

This is Larry Sprunk and the following is an interview that I had with Mr. Wilbur Chapin of Hankinson, North Dakota. The interview was held in Mr. Chapin's home Saturday, September 28, 1974, and it began at approximately two o'clock in the afternoon. Both sides of this cassette are the interview with Mr. Chapin as are both sides of the succeeding cassette with Mr. Chapin.

~~Mr. Chapin: That isn't going yet.~~

~~Larry: No, I gotta start it up again.~~

~~Wilbur: You can shut that damn thing off so it don't get somethin' we don't want. When you're using that, you push one o' these in and then when a person quits talkin', you just raise up your finger, don't ya?~~

~~Larry: No, it stays down.~~

~~Wilbur: It stays down?~~

~~Larry: Yeah.~~

~~Wilbur: Well, then, you push that one down.~~

~~Larry: When you're all through, yeah.~~

~~Wilbur: Oh. Now, then, say you push this one down to talk, while we're talkin' and I happen to make a mistake, how do we shut that off so that I can correct that?~~

~~Larry: Oh, you stop a minute, back it up and do it over.~~

~~Wilbur: Oh. Well, anyway, I'd rather we'd work it right. Then you won't have to be backin' it up if we don't get in too big a hurry.~~

~~Larry: No, we're in no hurry.~~

~~Wilbur: Now, do you think that that's the right distance, or should I be...~~

~~Larry: No, that's fine. That's fine.~~

~~Wilbur: Right where it is.~~

~~Larry: Yeah.~~

~~Wilbur: I don't have to talk into it.~~

~~Larry: No, that's fine.~~

~~Wilbur: Now, what does that do?~~

~~Larry: Well, it tape records our voices.~~

~~Wilbur: Are they workin' now?~~

~~Larry: Shall we try it?~~

~~Wilbur: Okay. Maybe you should be sittin' closer where you can get your hands on it quick.~~

~~Larry: [No, that's fine. We're fine.]~~ Tell me, Wilbur, when did the Chapin family come to North Dakota?

~~Wilbur: [chuckles] 1879. Eighteen seventy-nine. I was five years old when they come here. [You want to know where we come from, I presume.]~~

~~Larry: Yeah.~~

~~Wilbur: [Yes. River Falls, Wisconsin.]~~ We better start from River Falls, there. Wisconsin.

~~Larry: Okay.~~

~~Wilbur: [Because the first winter my folks went in down here to Hancock, Minnesota.]~~ The first summer they come from Wisconsin on to Hancock, Minnesota. That's where the immigrants come from that we come withⁱⁿ a fourⁱⁿ wagon caravan, covered wagons. And what we owned was on that wagon; We didn't own any more. All that you could put on an ordinary wagon box, and tie on the sides with then the canopy, or the canvas, over the bows over the top.

~~[You've seen those around here, you know what that is. Yes.]~~ Well, that's what we come over here with. And I've been told all this. ~~[See. Up until I got to be around, oh, I guess, twelve or fifteen years old. Fifteen? Yeah, fifteen. Then I went on~~

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~~my own. And I've had this ever since.~~ I'll probably forget some of it, but it's pretty hard to keep track of the whole works. ~~And, you see, my~~ ^{folks} ~~place~~ located west of Fargo out there ^{north of} at Leonard.

~~North of Leonard. Do you live in Fargo or in Bismarck?~~

~~Larry: I was born at Enderlin.~~

~~Wilbur: No.~~

~~Larry: Yeah.~~

~~Wilbur: Well, I'll be damned.~~

~~Larry: I have an aunt and uncle that live at Leonard.~~

~~Wilbur: At Leonard?~~

~~Larry: Yeah.~~

~~Wilbur: Well, I haven't been to Leonard but twice since we left there. But the town of Leonard is named after my uncle, Len Styles. [The name of Leonard, which is Leonard, North Dakota,] the name Leonard is on the corner of his quarter section, and it says right there--L. C. Styles. [If you've got the history of Leonard--did you get one of those red books when they celebrated ~~what the hell was it anyway? about their~~ their seventy-fifth anniversary?]~~

~~Larry: No, I didn't.~~

~~Wilbur: [I think it's the seventy-fifth. Because Leonard was in there.] The town of Leonard was in there in ¹⁸⁸² ~~eighteen eighty-two~~, I know. ^{1882.} ~~Eighteen eighty-two.~~ But I don't know whether it was there in ^{'81} ~~eighty-one~~ or not. Because I just don't have the recollection of that. ~~And~~ ^{include} my uncle Len Styles lived on that quarter and we lived on the next three quarters north, ~~of us.~~ [And, I presume you've heard that ^{include} when we come out here, you could take three quarters of land.] [You've heard that?]~~

~~Larry: Yeah.~~

~~Wilbur: Yeah.~~ Well, we took three up there and my uncle Len

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took three down here but his homestead was right where Leonard,
^{Leonard}
~~pretty~~ ^{perit} near where the depot is. [The depot, I think, is further
a little west of his quarter. It's on the same quarter, but I
mean west of the town. I think it is. I haven't been up there
in so damn long.... I was up there when they had that celebration.
And I got one of those history books. But, you know, I sold out
all my stuff down in the shop here and retired and I've got that
damn stuff piled way out here in this little shed in the back
room here....and it might be in Minneapolis, for all I know. My
son's got some property in Minneapolis and he goes down there
and he might have taken some of that stuff down there. I wouldn't
~~know. be able to say.~~]

Larry: Wilbur, when did you parents go from Hancock, Minnesota,
to Leonard?

Wilbur: In ~~eighteen seventy-nine.~~ ^{1879.}

Larry: Oh, that's when you took the covered wagon trip.

Wilbur: No, we took the covered wagon trip right out of Wiscon-
sinx

[~~Larry: To Hancock?~~]

[~~Wilbur:~~ [†] To Hancock. We came across there on a ferry. And it
seems to me, now I'm not sure, but it seems to me they had a toll
bridge across and they also had a ferry. But the toll on the
toll bridge was so damn high that this four wagon train didn't
want to pay the toll. So they went down and went across on the
ferry for cheaper money. I don't know how much it was, ² never
heard. But, anyway, we went across the Mississippi on a ferry
down there at Hastings, Minnesota. That was in ~~eighteen seventy-~~
^{1879,}
~~nine~~, when we crossed the Red River of the north here a mile and
a half ~~north, no~~ south of Abercrombie. That was the only ford

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between Wahpeton ~~here~~ ^{and} ~~and~~ Fargo. I think they had another ford up there because that water was pretty damn low right there in town. Yes, right there, ^{northeast} ~~down~~ from the ~~Catholic~~ the Catholic Hospital up there. ~~Maybe you know where that is. Yeah, well then it would be northeast from the hospital.~~ That water's pretty shallow across there. I been fishing along up in there ~~over~~ at Abercrombie, ~~and~~ south of Abercrombie, and down here at Breckinridge. The water ain't very deep on that river. Then I been the full length of the Red, clear to Canada.

Larry: In a boat?

Wilbur: No, not in a boat. I wish to Christ I could. I wish I had somebody to go with me, but after I got married, I didn't have time after that. I had to stay home. But before that I was havin' a hell of a time makin' a livin' single. And I thought they say, "Two can live just as cheap as one." But I found out that it's a damn lie. You can't do it. (laughs)

Larry: No. What was your dad's name Wilbur?

Wilbur: Wesley.

Larry: What nationality is Chapin?

Wilbur: Well, we've got three nationalities. French, German, and English. My dad was what they called at that time a Pennsylvania Dutch. Because he was half English and half Dutch. ~~See. 4. 18. 19. 19. 19.~~ My mother, of course, she was French. Her maiden name was Hawley.

~~You remember~~ There's a town east of Dilworth, ^{Minnesota,} by the name of Hawley?

~~Larry: Yeah.~~

Wilbur: Well, one of my mother's brothers took land in Minnesota up there. 'Course I don't know whether they knew at that time whether it was in Minnesota or not. ~~And~~ They named the town after my uncle, Miles Hawley. So, you see, part of this

Hawley = French?
Altered spelling
probably.

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damn country between here and Fargo is kinda half related to me. *yeah.*

Larry: Were your parents born in the United States, Wilbur?

Wilbur: ^{oh,} ~~yeah.~~ ^{yes.} Yeah. My mother was born in Kentucky and my dad was born in Pennsylvania. I don't know what towns. ~~[She's a buckeye and, what the hell do they call them Pennsylvania Dutch? That's the way they spoke of us to me. Damn, I don't know what it was, Some name. They had a name for all those--a good deal like they do--some of the states down south, Indiana, they call them Hoosiers. Yes. Canada--Canucks. Yes. And I don't know where else. There are some more of 'em but I ~~can't~~ ^{don't} think of 'em right now.]~~ ^{(then} And when we crossed there, at Abercrombie, this ^{four} (wagon) train come on this side and went up and crossed the Sheyenne River on a ford about two ~~miles~~ ^{three miles} or ~~two and a half miles~~ ^{three miles} west of Anselm. ^{A.} ~~[You know where Anselm is?]~~ ^(South?)

Larry: Yeah.

Wilbur: ~~Yeah.~~ ^{Anselm} Yeah, west of ~~Anselm~~ there's a ford there. I don't know whether you knew it or not. Across the Sheyenne.

~~[Because~~ ^T There was no bridge across the Sheyenne at Lisbon.

Nothin' but a railroad bridge. And before that train commenced ^{we drove} ~~and they run a track through there we could really drive~~ from our

place around down to ~~Anselm~~ ^{Anselm} and then up to Lisbon. You see, it's quite a ways around there. ~~Unless we~~ ^{Unless we} could go over to

Fargo, ^{but} and Fargo wasn't any bigger than Hickson up there. When

^{when} we went in there. ~~When~~ ^{Hell} You'd stay on the wagon or get off

and look most anyplace. You could look clear out across the country, just as far as your eyes could carry. ~~You see,~~ ^A another

thing, ~~[all of these now]~~ ^{now} when you're drivin' around about every mile or two or three, not over three, you come to a bunch of trees somewhere, ~~don't you?~~

~~Larry: Yeah.~~

~~Wilbur: Yes.~~ Well, every one of those goddamn bunches of trees were planted by hand. ~~[I presume you knew that too.]~~ *we carried bundles*

~~Larry: Yeah.~~

of little cuttings about as big as a lead pencil, and used a breaking plow to make the rows.

~~Wilbur: Yes.~~

~~the cuttings, about this long. And about as big as a lead pencil. And it had a bundle, about that big around.~~

There were ~~it~~ supposed to be either ~~a hundred and~~ ¹⁰⁰ a hundred or ²⁰⁰ two hundred in a bundle. ~~And~~ You pull one of those out, ~~And~~

~~you held that bundle like this. And you don't turn it around,~~

~~because this end has got the roots on, ^{it}. And that end has got the tops on, ^{it}.~~ *a cutting and when the plow*

~~When you pulled that out, ^{you} of there the plow goes went by, a breakin' plow and when it does you shove that in the ground.~~

Then you step ^{ped} whatever distance apart you wanted your trees. ~~And~~

I don't know how far we stepped for ours, but we'll call it ten feet, ¹⁰ ~~ten~~ steps. Step ¹⁰ ~~ten~~ steps and put your foot down there and

shove in another one. And another ¹⁰ ~~ten~~ shove in another one until you get ^{these} ~~the~~ all out and you follow that row. ~~I stepped~~

~~ten steps and put your foot down there and shove in another one.~~

~~And another ten shove in another one until you get these all out and then you follow that ~~road~~ until you meet ^{the} ~~a~~ fella comin' back.~~

ignore red You've got eighty rods in between, see. He comes from that way, and then, that is, he don't come from that way, he starts where I leave off. And I go back. Start in again. By that time ~~the~~ breakin' plow's around and makes another one.

