M.JJ 10:34 That's right.

LT: 10:38 You're living in Morris. You talked about the town. Have the people changed much? Have you noticed anything about the people?

M.JJ 10:45 Well, it seems to me everybody is busy now. It used to be we always had plenty time to visit in the neighborhood with our neighbors. But now, it seems like they are all so busy; there's no good time to visit.

LT: 10:59 Hurry up and go, right?

M.JJ 11:00 Yes, that's right.

LT: 11:02 It's a nice town. You enjoy living in Morris?.

M.JJ 11:03 I really like it because I've been here so long.

LT: 11:08 Mrs. Jackson, I ask one question at the end. What's your age?

M.JJ 11:12 Eight-three.

LT: 11:13 Thank you very much. We've been talking with Mrs. Jackson of Morris, on *Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota: a Saturday KMRS News Feature*.