

Mrs. Frank Jost
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. Frank Jost of Morris. Mrs. Jost, maybe you tell us where you were born?
- M.FJ: 00:15 I was born in Clinton, Iowa.
- LT: 00:19 Is that on the farm or in the city?
- M.FJ: 00:21 That was down in the city. I never lived on a farm until later.
- LT: 00:27 You lived a neighborhood that wasn't too far away from the fairgrounds and there seemed to be always something going on there.
- M.FJ: 00:33 There sure was. Whenever the fair time was, they always had a lot of horses over there. I seem to play mostly with young neighbor boys, and we would go over early in the morning and help water the horses. The boys would walk the horses; they'd have them blanketed, and we would go and the jockeys would let us tend to the horses in the morning, and it was lots of fun.
- LT: 01:07 Do you remember some of the early hot-air balloons going up? That used to be quite a thing.
- M.FJ: 01:12 There also were many balloon ascensions during the spring and summer, and often they'd have a little trouble getting

them started. Then they'd go out over the Mississippi River and everybody would be interested to see how far the balloons would go. Once in a while, they'd go up as far as Savanna, Illinois, about 25-30 miles up the river.

- LT: 01:40 The other thing too is when you were a school girl you saw one of the early planes of the Wright Brothers.
- M.FJ: 01:47 In those days, when there was anything interesting going on, the schools would charter a streetcar and load us all in the streetcar and take us down to Clinton, to the park. One time, the Wright Brothers flew from Chicago, Illinois—which was not too far—and we saw that land. It was a biplane, and it landed on the Mississippi River. We all saw it and were quite excited.
- LT: 02:22 One of the things that happened when you were a young girl was at the fair. Today, you talk about cereal and probably one of the most common cereal you think is Corn Flakes. But back before about the turn of the Century, there wasn't such a thing. Tell us about that at the fair.
- M.FJ: 02:38 One fair—I think I must have been about seven—we got little boxes of a dry cereal. They called it Eggo-C. I'd never forgotten it. It was a very thin, like a cornflake, and I think it was made from corn. Anyway, it was real good, and that was my first introduction to dry breakfast food.
- LT: 03:08 Now, of course, living in a town as compared to the country—there's a lot of people we talked to—there's lots of things that are different. But going to get water was something that even in the city you had to do.
- M.FJ: 03:21 Yes, we all had soft water. We had large cisterns and would save the soft water. But when it come mealtime, we would take our buckets and walk about a block and get fresh water from the neighborhood well. Often, there would be half-a-dozen kids there and sometimes we'd be soaked to the skin in the summertime before we get that pail water home because we'd have water fights. But we always knew when heard the church bell at 12:00, we'd better get a move on ourselves.
- LT: 04:04 Of course, then, as you were going up, you had lots of jobs. But I think one of the most interesting jobs you had was working in a candy factory.

- M.FJ: 04:13 Yes, and at that time, there were no labor laws. I think I must have been 14; it was in the summertime. The candy factory was a small—it was in a basement, and the floor was covered with sawdust.
- 04:31 A couple of girls would cook the caramels and then they would melt the chocolate in large vats. I was sort of what you'd call a flunky, I guess, because I'd carry the chocolate and they mixed cocoa butter with it. Then when they got that at a certain temperature, another girl would put it on a marble slab and dip the caramels in that—all by hand—and spread them out on another marble slab to get cold.
- LT: 05:10 Could you have a little candy when you were working sometimes?
- M.FJ: 05:14 They told us the very first day to eat all the candy we wanted, and we did, but with bad effects. The next day, nobody could even look at the stuff. To this day, I don't care about chocolate.
- LT: 05:31 Well, back in those days, you are talking about going on dates was a little bit different than today. What are some of the places that you went on dates?
- M.FJ: 05:42 One of the highlights was take a walk down to the river. We'd walk over the High Bridge from Clinton, Iowa to Fulton, Illinois. In the summer, we walked the bridge, and often in the wintertime, and after the Mississippi was froze over, we would walk over the ice and watch them make ice. The railroads made ice in the Mississippi River near our town every year and hauled it to Chicago.
- LT: 06:20 You got married while you were Iowa. I know there are lot of things we'd like to talk about, but I would like to talk about some of those early years when you lived on the farm at Ortonville. For a city girl, moving to the farm for the first time that must have been kind of a hard thing. Tell us about some of your trials and tribulations the first year as a farm wife?
- M.FJ: 06:42 Well, for one thing, I was used to a furnace-heated house, and I moved out to a farm, and we heated the kitchen with a cook stove and the other one we had a woodstove. The wood wasn't very dry—we moved in the fall of the year. There was a wood pile but that wood had gotten wet with

the snow. I would forget to put wood in the stove, and the first thing I knew my fire was about out.

07:12 It was in wartime, understand? It was in 1917, and you couldn't get hard coal in those days. By the time the war was over, we had a hard coal burner. After that, my troubles were over in the way of heat.

LT: 07:34 Tell us about the cream separator.

M.FJ: 07:36 I had never washed a cream separator. So the very first time I had to wash the cream separator, I took some hot water and plenty of soap—homemade soap at that—and I had a stringy mess. The little neighbor girl, about six, came over, and I was crying and wondering what I could do. She said, “Well, the first thing we'll do is pour that dishwater out and throw the dish rag away and get a pail of water—cold water—and we'll rinse the milk off, and from there we'll start all over,” and we did.

LT: 08:20 Another time was the transportation—horses were the only mode of transportation that most people used then. You didn't quite enjoy driving horses too much, did you?

M.FJ: 08:33 No. The first time I ever tried to go to town—I had company from Clinton, Iowa, and we thought we'd go into Ortonville. It was only three miles. Papa put a real gentle horse on for us and figured we'd get there all right. Well, that horse knew there were a couple greenhorns on the end of the line, and it really didn't want to go for us. When it got going, we weren't very able to keep it to slow down at all. By the time I got to town and ready to go home, I was scared stiff.

09:14 I had a cousin living in Ortonville, and we managed to get the horse up about a block, up that hill, and he took us home. That horse was just perfect going home for him, but it certainly didn't act that way for us girls. Then he had to walk the three miles back home alone.

LT: 09:40 You have to know that horses are smarter than people might believe sometimes.

M.FJ: 09:44 Indeed, that horse was.

LT: 09:48 Well, you farmed in Ortonville for about nine years, then you came to Stevens County. There is so much we could talk about, from 1923 to '53, farming in Stevens County.

Then you moved to town and you became a city girl again. Did you like that when you moved off the farm?

M.FJ: 10:05 When I said goodbye to that farm, I said goodbye to it. I moved to town, and I've never regretted getting back in town. I enjoyed the years that we spent here. We went fishing quite often—while my husband lived—and we did a lot of traveling—a good many States I've been in and have always enjoyed it. Now, I still enjoy going traveling by myself.

LT: 10:32 In fact, you just got back from a trip a couple weeks ago.

M.FJ: 10:36 Oh, yes. I was to Cheyenne, Wyoming, for two weeks. Then I visited several days in the cities. Then I came on home—and I hardly get my grip unpacked—and I went to Litchfield on Saturday for the weekend and didn't get back until Tuesday of this week. So I'm always ready to—in fact, I always keep certain things in my vanity case to just pick up and go whenever I want to.

LT: 11:09 Well, Mrs. Jost, you sound like you're still having lots of fun and you are keeping busy and enjoying your traveling. One more question. How old are you?

M.FJ: 11:18 I was 83 the 29th of March.

LT: 11:21 Thank you very much. We've been talking with Mrs. Frank Jost of Morris, on *Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota: a Saturday KMRS News Feature*.