~~Larry: Did you plant trees that way, Wilbur?~~

~~Wilbur: Yeah, I planted for days when I was little. [I wasn't only ten years old. I think I started in...no, by God,] I started~~

^{at 10,} ~~in ten,~~ And I planted two years. When I was ¹⁰ ~~ten~~ and ^{11.} ~~eleven.~~ Then when I was ¹² ~~twelve~~, I didn't plant anymore but I done the

plowin'. And someone else done the planting. *

~~Larry: Was this over by Leonard, Wilbur?~~ *Include this question*

~~Wilbur: No, this was down here. At that time it was down here~~
~~at Britten, South Dakota.~~ *at Leonard*
^ Sp. P. D. N.
(Hankinson)

~~And that's sandy country, a good deal like it is down here.~~ *in*
And my folks weren't used to working sand formation. Where they
come from it was all hard--or most of it--~~in some of those localities,~~

and that's what they was used to. So they didn't like the sand
up here so some of 'em started out to see if they couldn't find
some land somewhere. ~~So they went south. And they run onto~~

~~Britten down here after you--well, Forman's got pretty good soil.~~
~~And Havana. And all the way down here until you get four miles~~
~~outta town here.~~ *(Hankinson)*

~~Well, then, that four miles and across here~~
~~four miles east is sand. We've got an eight mile strip across~~ *(right)*
~~here, between Lidgerwood and Fairmont and Hankinson, see. After~~

~~you get four miles east here, you go down a slope here you go~~
~~down a slope like that and from there on is gumbo, or heavy soil.~~
~~Well, up there is practically the same. We had sand... We had~~

~~pretty good soil at Lisbon. And Forman was a little light. But~~
~~when they got by that they commenced down on the line they~~
~~commenced to hit--well, there wasn't any line in there--when we~~
~~went down there--went down there in eighty-three.~~

omit
~~You see, my~~
~~father passed away in ¹⁸⁸³eighty two. In eighteen eighty two. And~~
and then my mother and four of us kids lived in Lisbon at that time.

~~'cause we had~~ *land*
~~we moved from this sandy~~ *at Leonard, ~~we moved up to Lisbon~~
~~'cause he was~~ *my dad was*
a blacksmith and he worked in a blacksmith shop
there in Lisbon.*

~~Larry: Your dad.~~
~~Wilbur: My dad, yeah.~~

And He got sick in April. He'd been shoein' horses. He got so damn hot and sweaty and he ~~sat~~^{set} down on the sill of the blacksmith shop until he got cold and he caught cold. The thing turned into pneumonia, and then he went back up to Leonard, and that's where he passed away, ~~up there, At Leonard.~~ O' course, I'm talkin' from ~~Lisbon now.~~ And then our burial caravan was just our four and probably two or three more wagons that went from Leonard down to Lisbon. And then to the cemetery. When we come back we stayed in our house in Lisbon. See, ~~we~~ we had moved ~~a year before,~~ the winter before ^{down to Lisbon} 'cause he wanted to work in that blacksmith shop.

~~See.~~ That's where he made a little money. Goddamn, you needed money in those days. I'm tellin' you. Man. Yes sir. Oh hell man. We had lots of salt pork, ~~about that long, about that thick.~~

And ~~It's~~ what they call dry salt. They throw this pork into a salt bin. ~~And they turn it over. It puts in on one side. And~~

~~They~~ They leave it there until it absorbs all the salt it can, then they turn it over. Well, after they turned it over four or five times, they take it out and give it a little shake ~~like that~~ to get the majority of the salt off and pile it up on a bench. ~~And~~

~~They~~ They keep doin' that until they get a pile of that pork to ship. Then they wrap canvas around it or somethin' like that, put it on a train and ship it out to us people that went out here first.

Man!

Larry: Well, Wilbur, ~~did your... had you sold the land that you~~ ~~home-esteaded?~~ ~~had your parents sold the land that~~ ^{they} homesteaded on at Leonard when they moved to Lisbon?

Wilbur: ~~I think they... no. Well, they sold it.~~ They just sold the relinquishment. See. Yes, they sold the land for whatever they could get for it, ~~And~~ that's called selling the relin-

quishment. "I relinquish it to the other party." And then, of course, we went down around that ford, crossed the river and went over to Lisbon, ^{but} ~~and then we didn't stay out there.~~ ~~Then~~ The next spring, in ^{1883,} ~~eighteen eighty three,~~ along in May, I guess, 'cause there was green grass, they all got together and moved down to ^{Britton} Britten, South Dakota at that little town of Kidder. ~~out this side.~~

Larry: Now, Wilbur, when you say, "They all got together," who was they?

Wilbur: Well, there was Ede and Len Styles, my uncles and Foran Shurman and Oscar Ryan was the other two. That was the four of us.

Larry: Had they come from River Falls too?

Wilbur: Well, they come from that vicinity, yes. That neighborhood. Certainly. They all ~~got~~ got acquainted down there, ~~and~~ They all thought they'd all come out here, ~~and~~ go west and grow up with the country, ~~get the idea?~~

~~(Larry: Yeah.)~~

Wilbur: ~~Which~~ ^Which they did. I happened to be trailin' along behind 'em and when we moved from Lisbon down to Britten it was just across the country. It was just the wagon tracks where our folks had gone down and picked out land down there ^{at Kidder.} ~~and took land down here instead of up there, see, after they sold out.~~ ~~And they took land up down here.~~

~~(Larry: At Kidder?)~~

Wilbur: ~~AT Kidder, Yeah. Yeah,~~ ^{Chapin} My uncle George ^{lived on that one quarter} of land near ~~at~~ Kidder. ~~Just on one quarter of his land.~~ ~~(One quarter. Uncle George Chapin.)~~ Then there was Ross Chapin and Frank Chapin that

was in that bunch, ~~too.~~

~~Larry: Were they your father's brothers?~~

Wilbur: Well, ~~Some~~ Some were my father's cousins. Yeah. They come out afterwards down there ~~and settled~~ So that's the way we happened to come out in this country. ~~And~~ There was a halfway house ~~called it.~~ ~~That~~ That was somewhere near ~~Forman~~ where Forman is. ~~There~~ ^{It} There was a place there where you could stop, ~~and~~ get water, and you could stay overnight if you had a place to sleep.

^YOur own place. ~~They didn't have where you could sleep in~~ ^{You couldn't} their place. 'Cause their house was about as big as, ~~about as big as~~ this room without that restroom right there. ~~(Just about as big as this one room their house was.)~~ They had four or five kids themselves and they all lived in that house. ~~Same~~ ^s Same as we

did up at Leonard. ~~Yes,~~ Our house was one of those shanty roofs sodded up all around the outside. We put in two winters in that thing. ~~The men~~ ^{The men} went down in the woods ~~down~~ south of the Sheyenne River, brought logs back and cut 'em up by hand in order to have fuel for winter. They had no coal in those days; I mean in this part of the country. Back east they had plenty of coal and I guess as far as Minneapolis maybe, ~~but~~ but not out here. 'Cause

~~the majority... anyway,~~ ^U Us rookies that come out, why we had to live off the land, you see. If you wanted any fresh meat you took a gun ~~around~~ ^{went out and} and killed a prairie chicken or jackrabbit in the winter or deer down on the ^{Sheyenne} river. I'm talkin' now from Leonard. And down there six miles. The ^{men} ~~man~~ used to go down

there late in the fall. ~~With~~ ^{with} two teams or three teams, whichever they decided they'd have to have. ~~People that wanted wood, see?~~ They'd cut those dead trees down, pick ^{up} the ones that were good, ~~and the ones that were dead,~~ and put 'em on a sled, ~~and~~ ^{and} stay overnight down there.

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And in the evening or in the morning they'd shoot a deer or two, load ^{all} the things up and come on back. Put 'em on the sleds, you see. When we first come out here, ~~in the middle of October~~ you could usually use a sled. ^{in the middle of October} Most every season. It's got ~~been~~ ^{now} so you don't use a sled until the middle of December. Or sometimes not then. Well, of course, now we're on wheels and they clean the road off. But I'm just wondering what in hell this country would do if the Arabs over there in all the oil countries would say, "You goddamn Yankees, you stay where you are and we'll stay where we are. You can't have any more oil." What would we do?

Larry: ~~I don't know.~~

Wilbur: Christ, man, ~~there~~ ^{they} ain't a horse in the country. No. They ain't no oxen. Of course they could make oxen pretty quick. One season. But you couldn't make horses in one season. It would take three, ^m maybe four. See. Because to make oxen, they take these steers that's been cut and harness 'em up, put, well, I don't know whether you'd get horse collars. You couldn't get ~~no~~ oxen collars nowadays and they had 'em for both ~~them~~ at one time. ~~And that's what we'd do.~~

Larry: Say, Wilbur, when you came from Hancock to Leonard and then from Leonard to Lisbon and down to Britton, or Kidder, were you using oxen then or horses?

Wilbur: Both. We had ~~two~~ teams that come with us. ^{with oxen.} And one of my uncles had an ox team. I don't know whether it was Ryan or Sherman that had the other ox team. Then they had one or two horses. ~~see~~. They brought all the damn horses and oxen they could get ahold of. ~~See~~ ^{but} here in order to break up the land.

Omit or leave in? leave!

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"Cause some of 'em had been out here and seen it and they knew it was nothin' but raw prairie for acres and miles, ~~I mean to say. Miles of it.~~

Larry: Were there any settlements between Leonard and Lisbon? Or was that all open country?

Wilbur: That was all open country. ^(Hell, no!) Oh, you might see a little shanty like the size of this room. ~~It was~~ ^{10 x 12} by ~~twelve~~ ^{12 x 14} or ~~twelve~~ by ~~fourteen~~. ~~See a little shanty.~~ ^t That belonged to somebody. But there may be somebody living there and there may not. You don't know. You don't pay no attention to them. You take care of your own bunch, you see. That's the deal. And the same damn way goin' to Fargo from Leonard. Yeah. My folks used to go over there and they'd load up all the damn wagon ^(s) would hold and brought 'em back ~~with~~ ^{with} what you could put in a house. We lived in a ~~ten~~ ^{10 x 16} by ~~sixteen~~ house. That was the whole house too. Kitchen and dining room and bedrooms.

Larry: What kind of furniture had you brought from Minnesota?

Wilbur: Just ordinary wood chairs. ~~I got a half a one out there under the radio right now. Yeah, but the top has been broke off, it. And some chairs and that's about all.~~ ^m Maybe a table. But when ~~we come out~~ ^w We come out to this part of the country, we had some carpenters along. ~~My~~ ^M My dad was a pretty good wood butcher himself. He made a table, ~~in there~~ ~~and~~ ~~about~~ ~~that~~ ~~wide~~, put it on ~~hinges~~, leather hinges ~~right~~ ~~on~~ the side of the wall, and when you wanted to eat, ~~set the table~~, you turned a button up there, ~~and~~ turned the table down, and put two legs under it. ~~It had legs there.~~ But don't ~~kick~~ ^{kick} it over now, or you spill everything. You put your stuff on there and ~~set~~ ^{set} down. If you had room, why all right and if you didn't why you'd take your plate and go and set on a box.

Larry: What kind of a stove did you have?

start

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Wilbur: A four hole eight ~~inch~~ ~~Four hole~~ cookstove.

~~And~~ that was the heat and the cookstove both. See and then Y had to cut that wood to twelve ^{inches} or-- I think it was ~~twelve~~ ¹² inch-- ~~mighta been~~ ^{14.} ~~fourteen.~~ But I don't believe it, I think it was ^{12.} ~~twelve.~~ ~~Had to cut them so they'd fit in that fireplace.~~ ^{(break them so) So they'd fit in that fireplace.}

All done by hand. Crosscut saws and...oh, God, yes, that's the good old days. But I hope to Christ nobody ever has to go through 'em. They call 'em good old days, but, hell, man they're the hardest times you ever heard of. Bet your boots. People made underwear out of white wheat sacks. You've seen white wheat sacks, haven't you? Well they take and buy those new ones you see and the women would rip 'em up and cut boys' pants out of 'em that were white. ~~and~~ ^o course the kids they didn't like 'em. And coffee was so goddamn cheap those days you get two pounds for ^{28¢.} ~~twenty eight cents.~~ Two pounds o' coffee. So, those kids that didn't like 'em white, the people would ~~take and~~ steep up a pound o' coffee, ~~and~~ put that white pair of pants in there, and let 'em boil. Then take 'em out and hang 'em on the line. Then they were brown. [~~I don't know whether you remember this damn stuff or not.~~ ^{that's}]

[Larry: No. That's before my time Wilbur.]

