

Elsie Mohr
Narrator

Lee Tempte
KMRS
Interviewer

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- LT: 00:00 We're talking now with Mrs. Elsie Mohr of Morris. And Elsie, maybe you could start out and tell us where you were born and something about what you remember.
- EM: 00:10 I was born in Cherry County, Nebraska, and we lived in the sod house to begin with and in the log house afterwards. And then my parents moved to East Nebraska. And from there, in 1902, I came to Minnesota with my folks.
- LT: 00:26 Okay. Which part of Minnesota did you first come to?
- EM: 00:29 We came to Horton Township.
- LT: 00:31 Okay. And that was closest to the village of Hancock then?
- EM: 00:35 Yeah. The village of Hancock was our town.
- LT: 00:38 Well, now, you're of German ancestry, were there other people with the same nationality around that area?
- EM: 00:44 Yeah. Everybody was German that time, and they all came from the same community from Nebraska that was around us there. Everybody talked German.
- LT: 00:56 Okay. Well, when did you learn English, speak English?
- EM: 01:00 Not until after I got married. My husband helped me.
- LT: 01:05 But it wasn't a handicap because everybody else spoke it also.

- EM: 01:08 Yeah. Then they started speaking it all over. After that Second World War, everybody had to speak English because you was a Nazi if you spoke German.
- LT: 01:18 What about schooling, did you go to school around the Hancock area?
- EM: 01:24 No, we had just parochial school, the church school, that's the only schooling I had.
- LT: 01:30 Well, let's talk a little bit about your German ancestry. We've talked to so many Norwegians that it'd be interesting. What about the food? Now, I know that each nationality has its own food. Were the foods that you had back then a lot different than now?
- EM: 01:47 Well, a lot different than what they are today, yes. We didn't eat like they do today. We didn't have all that stuff, all that canned stuff and all that, it was all what we get out of the garden, that's the only thing we would have, fresh vegetables and stuff. We had no frigidaires, no ice or anything, but we canned, that was the only thing we had in the winter time.
- LT: 02:11 What are some of the favorite things that you remember eating?
- EM: 02:15 Well, I wouldn't know just exactly. It would be vegetables and fruits. We had gooseberries and all that stuff my folks raised and we canned some of that, and that's what we used.
- LT: 02:30 Well, Germans are, I think, more pork-oriented than beef-oriented. What type of pork did you use?
- EM: 02:37 Well, we used mostly pork that's—we salted it down and then they smoked it and we used it that way. That's the only way we could keep it during the summer.
- LT: 02:49 What about sausage making, did you do some of that?
- EM: 02:52 Oh, yes, they made lots of sausage. Yeah. We used to make all kinds of sausage, liver sausage and blood sausage, and summer sausage.
- LT: 03:04 Was that a big job when you butchered and made sausage?
- EM: 03:07 Yeah. That took us a week to do it all away, and that's winter time.

LT: 03:13 And how was that done?

EM: 03:15 Oh, gee, that's pretty hard for me to explain that to you just how we did it. But the summer sausage, of course, see, we just put that raw in the casings and salt it and smoked it that way. But the others, we all had to cook. We'd cook it in a big wash boiler and then we'd hang it up, the liver sausage and blood sausage and stuff. And then we'd eat it the way we wanted to.

LT: 03:42 What about entertainment back in those days, what did people do to have fun?

EM: 03:47 Oh, gee, we didn't have much fun, I guess, compared to what they do today to have fun. They usually have parties, some beer parties, the old folks, and we kids go along. And we kids would have some sleigh rides and stuff because all we had was horses. And the wintertime, we take the sled and we'd go out and take rides like that.

LT: 04:12 So a lot of the events and social gatherings were pretty family-oriented.

EM: 04:17 Well, we'd get together, the kids in the neighborhood, and we have games, we play games.

LT: 04:25 Back about the start of World War I or just after it, I guess, the Spanish flu epidemic hit this area. And was it anything like the flu they have today?

EM: 04:35 No, I don't think so. It was way worse than what it's today. Because at that time, there was pretty much every family that had a death in the family before it was all over with. Well, in fact, there was a family that I remember, they all died but one little baby, there was five or six in the family, and the baby didn't die, all the rest of them died in a week.

LT: 04:59 Did your family catch the flu?

EM: 05:01 Yeah, we all had it, too. All but one of my daughters did have it.

LT: 05:06 It was kind of a rough time. How long were people sick with the flu back then?

EM: 05:10 Oh, my, some of them were sick for weeks. My husband was sick for about three weeks with it, but some of them just a week or so, they'd get over it. But they had to be

careful if they'd go outside, they'd get it back, mostly was pneumonia, I think.

- LT: 05:28 What about the depression years? Living on a farm, were they some pretty rough years?
- EM: 05:35 Yeah, they were really bad. I tell you, it was pretty hard sometimes to make ends meet with the family.
- LT: 05:42 And your family at the time was trying to pay for your farm, and that was even tougher.
- EM: 05:47 Yeah, that was really tough. We had to put—you paid, and then every time we had to pay the interest on that little bit, we had to make a new loan to pay the interest again.
- LT: 05:57 So then when the good years finally came back, it took you a few more years to finally get it paid.
- EM: 06:03 Yeah. It took us 10 years to get out of that again, get that all paid off.
- LT: 06:08 What about back in those days as far as shopping goes, where did you go and do most of your shopping?
- EM: 06:15 Well, we went mostly to Hancock and shopping. We used to take the butter and eggs and then we'd get groceries for that in the stores in Hancock.
- LT: 06:26 What about coming to Morris, for example, how long would it take with a horse and buggy?
- EM: 06:31 Oh, it'll take a good hour and a half. It's usually we figured three hours a day if we went to town back and forth.
- LT: 06:40 What do you remember about the first car that your family had?
- EM: 06:44 Oh, dear, that was a joke because we had a Model T Ford, and the first time we took it out, we went to Alberta, and from there, when we came home the next morning, we had a flat tire and we didn't know how to fix a tire.
- LT: 07:02 It's kind of fun and a novelty riding in it though, I bet.
- EM: 07:05 Yes, it sure was, yeah. It took me a little while to learn to drive it, but managed it then.

- LT: 07:13 Well, there's lots of jokes they used to pick on the Polish people and I guess it's the Norwegians that are trying to—do they ever tell jokes about Norwegians, or do you have some pretty good jokers in your ancestors and your relatives?
- EM: 07:27 Oh, yeah, there were plenty of them there. They were some and they could tell some pretty rough ones, too.
- LT: 07:34 They had lots of fun when they got together.
- EM: 07:36 Yeah, they did. They really had lots of fun, and they'd sing them all German songs and they was fun.
- LT: 07:43 Well, there's one question that I always end up the interview, and Elsie, how old are you?
- EM: 07:49 Well, I was 85 last September.
- LT: 07:53 Thank you very much. We've been talking with Elsie Mohr of Morris on Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota.