

Rose Taffe
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're talking with Mrs. Rose Taffe of Barry, Minnesota. Mrs. Taffe, were you born around here or what state were you born in?
- RT: 00:14 I was born at Heber, Nebraska.
- LT: 00:17 And why is it that you're—
- RT: 00:18 [inaudible 00:17].
- LT: 00:20 Well, we'll ask you that at the end. Why is it that your family moved to Minnesota from Nebraska?
- RT: 00:26 Because we were always being dried out, it was too much drought. And we moved to Minnesota and we drowned out.
- LT: 00:33 So it's either too much or too little then?
- RT: 00:34 Yes.
- LT: 00:36 Well, tell us about your family, were they involved in farming and what type of farm did they have?
- RT: 00:44 I have always lived on a farm. My father farmed, he had just general farming. And when I married, my husband was also a farmer, and I've always lived on the farm.
- LT: 00:55 Okay. You did have a chance to work in town when you got a little bit older.

RT: 01:02 I worked in the bank, in the Barry State Bank for three years. Barry had a bank at that time. But I stayed at home, I went back and forth at night, so I was always on the farm.

LT: 01:15 All right. And the bank is not here, but the building is still here.

RT: 01:17 The building is still there, it's called Whoopi's Bar now.

LT: 01:22 All right. What was the banking business like? Was it more cash or did people use—did they have checks back then? Or what was—

RT: 01:30 Oh, yes. They used checking accounts, yes. They used— had checking accounts, some had time deposits. And I don't know, it wasn't so much different from now only that there was larger amounts of money across the counter than there is now.

LT: 01:46 Okay. And the town of Barry was considerably different than it is at the present time. Tell us about the main street of Barry and some of the different businesses that were there when you were working in town.

RT: 01:59 Well, at one time there was the McRay's from Graceville, had a large lumber yard and a hardware store. There was a small hotel. And on the other side of the street, there was a large store, we could buy most everything there. Men's clothing and women's clothing, groceries, things were all in barrels.

LT: 02:24 Everything in bulk, right?

RT: 02:25 Yeah. Everything was in bulk. Then there was a small restaurant down the street and the bank, and then another store, and a pool hall. And well, it was a livery stable at one time, then they turned it into a garage.

LT: 02:42 No saloons?

RT: 02:44 Well, it was kind of—part of that time was dry country, I don't remember when the liquor came back. But at one time it was dry, but there was a saloon there someplace in.

LT: 02:53 All right. And you mentioned a depot and a boarding house.

- RT: 02:56 Yes. And there was a boarding house, one lady I think she must have had about 15 boarders, steady boarders, it was Mrs. Chase. And there was a depot, and there were four different companies had elevators, and there was a passenger train went through every morning and back again at night. It was quite a town we thought, and it had a church.
- LT: 03:25 Okay. And you were talking about when people, if they went from Barry to Graceville, that's how they'd get, they'd take the train.
- RT: 03:33 In the wintertime, if you wanted to go to Graceville, the roads were not very good. You usually took the train in the morning and spent the day in Graceville and came back on the train that night.
- LT: 03:43 Okay. And then after you married, you, like you mentioned, moved on the farm again. And which area did you live on after you got married?
- RT: 03:51 Well, we lived about a mile south of Barry for two years, and then we built a house on the old original Taffe farm, the old homestead, close to my husband's people. They were still living here.
- LT: 04:07 And did you have a big family?
- RT: 04:09 I had five children, four boys and a girl.
- LT: 04:13 Now, I've talked to lots of men who tell me about the hard times and all the work they did, but I haven't talked to too many farm wives or housewives. They had it pretty rough in some of those days, too, before electricity and things like that. Let's talk about some of the different things that every housewife is about, like ironing clothes. What was it first like way before electric iron?
- RT: 04:39 Well, we had to iron all our clothes in those days. Nowadays, so much of this material is so different you don't need ironing. But we had to heat our irons on this cook stove, we had three irons. By the time we'd get to our clothes, usually, the iron would be cold, we'd have to go back and get another iron.
- LT: 04:56 Okay. You're talking about three irons, how did that work?