Wilbur: Well, before your time, but ~~it's~~ ^{it} a damn hard job to remember all those little things ~~like~~ ^{they} ~~o~~ went through. ~~But~~

~~L~~ots o' people, see, would think that ~~a lotta people would think that~~ I was just bullshittin' 'em. ['] If I told 'em that story.

[Larry: I don't.]

Wilbur: 'Course I don't aim to bullshit anybody. What I tell 'em is the truth and if I can't tell 'em anything I don't say anything. ~~that's all~~

Larry: Yeah. How much land, Wilbur, did your dad break over by Leonard?

Right on!

Wilbur: Oh, I don't know. I don't know as he broke up ~~it~~, more than

~~an~~ ^{an} acre or two~~x~~

Larry: For a garden or...?

Wilbur: No, to plant flax on. We was supplied with flax at, ~~x~~

I don't know, ^s seems to me it was ~~eighty-five~~ ⁸⁵ and ~~ninety~~ ⁹⁰ cents a bushel~~x~~ for seed. Shipped it out to the farmers, ~~x~~ or immi-

grants. Then these immigrants would go to Fargo and pick ~~x~~ up ~~x~~ ~~seed~~ whatever they had use for. Some of 'em had an acre, ~~and~~

some two or three, ~~and~~ you know, flax grew quick, got ripe quick and threshed ~~x~~ out pretty easy with a flail. ~~and~~ They could

thresh out an acre you know in a couple days. ~~So if they had~~

~~to use...~~ They didn't want to put any more land in than they could take care of in the fall. You see. Then, o' course, my dad,

being a blacksmith, ~~he~~ didn't do much farmin', but some of the rest of 'em, ~~did~~ ^{did} guess they, well, ~~then~~ ^T somebody come in there with

a ~~sweet~~ ^(sweep?) power. ~~They~~ ^T had ~~twelve~~ ¹² head of horses on there instead of an engine. That ^{sweep} went round and around and and the tumblin'

rod went to the separator. One man stood up there, ~~and~~ cut the bands, and fed the grain in. Well, then, that was done ~~there~~

for those two falls that we stayed out ^(there) in the country. Then we

went to Lisbon, you see. ~~After that, I didn't know anything about what they done out there any more than they loaded up the stuff and took off for Britton down here.~~

Larry: How did they seed the flax, Wilbur?

Wilbur: By ha nd. ~~Yes.~~ Yes, by hand~~x~~ because they didn't have no seeders. Well, somebody had one on the back ^(end) of a wagon,

I guess, ~~I seen them.~~ but the majority planted flax by hand.

~~and~~ you have a bucket ^(pail) of some kind, ~~and~~ you put in so much flax, and so much fine dirt, dry fine dirt. ~~and~~ Then you take a

scoopful of it ~~like that~~, a little more dirt than you do flax,

^s so you can plant the flax far apart. Otherwise, if you took

only flax, you'd have it too thick. ~~You get the idea.~~

~~Larry: Right.~~

~~Wilbur: Yeah. [Because fifty pounds of flax, fifty pounds...~~

~~what the hell is that now? Fifty pounds plants how many acres?~~

~~Was it one or two? Goddamn it. Or would it be three? I for-
got which it was. I don't know.] ~~But~~ They take this bucket, ~~you~~~~

~~see~~ and with that dirt in it, and then walk with the wind, and
sprinkle it that way. ~~and~~ Then take another one and keep walkin'

and sprinkle it with the wind. Whichever way the wind blew,

that's the way they'd walk to seed it. Well, then, if there

come up a rain, you don't have to drag it. But if there didn't

come up no rain you better drag it ^{when} it was pretty dry. You

see, that would get the dirt covered over ~~on a lot of~~ ^{the} seed.

Oh, hell, man, they raised wonderful flax there. Just as thick

as hair on a dog ~~and about that high~~ and when it got ripe it

was just brown, you know, solid. Then, o' course, some of 'em

had reapers, some of 'em had a sickle.

~~Larry: Would they cut it with a scythe?~~

~~Wilbur: Well, a sickle.~~ Not a scythe, a sickle. Maybe you've

seen these in the museums. They're a scythe and then they got

a ^{cradle} ~~scythe~~ up the back so when you hit that swathe it falls in that

cradle. Then they swing it this way and it lays down. Well,

that's it. Maybe they call 'em a cradle instead of a scythe.

I think they did.

~~Larry: How would they drag the flax, Wilbur?~~

~~Wilbur: Drag it? Oh, maybe some of 'em would take a ~~split a~~ log~~

as long as from here to the wall over there, and put a horse on

each end of it, and a chain, ~~you know~~ on each end, and drag that

log up and down that field. ~~I think~~ Some of 'em done that, ~~to~~

~~Larry: And that would cover the flax over.~~

~~Wilbur: Yes. Yeah, cover the flax over. Yeah. They take that with the bark side on, if there was any bark on it. That would cover up the flax and probably open up some that was too deep or something. And then, of course it wasn't but a year or so, then we moved down here. At Kidder, the Milwaukee Railroad had come through from Andover. The main line of the Milwaukee had gone through to Aberdeen. Then Andover was down there. See. Four or five houses, ^{course} ~~see~~ They started that train off~~

~~from there and run it up to a town in North Dakota by the name of Harlem. But they've cut that line out now down to Cogswell out here. So Cogswell is the length of the line. They come tri-weekly. Whenever they get enough to make a train, probably eight or ten cars. 'Cause I've gone over that track at one time. I think it was about four years ago now. ^(God) It don't look to me like it would hold a wheelbarrow beside our railroads around here.~~

omit

Larry: Say, Wilbur, can you remember traveling from Leonard to Lisbon?

Wilbur: From Leonard to Lisbon. Why certainly. We went over that ~~in~~ with my father's funeral, ~~and~~ We went over there some other times, two or three wagons at a time. Go down there, ~~and~~ cross that ford, and go back. I could go down a ford then alone if ~~they~~ they turned me loose.

Larry: Was ^{Lisbon} ~~that~~ the closest town to Leonard.

~~Wilbur: Yes.~~

~~Larry: Lisbon was.~~

omit

Wilbur: Yeah. ~~Of~~ ^{Of} course, then there was a little station started in there ^{named} ~~Butzville~~ Butzville, from Lisbon east, then Sheldon, then Leonard, and then... what's the name of that other one?
Davenport.

Larry: Kindred?

omit
Wilbur: Kindred? Kindred? Hell, no. Kindred is off on the other railroad. Davenport. Yeah, Davenport. Sometimes I can't think of 'em fast enough.

Larry: When you were traveling from Leonard to Lisbon, would you see a lot of deer or rabbits? Was there a lot of wildlife in those days?

omit
Wilbur: ~~Nothing. We wouldn't see anything but is that thing running now?~~

Larry: ~~Yeah. Go ahead.~~

Wilbur: We wouldn't see anything but jackrabbits and prairie chickens. ~~[Maybe I should talk a little closer to it.]~~

Larry: No, no, that's all right. That's fine.

omit
Wilbur: ~~It is, eh?~~

Larry: ~~Did you do any fishing in those days, Wilbur? Or your dad or...?~~

Wilbur: ~~Not...eh,~~ My dad used to do plenty o' hunting for fresh game and for fresh meat. But that's all we had, you see, ~~✗~~ those days. We didn't dare to kill anything else because they needed the milk cows. And we didn't do any fishing. We done some fishing in Lisbon, certainly, before ~~they~~ ^{we} left there. Then when they come down ~~here~~ to Kidder they had to go east up on the hills there to fish. ~~[Over near Vevland. They didn't even go clear to Vevland.]~~ ^{near Vevlan} They went to some of those lakes ^{near Vevlan} Nine mile lake. Then us kids would get in the water, and take the net by one end, and walk clear out around in the lake, and the men would hang on the end to the shore. Whatever we come in with, that's what we kept, pickerel and walleyes and ~~I don't know,~~ bullheads

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and everything else, I guess.

~~Larry: Were there a lot of fish in there?~~

~~Wilbur: Oh, yes.~~ Those lakes were plumb full of fish. Yes.
Lots of fish.

~~Larry:====~~ How about the Sheyenne River ~~there~~ at Lisbon?

~~Wilbur:~~ Well, the menfolks used to string a clothesline across the river with a boat ^{and tie it} to a tree. And then put jacklines on this clothesline and bait the hooks with fat pork, raw fat pork.

~~and~~ In the morning, they'd go across on the other side, untie the rope, ~~and~~ bring ~~the~~ the catfish out on this line, ~~and~~ they'd catch a line ^{full} most every night. That's the way we got most of our catfish meat. ^{Some of} ~~those~~ those catfish, ~~some of 'em were,~~ would weigh ~~why, they'd weigh why they'd weigh~~ ²⁵ twenty five pounds, maybe better. Great big ones. Then they'd take 'em over to the butcher shop ^{and} sell 'em to the butcher. He'd dress 'em out and sell 'em to the people. That's how he had good trade there. ^P Now then ^{when} ~~after~~ we left ^{Lisbon} ~~there~~ we went outta ^{town} ~~Lisbon~~ up that long hill on the south end. ~~(south of Lisbon, that long hill.)~~ It's ~~the only road in that's~~ ^{road} blacktop ^{now,} but when we went out it was just a wagon track up through there. And o' course I was nine years old that summer ~~and~~ so I had to walk behind some of the wagons to keep the steers or the cows or ponies up so they wouldn't pull back, see. We walked across there, the Ryan kids and I and one of my brothers. He was a little bit too young; ~~he~~ he couldn't stand it very long. But we come across there you might say a ^{foot} foot. That's it.

~~Larry:~~ How many miles could you cover in one day?

~~Wilbur:~~ Oh, ²⁵ ~~from twenty five to~~ ^{28.} ~~twenty eight.~~ Well, we never covered ³⁰ ~~thirty~~ that I know of. ^{No,} ~~we~~ had another little stopping place overnight. But we got in there terrible late, down there

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at Kidder that night. ~~They~~ ^{Some} had already made a shanty ~~some of~~
~~you had~~ ^t to live in. ~~And they went in and after~~ ^When it's come
bedtime, why they went down and cut a lot of green grass out of
a slough, a little pothole. Carried it up by hand, armfuls,
put it on the floor down there, ~~and put~~ ^{horse} blankets down and other
blankets down on that hay ~~that grass~~, and pile in ^{for the night.} ~~stay where~~
~~you're put.~~ Overnight.

Larry: ~~Yeah.~~ Could you make it from Leonard to Lisbon in one
day?

Wilbur: ~~From Leonard~~ ^t ~~to Lisbon?~~ No. No, no no. We stayed
overnight at that halfway house down there south o' Lisbon. It
would be about where Forman is ~~now~~ now. Somewhere in there.
Then, that's all you could make in one day. Then, from the
halfway house down to Kidder would be the next day. And get in
there pretty late--seven, maybe eight, nine o' clock.

Larry: That's going from Lisbon to Kidder?

Wilbur: That was goin' from Lisbon to Kidder, yeah.

Larry: ~~But could you make it from Leonard to Lisbon in one day?~~

Wilbur: Leonard to Lisbon in one day? Oh, yes. Yes. You could
make that in on e day easy. ~~And back.~~ ~~Yeah.~~ We'd go over and
~~back in one day.~~ But you had to start a little early in the mor-
ning,

Larry: How early?

Wilbur: Oh, ^{7:00} About ~~seven o'clock.~~ Yeah. Go down ^{across} with the Ford, get what
^{you wanted and get} ~~you know and~~ back up there, get what you wanted. ~~It~~ It would take
you all day to do it.

Larry: ~~Who ran the Ford?~~ *How did you cross at the ford?*

Wilbur: ~~Nobody.~~ You don't need anybody at a ford. Somebody had
piled in a lotta rock there where the water was shallow and you

omit

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drove across the river.

omit
~~Larry: Oh, yeah, right. I was thinking of a ferry, I'm sorry.~~

~~Yeah.~~

Wilbur: We drove across on these rocks. Sometimes the river'd be a little high and sometimes it'd be a little too low and you could ~~partly~~ ^{part-} near see the rocks ~~in~~ ^{if} those fords. ~~Yeah.~~

~~Sure.~~

Larry: How big was Lisbon when you lived there?

Wilbur: Well, ~~I imagine it would probably be about, oh, might be~~ they flocked in there pretty fast. Mighta been around ~~two~~ ^{200.}

~~hundred,~~ ~~Yeah.~~ ^{After} Something like that. ~~They~~ they put that railroad through, see. ~~Then~~ ^{Why,} whenever a train went by ~~somebody~~ ^{with a} somebody was on there ~~with~~ ^{They} ~~an~~ immigrant car--maybe two or three of 'em. ~~It~~ was good business out there at Lisbon. As long as we

was there. Yes, they had butcher shops ~~and~~ stores. But o' course ~~the depart~~--they call 'em department stores now--ⁱⁿ those days they called 'em a general store. You generally could find everything. (laughs)

Larry: Wilbur, were those people pretty hardy people?

Wilbur: Hardy? Yeah, most ~~of~~ 'em. Unless they would catch a cold or disease of some kind. Of course most the diseases they had those days was just among the kids in the spring. Yeah, mumps and measles and the whooping ~~cough~~. I went through all of 'em myself. ~~Something like that, I know.~~

Larry: Whooping cough was pretty bad in those days wasn't it?

Wilbur: Yeah. That was pretty tough. Yeah, that's pretty tough.

~~Larry: People used to die from whooping cough.~~

Wilbur: ~~Oh, yes.~~ Some of 'em would choke to death, ~~but~~ ^{but} ~~that~~ ^{that} whooping cough. ~~But~~ ^{sight,} that would be small children. ~~Small children.~~ Anybody that was ¹⁰ nine, ~~ten~~ years old, I don't think they ever died

of that whoopin^g cough. 'Cause they knew how to throw up ~~but~~ ^{that} ~~enough~~ phlegm. You know, the goddamn stuff would get connected (laughs) in your throat. That don't sound very good on there, does it?

Larry: Well, that's the way it was.

Wilbur: That's the way it was is right. Yeah. A man's old enough, big enough to throw it off, see, so they weathered the storm and got well. Oh, yes.

~~Larry: What kind of a hdy was your mother, Wilbur?~~

~~Wilbur: YOU mean heavy or...?~~

Larry: ~~No, I mean~~ ^{Your Mother} Was it hard for ~~her~~ to keep going after your dad died?

Wilbur: No, no. She was pretty healthy. ^{Yeah,} ~~oh,~~ my mother lived until she was ~~eighty seven.~~ ^{87.} Yes, she was a pretty hardy woman. Tougher 'n a boiled owl. Yeah. You bet.

Larry: How old was she when your dad died, Wilbur?

Wilbur: Well, ~~she woulda been.~~ ~~see~~ my dad died when he was twenty-nine. She was probably ~~twenty six~~ ²⁶ ~~or~~ ^{or} ~~twenty seven.~~ ^{27.} Somewhere right around in there. That's right. He died when he was ~~twenty nine.~~ ^{29.} He woulda been ~~thirty~~ ³⁰ years old. His ~~birthday~~ coming birthday.

Larry: Was that quite a shock, Wilbur?

Wilbur: Well, ^{for} anybody that was an immigrant, anybody that passed away was a shock. Yes. ^{(Because} ~~for~~ ^{for} reasons. You had no undertaker, ^a and maybe a doctor would be ~~thirty~~ ³⁰ miles or maybe ~~forty~~ ⁴⁰ miles and you couldn't get him quick enough. ~~and~~ ^{When} this ^{person} ~~party~~ passed away the farmers would have to go to town ~~if~~ if they didn't have lumber, but some of 'em had ~~lumber~~ enough, ^{old} ~~lumber~~ they made ~~houses out of that they could~~ ^{to} make a coffin and they'd go to town, and get some black bunting or something like that, cheese-

omit
start

Carol
start here

cloth or something, ~~like that~~, put hay in the bottom of this box, and put your corpse in there, and nail the cover on. That's what they ~~that's what~~ my father's funeral went through--a coffin just like that. That's gettin' early enough. Yes. Yeah, and even people in town were buried the same way. I went to one

and funeral in town and that was a box. They cover this box all up with black cloth, see. But it's made of one-inch boards. Then they nail the cover on it.

Larry: How many brothers and sisters did you have, Wilbur?

Wilbur: ~~I had two brothers and one~~--I had three brothers and one sister. Yeah.

Larry: Did your mother ever remarry?

Wilbur: Yes, she married later down at Kidder, ~~there~~. ~~Yes~~.

~~She married later~~ and she had three children after that ~~that~~

~~two~~ two half-brothers and a half-sister. ~~two~~

Larry: Wilbur, when did you leave Home?

Wilbur: Well, I never really left home. I just went to work for somebody else, ^w when I was ~~fifteen~~ ¹⁵. ~~Yes~~.

Larry: Did you go to school in Lisbon?

Wilbur: Yes, I went to school in Leonard too. The first year ~~in~~

~~Leonard~~ and part of the next ^{in Leonard and} then we moved to Lisbon.

You see in those days ~~you only had...what the deuce was it? Was~~

~~it April? No. April, May and June seems to me. In the spring~~

~~of the year~~. ^w We didn't have no school in the winter ^{in Leonard} ~~that we~~

~~went to in Leonard~~. We just went those two or three months ^{in the spring} there.

~~Then went over to Lisbon~~. Well, then, o' course, they had better

schools ^{in Lisbon} ~~over there~~. We went to school ~~over~~ there the first two

parts. See, there wouldn't be whole seasons. There would be

broken seasons. ~~Until we moved to Kidder~~. Then I went to school

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down there ^{in Kidder} and then I went to school in Britton too. ~~Yeah.~~

Larry: How many years did you go to school, Wilbur?

Wilbur: Up ~~to~~ ^{to} the ~~eight~~ ^s seventh grade.

Larry: What kind of a school did you have at Leonard?

Wilbur: Well, just a little room about the size of this one. I think the old schoolhouse stands there yet behind another one they built in front of it. Just a little small building with benches in there. Oh, there wasn't many children in there you know. Probably eight or ~~ten~~ ¹⁰ would be all there'd be around there, see. So, the school's was pretty small, I'll tell ya. No jails. Didn't have a jailhouse anywhere. Didn't have a jail ~~in~~ in Lisbon either, ^w when we lived there.

Larry: Were there some rough characters around?

Wilbur: No. Everybody was congenial. Because everybody depended on everybody else, ~~and~~ ^a and didn't figure on havin' any, well, ~~what they call now~~, guess you call 'em desperadoes, ~~or~~, ~~Oh~~, once in a while out in the country or maybe somewhere else around the territory you'd hear of somebody stealin' a horse. But if they caught him, why it didn't do him very much good. He either got a damn good lickin' or was hung up. It depended on what he done. Yeah.

Larry: Who taught school in Leonard? Who was the teacher?

Wilbur: ~~It wasn't. now if that thing's workin' that's kinda bad.~~

Larry: ~~I mean was she a lady from the community or was she...~~

Wilbur: ~~Goddamn it, yes.~~ Mrs. Watts, Watts. That was her name. I don't know how she spelled it, but... ~~Watts~~ ^(just) Watts, I can remember that. That was her name in Leonard. I don't remember any of the teachers names in Lisbon. No.

Larry: Say, Wilbur, the families that moved with your parents from River Falls, Wisconsin, to Hancock to Leonard, did they stay together all the way down to Kidder?

Wilbur: Yes. Yes, we all stayed, a four wagon train stayed down until we located at Kidder and some of 'em are down there yet.

Larry: You must have had a pretty good group of people.

Wilbur: Well, they were all good neighbors. And friends.

And half of it, you see, was relatives. You see, we had Len and Ede Styles, they were uncles. And then these Ryans ~~and~~

and Sherman ~~and Ryan~~ they were our friends. But the rest of us was all relatives, see. Yeah. Then there was an acquaintance by the name of Kelly and he married my grandmother. He was one of the immigrants that come out. So, you see, in our bunch there was the Chapins, the Ryans, the Sherbans and the Kellys.

Larry: Had your grandfather died?

Wilbur: No, he moved away after ~~he moved after~~ we located. ~~there,~~ He moved back into Minnesota somewhere. ~~And~~ That was the end of his career as far as I'm concerned. I don't know what happened to him.

Larry: Your grandmother remarried.

Wilbur: No. No, my grandmother didn't remarry.

Larry: Oh, I thought you said she married this Kelly.

Wilbur: She did. But this Kelly and she...my grand^{mother}father passed away, yes, there at Kidder. Then this Kelly as I say moved to Mimesota.

Larry: Oh, I see.

~~Wilbur: Yes. That's it. Yes, my grandmother. Yeah. Grandma Kelly. She was my father's...~~

~~Larry: She's the one that smoke the clay pipe.~~

~~Wilbur: No. No, I don't know who that woman was. She was a grandmother o' mine but I don't know how. Nor where. I don't even know her name nowadays. I don't believe I ever learned it. No. But she didn't come out with us. She stayed there in River Falls, see. Yeah. River Falls, Wisconsin. Yeah, and then after~~

omit

Start

~~that~~ Wilbur: I grew up down there around that Kidder country and after I got a little older, why, I didn't go to school anymore. I went to work, so to make a living. You know everybody had to work those days that was capable o' working. Yes. ~~For~~ For my part, the first thought ~~which~~ happened to be a breakin' plow with ~~five horses,~~ four horses and one ox, ~~and~~ I broke up a lotta that land down around Kidder when the men wanted to do something else, see. Yes. ~~And then~~ After I got ~~over into...~~ ~~got~~ that all done I went to work for a farmer out there by the name of Wait, John Wait. ~~and~~ I worked with him all summer. That was quite a deal. He was a real mechanic. He bought a second hand separator that was a ~~thirty two,~~ ³² thirty two by ~~thirty six,~~ ³⁶ Cylinder. ~~and~~ He and I cut that down to a ~~twenty~~ ²² two inch one winter ~~and~~ ²² made a ~~twenty two~~ inch threshing machine. ~~and~~ He had tread power, ^a and he bought another tread power, so ~~he~~ he had two of 'em. ~~and~~ He put the two of 'em side by side, ~~and~~ put the flywheel in the center between 'em. ^{with} And a drive shaft clear across so you put four horses in there, And it was a four horsepower ^{treadpower} that drove that threshing machine. ~~and~~ He fed that, ~~and~~ cut bands by hand and had it so attached that if he

wanted to stop all he had to do was reach back ~~and~~ ^{set} the brake on this flywheel and all four horses ~~stopped~~ ^a And the threshing machine stopped. ~~The operator~~ ^{Then} we'd open the gate, ~~and~~ take these horses back out, ~~and~~ let 'em rest for an hour, ~~and~~ then put 'em back in this tread power. ~~And~~ ^That's the way he and I threshed the grain offun one quarter o' land. That's all the farm he had. One full quarter. ~~He had broke that up a year or so before, see. Then the next year...~~ *This would be about 1899.*

Larry: What year was this?

Wilbur: Oh, jiminy, I don't know...I was about sixteen, seventeen years old. I was sixteen I think that first year. I know I was.

Larry: So that would be about eighteen ninety, huh?

Wilbur: Let's see, went down there in eighteen ninety-three.

Eighteen eighty-three, I mean. To Kidder. Eighty-three.

Well, call me ten. Well, then, I'd been down there--gee,

that would be right close after I got down there, I went to

work with him. 'Cause I think I was fifteen years old at that

time. Seems to me I was, anyway. And then...