- RT: 05:00 Well, there was one handle. Two irons would be heating while you were ironing with the one handle. Then you'd take your handle off and put it on the next iron and put it back on again.
- LT: 05:10 A little bit slower. Washing clothes used to be a big job. Did you always do it Mondays?
- RT: 05:17 Well, we were supposed to wash on Monday, but we didn't always do it. But it took about all day to wash. We had an old—the washing machine with a big wheel on it, as far as I can remember, and a ringer that we had to turn by hand. But then—
- LT: 05:34 What about those boilers to it?
- RT: 05:36 Yeah. We had a big copper clothes wash boiler that we sat on the cook stove. And early Monday morning, you'd have to get the fire going, fill it up with water and that'd be your hot water. And then of course, when the water would get dirty, you'd have to dump it out and try to heat some more. Sometimes you'd kept on washing with the dirty clothes—dirty water, I guess.
- LT: 06:00 Even before electricity, they had such a thing as gasoline washing machines. How did they work?
- RT: 06:07 We thought we really were it when we got the gasoline engine hooked up to the washing machine. We had a hose, I suppose that was to let the exhaust fumes out through the window, and we—that turned the machine. So I just don't remember how it worked, but it worked anyway and we didn't have to do all the work anymore, but it still took time because each batch of clothes had to be washed and it had to be rinsed. That was an all day's job.
- LT: 06:37 Another thing, too, like, putting up food, most farmers and farm wives back then, they virtually raised just about everything they eat. What about meat and that type of thing?
- RT: 06:51 Well, we never had fried chicken in the winter time like we do now. We've butchered in the summer, we put it in the freezer, but in those days we just had it in the summer months when the chickens were young. And the other meat would have to be butchered in the winter time when it was cold. My dad was a butcher before he went to Nebraska in his young days, he was a butcher. So he knew how to

butcher, and he cut up the meat and he made sausage, we made liver sausage and pork sausage and had cheese. And that was about an all week's job, too.

- LT: 07:22 Did families ever get together and do this together?
- RT: 07:25 Well, the relatives usually get together, they'd always like to have my dad come and do the butchering.
- LT: 07:32 And everything was sausage, stuffing sausage, too.
- RT: 07:37 I still have the sausage stuffer and the meat grinder. And I think most people see the sausage stuffer, they don't know what it is.
- LT: 07:44 I suppose a real big garden, too, to can thing.
- RT: 07:48 Yes. We had to—and we'd always try to raise our own potatoes. Now, with the heated basements, you can't keep potatoes anymore. In those days, we'd have a big bin about 60 bushel potatoes in it, and they'd all be gone the next year by the time, the mixed potatoes were ready.
- LT: 08:05 And your kids had a little bit easier than some as far as going to school, they didn't have so far to go. How far?
- RT: 08:14 I guess my youngsters had about a half mile to walk to school, and that school is still standing, and it's the first school that was built in this township. The other kids, some of them had as much as two miles to walk to school.
- LT: 08:30 They're pretty lucky then, I guess. Now, when your husband was going there, they had quite a few more people, there were probably more families around.
- RT: 08:38 Yes. My husband went to that school, too, and there were a couple of years that he said there were over 40, I think, 42 children going to that school. One teacher handling all those eight grades.
- LT: 08:52 I hope the teachers are listening today, they might not have it so bad. Well, the different things that came in to make the farm wife's life a little bit easier, of all the different things that came in, convenience type things, what made it the easiest for you?
- RT: 09:09 Well, the electricity, of course, that brought everything. But at first, we just thought if we had an electric iron we'd have

everything we wanted. But it was soon found out we had to have other things, too.

- LT: 09:21 And you remember when radio came out, too?
- RT: 09:23 Oh, yes. I can remember when the—some garage in Beardsley installed a radio and my brother and my father went over—and my husband went over there one Sunday afternoon to listen to the radio and they came back with big stories. It was the most wonderful invention. It wasn't long until we had one, too.
- LT: 09:44 Well, now that you're not really retired because as I was visiting here today, you're feeding the guys that are working, and so you're still involved—you've got most of your family all around this area, which makes it nice.
- RT: 10:00 Yes. My family all lived—my sons are all right within two miles. My one son died, it was about seven years ago, but he lived about two miles from here. I have one girl and she lives in Morris, she's the farthest away.
- LT: 10:14 So it's nice that you don't have to go too far to see all the grandkids. How many grandkids?
- RT: 10:20 I have 25 grandchildren, 12 boys and 13 girls.
- LT: 10:23 Any great grandkids yet?
- RT: 10:24 Yes. I have eight great grandchildren.
- LT: 10:27 Well, I'd like to thank you very much, it's been very interesting. And I would like to mention you're the first person from Barry, and I hope that we can talk to some more of your friends soon, okay?
- RT: 10:35 That'll be all right. Yes.
- LT: 10:36 One thing I ask at the end, what is your age, Mrs. Taffe?
- RT: 10:39 I'll be 80 my next birthday in January.
- LT: 10:42 Thank you very much. We've been talking with Mrs. Rose Taffe of Barry on Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota, a Saturday KMRS news feature.