Larry: Well, if you were born in seventy-four, then that would be about eighteen eighty-nine, huh?

Wilbur: Eighteen eighty...eight. Eighteen eighty-eight, eighteen eighty-nine. Yes. Yes. Be eighteen eighty-nine

or eighteen ninety. See. In those years. Then the next year

this same farmer bought a header. 'Course we had a drought

down there in ~~eighteen eighty-nine~~ ¹⁸⁸⁹ or ~~eighteen ninety~~ ¹⁸⁹⁰ and the

grain was only ~~sixteen, eighteen, twenty~~ ^{16, 18, 20} inches high. And I

had to cut it with a header or else put the binder down just

Omit

as far as you could cut it. And you couldn't bind it. You had to just run it out loose and then ~~it~~^{rake} it up with a hay rake. And I run this header for this man Wait. These times. Then we had two header boxes and ^{the} header stuff all went into those boxes and they stacked it in little low rows. ~~and~~ We threshed that in the fall with that tread power. Yeah. Those times was kinda tough too. Yes.

Larry: How much did you make a day?

Wilbur: ~~Two.~~ I got ⁴ I in the harvest, runnin' these machines, I got two dollars a day. And then my uncle George bought himself a cheap threshing machine and an engine. I fired the engine the first two falls; I ^{didn't} work with Wait all ~~the~~ fall see. I went back to Uncle George's threshing machine because he needed me there and we was short of help. ~~and~~ I'd fire that with straw ~~the~~ the first two falls, ^{and} and the third fall I run it. Then after that I took up this steam engineering and ~~and~~ I run two o' those threshing engines around Kidder there before we went over to Park Rapids in Minnesota. ~~and~~ By that time I was ¹⁹ ~~nine~~ teen years old and I went over there to Park Rapids and sawed trees down, so they ^{would have} ~~had~~ room to build the buildings in town. ~~and~~ Park Rapids ^{had} had a lot of timber at that time up in that part o' the country. ~~and~~ If you want^{ed} to build a house you pretty near had to cut some trees down or else build it out in the clearing and they didn't like to do that. ^{In} Some of the places you'd ~~go far enough you'd~~ find some clearings, ^{probably} between Park Rapids and Detroit Lakes, ~~in there~~ but the most of it north and east was trees. ~~and see, and~~ Then the Great Northern run in there and we sawed trees down there in the wintertime. ~~and~~ ~~on into the fall.~~ [We was goin' into the woods the first winter

~~but we didn't go in there.~~] We freighted ^{logs} stood on one end o' the log, and once we got a job freighting from Park Rapids across to Walker. We'd make a trip over there and back in ~~one day, or~~ one week, ~~I mean~~; then the next week we freighted up to Bemidji. Went up in one day and back the next, see.

~~Larry: What kind of a team would you use?~~

~~Wilbur: Horse teams. At that time we didn't have any oxen.~~

~~H~~ We had horse teams. ~~Yeah.~~

~~Larry: How many horses would you have?~~

~~Wilbur:~~ One was a four-horse load and the other one was a two-horse load. I drove the two horses. Oh, yes. My stepdad at that time had the four horses go ahead.

~~Larry: What was his name?~~

~~Wilbur:~~ His name was Smart. Miles Smart. ~~and~~ We followed a blazed trail from Park Rapids to Walker and also from Park Rapids to Bemidji, before they put the railroad on through up to Bemidji. That's quite a deal too. It was all snow in there, ~~you know, those days,~~ ⁱⁿ those times. ^{The} Snow would be a foot and a half or two foot deep but all loose so you could just walk through it. ~~and~~ We had to follow this blazed trail, ^{through the trees}

~~They blaze that trail on trees. I guess you know how they did that.~~ Well, ^T they took a axe and went to a tree where you could drive ^{to} and they cut a patch open on the bark so you could see it from this way. You went up to that one and then you looked for the other one over there. Went over that blazed trail or straight ahead. But after dark you couldn't follow 'em. You had to just put up for the night maybe out there in the snowbank, ^b but we got by with it anyway. Sometimes it was a little bit cool. But then after we get up in the morning we'd wiggle around, ~~and~~ get warm again, and take off. There was a little halfway station by the name of Lethrop in there some-

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where ~~x~~ ^t that we stayed at. We managed to get from one point to the other before dark. ~~and~~. Yes. We didn't have any loads comin' back. Everything was empty. They didn't have anything that they wanted to ship down. Not yet. ~~The town~~ ^{Bemidji} was too small. ~~I suppose you've been over there, haven't you? Bemidji?~~ ^{Now then whats next?}

Larry: Yeah.

Wilbur: Well, you seen that blue ox over there. Well they were there before they built him a long time. Well, before the railroad went in, see. Certainly. Now then what's next?

Larry: Well, let's see. I wanted to ask you, Wilbur, were the winters worse in those days? Were there some bad winters?

Wilbur: Oh, hell, yes. Twice as bad as they are now.

Larry: ~~What years were bad winters? Eighteen eighty eight? Eighty nine? Were those bad winters?~~

Wilbur: ~~Eighteen eighty eight and eighteen ninety six and seven. These were the two hardest winters that I ~~went~~ went through. Yeah. ~~Eighteen eighty eight was down there north of Britton.~~ ^{1888 and 1896-97} ~~In 1888~~ We lived on a hill nine miles north of Britton.~~

That's where we were that winter. Quite a lot of people froze to death there. Some of 'em they found in a haystack the next spring, you see. Yeah. And some of 'em would get lost, and get into a haystack, and burrow in there, and make it overnight. Then in the morning they'd get out and go someplace. That's the way they went through ~~with~~ those deals. Yeah. There was one couple that burrowed into a haystack less than a half a mile from where we lived. They stayed overnight down there. It was a man, come over to get a schoolteacher and ~~the~~ ~~when~~ when they got back as far as that haystack they couldn't go any farther because they couldn't see nowhere. ~~You see.~~ ^{The '88} ~~Eighty eight~~ blizzard was when I was ~~twelve~~ ¹² years old and that blizzard was so strong that you couldn't see ~~ten~~ ¹⁰ feet

out

The

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in front of ya. ~~Only just maybe by just a gust.~~ Maybe for
an hour you couldn't see ~~ten~~¹⁰ feet. Then there'd be a lull
maybe so you could see a little ways. But we managed to go
from the house to the horse barns on clotheslines, ~~tied~~^t
to a post outside the door. ~~And then follow~~^{We} the clothesline
to the barn, ~~which was tied to another post down there, see~~
That's the way we watered our stock. That ~~eighty eight~~^{'88} storm
hit down around that Britton country at nine o' clock in the
morning. It was just as clear as a bell out all morning up
until nine o' clock. And when that hit from the northwest ~~it~~
was just like a ~~fifty~~^{50,} ~~sixty~~⁶⁰ mile wind. ~~It~~ It blew steady all
day, ~~and~~ all night, ~~and~~ all the next day, ~~and~~^{and} cleared off the next
afternoon. ~~But in the morning it was a bad blizzard too.~~

out ~~But a lot o' people, as I said, there wasn't as many as you'd~~
~~think but still there was a few.~~ And That was all over this
country from down there clear ~~down~~^{up} here to Hankinson. ~~It~~^{It} covered
this part of North and South Dakota. Well, say, I'd make a
good guess it was ~~seventy five~~^{75 to 100} ~~a hundred~~ miles long, ~~or~~^{or}
wide, you might say. That blizzard was ~~Yeah, it was~~ terrific.
That was a bad one. ~~Eighteen ninety six and seven~~^{1896 and 7} was the
winter we had the heavy snow. ~~It would be, oh, usually, well,~~
anywhere from two feet to three feet to four feet deep. Any-
where across country through here, right through this neck o'
the woods. That winter I was in the watch business down there
at Britton with another fellow. ~~and~~^{he} locked up, ~~and~~ went to
Wisconsin, and I had to come down to my stepdad's home which was
down here ~~by Lidgerwood four miles, no,~~ about six miles south-
west o' Lidgerwood. ~~Four miles east o' Skunk Lake. That's~~
~~where they lived.~~ And I came down then they had that railroad
through. I came down on the train, ~~and~~^{and} walked from Cayuga or...

Geneseo ~~I walked from Geneseo~~ down there through that deep

(I had no track or nothing but)

snow. I had the direction. That's all I needed was the direction.

~~See.~~ Yeah. Yeah. ~~Yeah.~~ That was a bad winter, awful bad winter. Yeah. Man. But we didn't have any cars then, you see. So we got along pretty good with the horse team. Yeah, a team o' horses.

end → Larry: Wilbur, how did it happen that you got started in the jewelry business or the watch business and your stepdad moved up to Lidgerwood?

miles smart,
Wilbur: Well, my stepdad, ~~he moved from Lidgerwood...~~ he was ~~lookin' for a different farm.~~ He couldn't farm around Kidder any longer so he moved down here east o' Skunk Lake on a farm down there. Then he afterwards when he got off ~~that~~ that he moved to Lidgerwood. And then from Lidgerwood they moved to Esmond, North Dakota. ~~Esmond.~~ I didn't see 'em afterwards. And from Esmond they moved to Shawnavan, Canada and they stayed up there ~~twenty years.~~ No, ten years. ~~Ten years.~~ And after the ten years they moved back down into North Dakota or Montana, ~~Down there at...oh, goddamn little town.~~ And he passed away. My stepdad passed away up there while he was driving from Shawnavan...that was their post office. But Gull Lake down to Shawnavan. And he passed away from driving from Shawnavan into Montana. What in the devil was the name of that little town there? Little town west of Flaxton. Little town. It wasn't where Dempsey and... Dempsey and Killane or was it Dempsey and who else was that fella? Had that prizefight out there in Montana.

Larry: I don't know, Wilbur.

Wilbur: Well, it was a little town east o' that. I can't

omit?

~~I think of that town either. Right now~~

Larry: How did you get started in the watch business?

Wilbur: ~~My~~ ^{the} last fall that I run a steam engine I was down at Clairmont, South Dakota. I went down there 'cause I heard there was a man wanted to get an engineer to run a threshin' rig. I went down there and hired out to him. ~~And~~ I run that engine ~~that fall~~ ^{for} only about half of the fall. This engineer got sick, I guess, and quit. So I took the job on and run it until he quit threshing. Then I went to Britton and bought half interest in a jewelry store there. 'Cause I told that fella I wanted to learn the trade, see. ^{His} ~~name~~ was Clarence Wood. ~~And he~~ says, "I can take you on if you put in a ~~hundred and fifty dollars~~ ³¹⁵⁰ in the business." So I bought half interest in his business ~~there, see,~~ and then I learned ^{the} to trade there. ~~and then after that he... that winter and the next summer.~~ Then the next fall I went to Oakes and run a jewelry store there for ~~his father who got sick.~~ ^{Clarence Wood's father, who was sick.} ~~Clarence Wood's father.~~ I run that jewelry store up there until his father got well. Then I moved from there back down to ~~Kidder again.~~ [^] Britton, ~~Illino.~~ ~~And after that, that~~ ^a winter, ~~he~~ he locked up that jewelry store. ~~And~~ I had to dig outta there and go somewhere else. I didn't have any watch work to do, see.

Larry: Now was this ¹⁹⁶ ~~ninety six~~ or ^{'97} ~~ninety seven~~, Wilbur? Or when was it?

Wilbur: ~~Ninety six.~~ ¹⁹⁶ ~~Yeah, ninety six.~~ ~~And~~ Then from there I went to Saint Paul and worked in Saint Paul at Swift's packin' plant ~~until December,~~ from October ^(see) ~~and~~ December. ~~Middle of October.~~ Then I went up to Saint Paul and got acquainted with this Cisco and Beard wholesale jewelry house.

I went into the place

And I asked 'em ~~then~~ if they knew if anybody wanted a watchmaker. ~~And~~ They said, "Well, are you a watchmaker?"

"Yes, yes, I've done a little of it. Not very much but a little." "Well, all right. When do you want to go to work?" this Jew said in the wholesale house. I said, "Just as quick as I can. I've got a job, but I don't like it. I want to get back into the jewelry business, watch makin' business."

"Well," he said, "you just wait about five minutes." So he called ^{a man} ~~Uncle Ben~~ in Little Falls ~~by~~ ^{the} name of Spirit Basslake. He was another Jew. ~~And~~ course I waited a few minutes and he said, "Well, ~~he said,~~ how quick can you get up there? He wants a man now." "Well," I said, "I think I can work there Wednesday." This was on Saturday. I wanted to give them long enough time to get a man to put in my place ~~see~~.

~~in the packin' house. The packin' house.~~ 'Cause I had a job there and I didn't like it. So I went back and told ~~him,~~ I told him the next morning on Sunday down at the office that I was gonna have to quit. ~~I'd have to quit~~ Wednesday.

"Oh, ^{why}, what's the reason?" "Well," I said, "I'm a watchmaker by trade and I don't like this butcher job." "Oh.

All right." ~~"So my brother and I was workin' there in Swift's as firemen. We bunked in the firehouse, you see. So I told~~

~~him, "All right. We'd have... I'd have to quit." They'd have to get another man for there too. Yeah.~~

So on Wednesday I took the train up to Little Falls.

omit

This is Larry Sprunk and this cassette contains the completion of the interview that I had with Wibur Chapin of Hankinson, North Dakota. The interview was held in Mr. Chapin's home in Hankinson Saturday, September twenty-eighth and it began at approximately 2:00 in the afternoon.

~~Larry: Okay, so you went up to Little Falls, huh?~~

~~Wilbur: Then I went to Little Falls, Yes.~~ A And when January

1st first came I walked into his office and I said to him, "I presume my time is up now." I was to work until the first of the year. "Well," he said, "Did anybody say anything to you about quittin'?" I said, "No, they hadn't yet, but I expect they will." "Well," he says, "you can work right along just as long as you want to until you hear from me, 'cause I'm runnin' this place." So I went ~~in and out~~ back to work until May. Then ~~along about the first~~ before May I told him I'd have to quit May first because I've got a town all picked out to go into the jewelry business in. "Oh, have you? Out in North Dakota, I suppose." "Yes." So I moved from there in April, May, up to Sheldon and set up a watch bench there in Sheldon.

~~Larry: Sheldon, North Dakota?~~

~~Wilbur: Yes.~~

~~Larry: I used to go to church in Sheldon.~~

~~Wilbur: You did, huh? Well, that's nice. I'm glad you did.~~

~~Which church did you go to?~~

~~Larry: E. U. B.~~

~~Wilbur: E. U. B.?~~

~~Larry: Evangelical United Brethren.~~

~~Wilbur: Oh, yes. That's right. You did, huh? Well, my foks went to the Methodist Church there.~~

~~Larry: Yeah, well the E.U. B. and the Methodists joined together and now there is only the Methodists.~~

~~Wilbur: Now there is no Methodists?~~

omit?

~~LARRY: There is a United Methodist but there's no E.U.B.~~

~~Wilbur: Oh, that's it.~~

~~Larry: Yeah.~~

~~Wilbur: Did you ever know anybody there by the name of John Green?~~

~~Larry: No, but there's a Brownie Green that lives there.~~

~~Wilbur: A Brownie Green. There isn't a woman there that lives there by the name of Gee Green? Or did you ever hear tell of her?~~

~~Larry: No.~~

~~Wilbur: No, well that musta been before your time? Yes.~~

~~'Cause he was a druggist. Johnny Green was a druggist.~~

~~Larry: Wilbur, when did you go to Sheldon? In ninety-seven? Or ninety-eight?~~

~~Wilbur: Let's see, ^{in 1899 I moved to Sheldon,} ~~Eighteen ninety nine, nineteen hundred. Eighteen ninety nine. When I moved up there, And nineteen hundred.~~ Then in ¹⁹⁰¹ ~~nineteen hundred and one~~ I moved from here to Hankinson.~~

~~Warry: So you only stayed in Sheldon about a year and a half then?~~

~~Wilbur: Well, yeah, a little over a year and a half. Call it close to two years. Yes. 'Cause I moved down here, see. I moved down there in ¹⁸⁹⁸ ~~eighteen ninety eight~~ in the spring. Then I moved down here ^{[Hankinson] 10th} on the ~~tenth~~ of May, ¹⁹⁰¹ ~~nineteen one.~~ Yes, so we're gettin' pretty close to the end. I've been here ever since.~~

~~Larry: You came here in nineteen one and you've been here ever since?~~

~~Wilbur: Yes sir. That's right.~~

~~Larry: What was Hankinson like in thos days, Wilbur?~~

OMIT?

OUT

Wilbur: Well, just like any country town. ~~We had a lot of~~
~~We had all the stores that there is anywhere. Single. Dry-~~
Two
goods stores and hardware stores. hardwares.

~~Larry: Were you the only jeweler?~~

~~Wilbur: yes,~~ I was the only jeweler after I bought this
man out. ~~That was here.~~ Yes. I was the only jeweler for
quite a little while. And then there've been several jewelers
have come here and located and they stay anywhere ~~from any~~
~~where~~ from one to four years. Then they vacated.

~~Larry: You run 'em out of business, huh, Wilbur?~~

~~Wilbur:~~ I don't say that I run 'em out of business. I say
they just got tired of livin' here.

Larry: When did you get married?

Wilbur: I got married in ~~nineteen one~~ ¹⁹⁰¹. Sure. I moved down
here in ~~nineteen one~~ ¹⁹⁰¹ the ~~tenth~~ ^{10th} of May and I got married on the
~~twenty seventh~~ ^{27th} of June ~~nineteen one~~ ¹⁹⁰¹.

~~Larry: Had you known your wife before?~~

~~Wilbur: Yes,~~ I married a girl from Enderlin.

~~Larry: You did! I went to school in Enderlin.~~

~~Wilbur: Yes.~~ I got acquainted with her in Sheldon, though,
first. Then ~~she...her father...~~ her family moved to Enderlin.
~~And when my father in law got a job in Enderlin as a police man.~~ ^{her father} ^(the)

~~He was a police in Enderlin for years. I don't know just~~
how many years. But from there we moved down here to Hankinson
and ~~we moved down here and she was~~ ...we lived here ^(the) until sixty-
~~two. Nineteen sixty two~~ ¹⁹⁶² when my wife passed away. Then I
been batching it ever since.

~~Larry: Well, are you getting tired, Wilbur?~~

~~Wilbur: No, I'm not gettin' tired.~~

Larry: Oh, okay, well I got some more things I want to ask you.

Wilbur: Is that right! Well, I thought maybe you'd run out of questions.

Larry: No, I never run out of questions.

Wilbur: You don't. You must be a kind of a TV then.

Larry: I guess so.

~~Wilbur: Yeah. What else?~~

Larry: What was your wife's maiden name? Her n

Wilbur: Her name was Iva Smart. Iva Smart.

~~Larry: Didn't you tell me that you had known a man named Miles Smart?~~

Wilbur: Yes. ^{But} ~~he~~ was a brother to my father-in-law.

Larry: Where had you known him? Down at Britton?

Wilbur: Who?

Larry: Miles Smart.

Wilbur: Yes. I knew Miles Smart at Britten and I knew Charlie Smart at Enderlin. My father-in-law's name was Charlie. See.

~~Yes. I married my step father's brother's daughter.~~

~~Larry: Oh, Miles Smart was your father stepfather. I see.~~

Miles: ~~Stepfather~~. And my father-in-law was my stepfather's brother. See. You see how that worked out?

Larry: Right, right.

Wilbur: ~~Oh, we're no relationship, only just by acquaintance.~~

~~Yes. And we was married in Enderlin. Yes.~~

Larry: How big was Enderlin in those days?

Wilbur: Oh, I'd say probably around...maybe ^{6-700.} ~~six, seven hundred.~~

~~Wilbur: Yes, I believe it was.~~ It was a railroad town, you see.

~~Larry: Did they have the roundhouse in then?~~

~~Wilbur: ^{Yes Sir.} ~~See.~~~~

~~Larry: They did.~~

~~Wilbur: Yeah. They had a roundhouse there. I think it was a four stall roundhouse. ~~Yeah. That's right.~~~~

~~Lar: That was a division point on the Sioux Line?~~

~~Wil: I think that was one division...yes, ~~that was one~~~~

~~I think that was a division point. ~~Oh, it's only four o'clock. Hell, I thought it was about five o'clock.~~~~

~~Lar: No, we got a lot of time.~~

~~Wil: I hope we get a lot of time.~~

Lar: How many children did you have then?

Wil: I had four children; ~~In our family.~~ Three boys and one daughter. And two of my sons have retired. Which is pretty nice. ~~I presume you want to know where they are. Yes. Dean Chapin lives in Jamestown. He was~~

~~the master baker in the State Hospital. For eighteen or nineteen years. I claim that's quite a record. But he and his wife have decided that's where they want to make their home. And so they reside there. Now, then. The second boy was Allen, which is retired. He put in better than twenty-five years in Minneapolis as a painter. An interior decorator and painter. Then he worked on that until ^(they) told him one day that your age is speakin' up on you and you've got to quit. So we'll have to get another man in your place. He stepped out. And I was down there with him the winter that he was ^(re) ~~tired.~~ Now I'm living here ~~with him.~~ He does all the work around here~~

now with my son Allen.

OUT

OUT

OUT

Wilbur Chapin - 40

and I do the BSing. We'll fix that tape up.

Larry: Yeah. Well, Wilbur, people are going to talk the same way ~~a hundred~~¹⁰⁰ years from now that they talk now.

Wil: You think they will?

Lar: oh, yeah.

Wil: Say, Larry, throw that away. Let me give you a new one. (cigar)
You like to continue to smoke, don't you?

Lar: ~~Wil~~: That's pretty stout. By the looks of it.

~~Wil~~ ~~God dang it, I should get up a little oftener. Here you are.~~

~~Lar~~: Okay, thank you. These are good cigars. ~~I'll have to remember that. Previce.~~

~~Wil~~: ~~They come from Portland, Oregon. And that box there come from Portland, Oregon. And those two boxes here come from Florida. My daughter sent me those. Yes.~~ I've got a son John out in Portland, Oregon. ~~That's made his home out there.~~

~~And I was out there at my birthday when I was ~~a hundred~~¹⁰⁰ years old. Yes. They put on quite a jamboree out there, I'd call it. ~~Yes, and of course, I got these boxes for a hundred~~^{a 100-}~~

~~my years birthday present with that and I got a cigar, with it. Now, maybe you can tell the people if that cigar is~~

Now, maybe you can tell the people ~~how long~~^{lots of time include} that cigar is.

Larry: Well, it's about a foot long, about an inch and one-half thick, and a ~~souvenir of Oregon~~ souvenir of Oregon.

~~Wilbur~~: That's right.

~~Larry~~: When you gonna smoke that, Wilbur?

Wilbur: I'm gonna smoke it when I got lots of time. ~~I kinda think that that will be down in Florida because I'm gonna take it with me and we expect to go down there this fall, you see. And I'm gon o going to cut the end off'n that big cigar and smoke it in a pipe.~~

Wilbur Chapin - 41

~~Larry: Oh, I see.~~

~~Wilbur: Oh, I've got a way of taking care of all this tobacco. Sure, I don't don't waste any of that.~~

Larry: Was the jewelry business pretty good ~~here~~ in Han^{start}kinson when you started, ^{here} Wilbur?

~~Wilbur: Very good. Just wonderful. I happened to be, as I said before, I think that will grow. Ya, that'll grow. The fire pretty near went out on his cigar and I'd thought I would tell him it it would grow.~~

Larry: Ya, it will grow.

Wilbur: What's your first name?

Larry: Larry.

Wilbur: Ha ^LLarry?

Larry: Ya.

Wilbur: Well, that's a nice name. They must of knew youse gonna be a pretty nice fellow or they wouldn't of given you that name.

Larry: Why ^{mit} you think I'm a pretty nice fellow, Wilbur?

~~Wilbur: Well, ah, that does it. Ya and the business was here was excellent~~

~~I would say, excellent was excellent because that was long before they started making plastic jewelry. And I had the pleasure of making a few~~

~~wedding rings here while I was here in the earlier days. I mounted up the gold and put it in a cast and finished them. Plain band rings besides all~~

~~the wash work I mounted up the gold, and put 'em in a cast, and finished 'em. Plain band rings, you see, besides all the watch work. I could work from~~

~~eight o'clock in the morning or seven thirty or sunrise if I wanted to~~
~~until ten thirty and eleven at night and I never could catch up.~~

~~Larry: Is that right?~~

~~Wilbur: For at least ²⁰ twenty years I sure done wonderful. I must say that I enjoyed it although ^{9/1} it was pretty steady work. There's lots of people,~~

~~hundreds of watchmakers, that can't ^{even} stand it ¹⁰ ten days ^{years} can't stand it ten years without quittin. Too tedious. But I guess I broke into it like I~~

~~either had to do it or starve to death so I did it, that was it. Then,~~

after this plastic jewelry commenced to being made, alot of the stores put that on their shelves and, believe it or not, the solid gold business dropped off terrible.

~~Larry: Is that right?~~

~~Wilbur: Yes, sir.~~ It was hard to sell a solid gold wedding ring, because they could buy a gold-filled ring for two and a half or three and that would do just as well as a gold one because it was filled, you see. ~~and~~

~~and~~ This filled jewelry and the plastic jewelry cut down terrible. ~~and~~ Of course there was one year ^X inbetween there that we had a drought here.

~~Larry: Was this in the '30's now?~~

~~Wilbur:~~ That was what they called the dirty '30's. Yes. Business, I must say, ~~business~~ went all to pieces. If you made a living or a little over, you were doing pretty good for about three years here. And, of course, that was kinda hard times. ~~and~~ ^{So} ~~after~~ that ~~though~~ the watch business ^{began} started picking up in pretty good shape. ~~and~~ I sold out and been selling out all of the jewelry that I could dispose of and I didn't ^{add} much ~~of~~ business after that either. From that time on I just took orders and did watch repairing which was very good. I must say that I had a good trade, very good. People here was very responsive and they believed like I did, I think, in trading at home if you possibly could. ~~and~~ ^I If you couldn't, ~~and~~ then you was naturally excused to trade wherever you choosed to. So that's the way our trade went from the '30's up until now. And I believe, I really believe, if I was capable of handling small watches ~~and~~ I could be in a good business here yet. I believe that anyway. Yes, I don't think I'm mistaken.

Larry: Did the banks in Harkinson close in the '20's or '30's? end

Wilbur: ^{No} Well, I didn't lose any in the banks ~~although~~ although they all went broke. But allow me to say that I had a pretty good friend living here and he ~~kinda~~ kinda tipped me off. I don't wanna mention ^{the} any names or the amount of money, but whatever I had I had in two banks and I took it out. ^{So} I didn't lose any money on the banks going closed. Well, I must say, there

was alot of people here really did lose alot of money. Yes, sir, it was just too bad. ~~I tell you that bank going closed is a crippling business~~ I tell you that bank going broke is a crippling business, you know, crippling to business and to people. Gosh, ~~oh friday~~ ^{that's rough,} yes, sir! I believe, pardon me, but I gotta get another cigar. ~~I'm gonna get up and walk around a little bit.~~

Larry: Well, Wilbur, before I ask you about the '30's let me ask you about this ~~one of~~ area of Richland County. Was this Haakinson area settled mostly by Germans?

Wilbur: Yes, Haakinson was. You might say Haakinson was ^{really} all-German settlement. ~~and~~ Then north of us around ^{Merton} ~~Merton~~ and ^{wyndmere} ~~Weimer~~ and from there on up, oh, to Kindred up in there there was Scandinavians, the nicest bunch of people in the world to live with. Ya, because I know that when I lived at ^{Britton and} ~~Britton and~~ Kidder down there, we had a Norwegian settlement east of us and the finest people in the world that we ever had to do business with. ~~So I think that would~~

Larry: What nationality was your wife?

Wilbur: She's a Yankee, just the same as I was. A Yankee, yah. A blue-bellied Yankee.

Larry: Where did the Smart family come from?

Wilbur: Bangor, Maine. There all Yankees down there. Bangor, Maine, I remember that just like a book.

Larry: ~~Wh-We~~ ^{Chape} Were you here, ~~Chape~~ when all the Germans came in or were they here already when you came to Haakinson?

Wilbur; Well, when I come to Haakinson the ~~pop~~ population was around ¹⁵⁰⁰ ~~fifteen~~ hundred or a little better and ^{98%} ~~ninety-eight percent~~ were Germans.

Larry: Were they Germans that came over from Germany?

Wilbur: Well, not all no. There was some that came directly ⁺ from Germany, alot, and then others came from other states around here like Nebraska, and Minnesota. ~~BE~~ ^{Swedes and Norwegians} Most of the Scandinavians, as I said, and the Swedes ~~they~~ located mostly in Minnesota, ~~because there supposed to be Norwegian states, Swede.~~

~~Larry: Well, Haakinson must have grown awfully fast.~~ H

~~Wilbur: Well, from the railroad days you see out town at~~ Haakinson at the time was a railroad division point. ~~And we had, let's see,~~ We had the great Northern running in here, two trains a day. ~~Some days~~ ^F Four trains a day ^{sometimes} when they had the passenger train, and the same thing on the main line of the ~~500~~ ⁵⁰⁰. They was running extras every once in awhile and the same on the branch. We had a very good railroad town here at one time. But, of course, now advancement has put the diesel in front of the steam. Naturally it's cut two-thirds of the railroad trains that used to run. ~~I think it's over one-half, two-thirds anyway at this time, yes sir.~~ We never did ~~enjoy~~ enjoy having the passenger train taken off, but the railroads claimed they ~~either~~ had to take it off because they was losing too much money which I don't know that they was.

~~Larry: ya, Ya, I think that was a lie.~~

~~Wilbur: Simply, because the~~ Cars were taking the trade away from the railroads. Before we got the cars, it took us two days to go by train over to Wahpeton and back, that's ~~thirty five miles~~ ³⁰ thirty miles. And now, when we got the cars we can go over and back in an hour. ~~And, of course,~~ that Cars took alot of trade away from the railroads and that's what put the railroads on the passenger bone. ~~Don't you think so?~~

~~Larry: I guess so.~~

~~Wilbur: Ya, I think so.~~

~~Larry: But I don't think that the railroad had it's stop the passenger service as soon as they did. I don't think that they were in that bad of financial problems.~~

~~Wilbur: Well, I don't know.~~ Now, you know that the railroad had to pay it's working crews about three times more than they ever had to before. Well, maybe the wages was taking too much of their profit. Who knows? ~~I wonder how that will sound on there?~~

~~Larry: Well, it it will sound diplomatic anyway.~~

~~Wilbur: Diplomatic! Maybe it will sound like I am kind of a crabber.~~

~~Larry: No.~~

~~Wilbur: Come come on cigar! Come on!~~

Larry: Was this a division point on the Soo Line?

Wilbur: Yes, a division point for trains running between ~~Haakin~~-Haakinson and Minneapolis and ~~Ha~~kinson and Bismarck.

~~Larry: Was there a roundhouse here, too?~~

~~Wilbur: Yes, we got a roundhouse here yet!~~

Larry: Well, ^{Chape}~~Chap~~, was your business pretty good from 1901, when you started it, until the '30's? I mean, were those all good years?

Wilbur: Yes, they was all good years. You bet. I can honestly say, I can compliment the trade. The people traded at home when they could. Then, of course, I happened to be the only watchmaker for 30 miles around here, outside of Wahpeton of course, which is 30 miles. ~~Sis~~ton had one, Briton, but none of the rest. I had all the territory; it's a big territory. The farming community was heavily settled up, but there's only one farm now where there used to be three. I don't think that's making it too strong.

~~Larry: No, I don't either.~~

Wilbur: You can go through the country now ~~and drive through the county~~ and probably drive for six miles before you find a place where somebody lives. Some big farmer is running all that land in there. That's what happened between here and Wahpeton. I don't know how many quarters Mr. ^{cut out name?} Miller's running, but I think it's twice as big as what's that other ~~un~~ 'un used to run over there-^{Dalrymple}~~Down~~ Ripple owns west of Fargo ain't it? What the devil they call this 'un here?

Larry: Downing?

Wilbur: Ya, this is a Downing. Then the Keystone, they run big farms. But just as soon as you got away from their district, the small farmers were thick. Every mile or two miles it was all small farming. Now it's all big farming.

~~Larry: What do you think of that, Wilbur?~~

~~Wilbur: Well, I don't know.~~ I think it's all right if they don't go to buying up the whole county. If they stop when they think they have

enough land or ^{bur} less some of them die off and the rest of them don't wanna run so big a farm. Some day it may revert back to smaller farms because the people that are running it now has got too much on their hands. A good deal like this Bag⁹ Farm between here and ^{more on,} ~~Mountain~~. They reduced their size. They sold out part of their farms to smaller farmers you see. It may happen again with these big farms some day but it's hard to say just what will happen. They will probably run until these fellows that run it now ~~they~~ get too old. ~~They~~ They won't wanna run it any more and they ^{may} ~~are going to~~ liquidate. ~~I guess that's it where they fall to pieces.~~

Larry: Did the depression drive alot of people out of this area? Did alot of farm families leave in the '30's?

Wilbur: No, not very many. I can't say that there was very many. There wasn't enough to make any particular difference in our trade, no. There was a few, of course, but where they went probably wasn't a great deal better only for the time being. They might have had a little drawback in their farming business too. You can't always tell. Something might have happened.

Larry: Did people get discouraged in the '30s, Chape?

Wilbur: Well, they simply got discouraged because they wasn't producing like they used to. They naturally get a little discouraged. And the prices, you see, were awful low at that time. You see there was lots of corn sold for ~~ten~~ ^{10¢} cents a bushel. You knew that. Wheat was only ~~one dollar~~ ^{\$1.59} ~~fift~~ ~~fifty-nine~~ ^{.59} cents once or ~~fifty-nine~~ ^{.69} or ~~sixty-nine~~.

~~Larry: Ya, lower than that.~~

~~Wilbur: Maybe.~~ Not being in the grain business, I can't tell all of these prices but there was alot of people said well, I bring in a wagon box full of corn, which was probably 35 bushel, they wouldn't get money enough ~~out~~ of it, three and one-half or four dollars, they wouldn't get enough money out of it to buy one-half ton of coal. So they said, we'll put that damm corn in the furnance and they did. I don't blame them. In fact that's the only way of getting through. One time another fellow and I took two axes and went

out in the sandhills here and cut down green pawpaw-^{Poles}~~paws~~ to get enough wood because we got that wood for nothing. All we had to do was cut it off and we bucked it up into wood for our furna~~nces~~^{ces} for our houses. There weren't furna~~nces~~^{ces} there was stoves. ~~we~~ We got through, if you wanted anything done you done it by hand. That was in the '30's. People were selling these big trees around here for one dollar a tree. ~~and~~ The men cut them down and put them into stove ^{an word} wood. Some of them right in town. Some of them were just out of town in those groves ~~which these groves was all~~ made by hand by kids like me, ~~when I was a kid, planted those cuttings.~~ So that's the way this country grew up from bleak prairie to what it is now. ~~The only woods was along some of the creek~~ The only woods was along some of the creeks, ~~and~~ rivers, and a little brush around some of the lakes.

Larry: Let me go back a liittle bit, ^{Chape}~~to~~, to when you were living with your family over by Leonard and you used to go to Lisbon. What was that land ~~lik~~ like? ~~Was it prairie grass or ah--.~~

Wilbur: Why it was just like a school sections used to be, nothing but old grass. You know what the school section used to be. They call it hay land. Well, thats the way the whole ~~e~~ territory was.

~~Larry: Was that good hay?~~

~~Wilbur:~~ This was a territory before it was states. And it was good hay-you bet your boots-ya, bluegrass, ~~and~~ bluejoint grass, and all that kind of wild hay, ~~and~~ It stood anywhere from one foot to three and one-half to four feet, all over the country. Of course if they had a sandhill, it didn't grow on top of those sandhills. It grew wherever there was a place for it, yes sir. ~~and~~ ^{Prolific}~~prolific~~, You take a ^{scythe,}~~scythe~~ and cut that grass anywhere, and you had hay by the ton.

Larry: Was there alot of wild berries in those days, ~~Chap~~^{Chape}, when you were living over by Leonard?

Wilbur: In a few spots, we could get a few strawberries, ~~and~~ along in the rivers there were wild gooseberries, ~~and~~ chokecherries, and wild plums, yes. But that was pretty nearly the extent of our berry crop. There was some blueberries if you knew where to find them but there were very few.

~~Larry: I used to go with my parents to pick juneberries in the sandhills south of Leonard. Were there any juneberries in the early days.~~

~~Wilbur: Yes.~~ There are juneberries right out here four and one-half and five miles north.

Larry: Well, let's go back to the '30's again in Harkinson, Chap, Was there a WPA office here? Was there WPA work done.

Wilbur: Yes, sir. Yes, sir. WPA was ~~one~~ of the largest ^{projects} ~~products~~ ~~what~~ ~~do you eat them call 'em, products-~~

~~Larry: Projects.~~

~~Wilbur: Yes,~~ that we had around here in the '30's because most everybody was ~~on WPA~~ ^{on} it, ~~was a big project, yes,~~ and ^{Southwest} One of the largest ones was out ~~of town~~ ^{They} about four miles. ~~that~~ ¹ put in one mile of grade out there and named it the Million Dollar Mile because it was done all by project work and it cost pretty near a million to put that mile in.

~~Larry: Ya, ya.~~

~~Wilbur:~~ So, you prett-n-near get an idea of what WPA meant. They did a very good job though. It's blacktopped. ~~We've got blacktop out tTtoet(?)~~. We call it the five mile corner but that million dollar mile, I don't think that is blacktopped yet. I went down there this summer to see. Since I sold my car, I don't get around out in the country much, but before that I used to ~~geget~~ ~~around~~ whenever I had the chance to get away yes, sir.

~~Larry: Were people getting pretty poor in the '30's, Chap, were thing going pretty hard before WPA came in?~~

~~Wilbur: Well, WPA started ten years before the '30's and down the '20's. That's when WPA started.~~ ^{3'} When we worked for a dollar a day on the farm,

~~yes.~~ I was ~~there~~ ⁴⁴ when we had the first war, 1918. We didn't have anybody here in town because we was short of laborers. ~~and~~ So I locked up the shop and went out, another fellow and I. I helped thresh and I got ^{15.00} ~~five~~ dollars a day on a bundle team hauling bundles to a threshing machine.

I did that for a week. My rear end's pretty near worn out; I was so exhausted. And my partner, of course, he lasted three days and then he quit. But I lasted up from Monday to Saturday, then I quit too. Ya, I

run the threshing machine into town then I quit and I haven't threshed any since.

~~Larry: Ah, you run out of light there, chief.~~ ^{Chap.}

~~Wilbur: We ain't smokin' enough.~~

~~Larry: No, we are talkin' and not smokin'.~~

~~wilbur: We are talkin' too much.~~

Larry: Did the farmers around here have any trouble with the IWW?

Wilbur: No, not a great deal. There was a little, of course. ~~There was a little of it, thank you.~~ A little IWW trouble, where, ~~if~~ if they thought they wasn't doing the right thing it meant setting ~~somebody's~~ somebody's field afire or something like that.

~~Larry: Did that happen?~~

~~Wilbur: Yes, but~~ **I** it didn't happen very often. There wasn't enough so to make any real big disturbance about it. Somebody got out and shut it off in a hurry or put it out ^{with} or run up against some green grass and quit, ya. Yes, we didn't have much trouble about that, no.

Larry: Were there alot of hobos coming through ~~Hap~~ ^{Staret} kinson on the railroad in the '20's and '30's?]

William: Yes, sometimes we would have 25 or 30 men in what they called jungles that was doing their cooking and staying down there in the box-cars. They ~~was~~ all pretty peaceable people too. There weren't doing anybody trouble and we treated them as citizens, not as outcasts. No, we ~~tried~~ tried to treat ~~them~~ them right. Lots of them I invited into the shop, ^{said} damn it, let's have a little ~~talk~~ talk. And some of them, I tell you man, there was some of them fellows that were known as hobos were educated, college educated men, and some was even preachers. They knew what they were talkin' about. But, of course, us common people we called them hobos. Oh, I think lots of times there was lots of us that were near ^{of} ~~the~~ hobos on account of the drought than the men that was in the jungles. ~~I guess that will sound all right though.~~

~~Larry: Ya, it will.~~

~~Larry: But, they were pretty good guys. They weren't troublemakers or~~

~~Criminals~~

~~Wilbur:~~ No, we couldn't say that they were troublemakers, no. Oh, once in awhile some of ~~em~~ get drunk then there was a little trouble, but that's just common business. It wasn't because they wanted to be mean it was just because they objected to somebody's remark. I don't blame ~~em~~ 'cause in the early days it was ~~quite~~ quite easy to get into a confliction if you wanted to get into one. All you had to do was object ~~to~~ to somebody's remark and you was in. Right ^{Oh}! Ya.

Larry: When were the "Blind Pigs" opened in Haakinson? What years were

~~Wilbur:~~ ~~Opened?~~ there "Blind Pigs" in Haakinson?

Wilbur: Well, all the time, ~~in the time~~ from 1886 to 1918. Ya, because ~~lot of the community~~ alot of them would come in ~~front town~~ and they had to make some money some way to make a living so they started running a "blind pig" and that's why we had so many of them.

~~Larry:~~ ~~How many did you say there were?~~

~~Wilbur:~~ Oh, There was eight or nine or ¹⁰ ten, someplace around there. Some did go out of business and some did start up again. Some of them quit and went into other businesses.

~~Larry:~~ ~~Chop, was a "blind pig" a place where you could go and drink or was it a place where you could buy it and take it and drink it at home?~~

~~Wilbur:~~ Some of 'em run a place where you could go in a second room, ~~and~~ stay, ~~and~~ visit, and play cards such as that. ~~And~~ ^OOther ones were just a place where you would just buy. Buy and leave. You couldn't drink in there All you had to do was put your money down there, turn around, and there'd be a bottle there. They'd put it in a little paper bag and you could either put it in your coat or take it with you otherwise, any way you wanted to.

Larry: Was that all home brew?

Wilbur: Well, most of it. But there was places where they got in ^{beer} by cask.

~~Larry:~~ ~~where from, Canada?~~

~~Wilbur:~~ I don't know where it come from. I know where some of it went down, bu^t I don't know where it come from.

- end

Larry: Was there a nursery here, Chap~~e~~?

Wilbur: Yes, we had a nursery here up until the '30's that was one of the largest nurseries in the state. Haakinson ~~business~~ Nursery did more business.

~~Larry: Who started that and ran it?~~

~~Wilbur:~~ Haakinson Nursery was first made up by a fellow ~~by~~ name Hines.

Who in the duce was the other one in there? Strubells. There was Strubell, ~~and~~ Carmen, and Hines. I think those three. Strubell, Carmen and Hines were the instigators of start'in a nursery. Then, of course, it ~~shifted different~~ ~~that~~ was run a long time by Carmen and Chinberg. Then they sold out. Sold out to a man by the name of ~~Regel~~ ^{Regel} and he ran it for a while. Then he sold to some people by ~~then~~ the name of Smith, from Mantador, that own it now.

~~Larry: Oh, it's still open?~~

~~Wilbur: No, the nursery is closed, practically closed.~~

~~Larry: But they own the land.~~

~~Wilbur: They just own the land, yes, and the nursery all around there.~~ I

think the nursery consisted of pretty close to 30 acres. I am not sure about the size of it but, I'd call it 30 acres anyway. At one time they did a terrific business. They even put a side-track in there to get the stock out fast enough. Off'n the Great Northern.

~~Larry: What did they ship out?~~

~~Wilbur:~~ Everything from strawberries, apples, plums, gooseberries, blackberries and all that stuff. All different varieties and then all kinds of nursery stock like pine trees, pines and weeping willows and all that kind of fancy vegetation or trees, sure.

~~Larry: Did they raise vegetables, too?~~

~~Wilbur:~~ No, **T**hey didn't raise vegetables like carrots, turnips, and cabbages and stuff like that. It wasn't a vegetable farm; it was a nursery.

~~Larry: Tree nursery, huh?~~

~~Wilbur:~~ Ya, **T**ree ^{nursery} ~~nursery~~ and all kinds of ornamental trees. Yes, we've got some right here in town. Those trees right across the road here

~~were bought from our nursery and lots of trees around town, ornamental.~~

Yes, that's the way of it.

Larry: Say, Chap, was Haskinson a place where the Sisters started an academy?

Wilbur: The Sisters, I think it was them, that started the academy here.

Larry: Saint Francis Academy or something like that.

Wilbur: Yes, that's ~~it~~right. Some people call it academy, also some people call it a convent. I don't know which way it is; I'm not posted well enough on it to tell you.

Larry: Is it still open?

Wilbur: Well, yes, I think it's still open, yes. I'm pretty sure it's still running. They're affiliated, of course, with the hospital. They were also instigators of the building of the first hospital, and that was a small one. I don't know how many beds it was; I can't tell you now, but they put an addition on it that's got larger. Now, you got a very good hospital here. You bet, and well staffed, that's it. I can't help but ~~boast 'em~~ ~~about~~ it.

Larry: Chap, what kind of social life did Haskinson have in 1905, 1910, 15, and '20s? What did people do to entertain each other or to have recreation?

Wilbur: Well, we had ^(a) ball club fro ⁵ one thing and then ~~fourth~~ ^{4th} of July entertainment and Christmas, of course, celebration and one of the main things was, too, if anybody got married they had to shivaree 'em. That was another celebration.

~~Larry: Was there alot of dancing done in Haskinson?~~

~~Wilbur:~~ All of those entertainments also had dances connected with 'em, besides individual barn dances on any farm that built a barn big enough to have a dance in and the rest of the time most of them were work'in. That's about the size of it. They all kind of clicked together in their communities and when they want'ta shivaree alot of people turned out for it and there was some big celebrations at that time.

Larry: Were people more sociable in those days.

Wilbur: We must admit it, yes, ~~that~~ us people that went through the '30s

found that the people before that were all more sociable, simply because we couldn't get any further than what our horse could travel in one day. That was about as far as they could get . They pretty near had to be social able, unless they'd be fight'in all the time and that won't work. So they were more sociable, naturally and they didn't mean to be click^v or anything of that kind. That wasn't the idea. ~~It was prob^{ly} near community com-
mercially.~~

Larry: Do you think, Chap, if there was a depression today , that people would work together and pull together the way they did in the '30s?

Wilbur: I don't know how they could; I think they'd have to, but we're in such a delem^a that I don't know how long a community would last working together when we have nothing to work from. I don't know where we would ~~sta~~ start picking up from because when we came here we lived off the land. Now that we're here and if we have a depression that would be, you might say, fatal, I don't know where we would start trying to make a living. ~~from my just right from the point of it.~~ I'm sure I don't know. I'm probably not versed on how long our supplies would last, ~~and I don't know in some ways if some of our commodities were shut off, I don't know how our~~ ^{the} commodities that we've got in supply, I don't know how they would use them. ~~I don't see how they would, because something might shut off, like a manufacturing district like there is in Minneapolis and St. Paul in the milling districts, big ones. If something like that shut off totally, can you tell me where we are going to start?~~

~~Larry: No, I don't know.~~

Wilbur: The question before us is a big one. If you ask the right kind of a question, it's a big question. I hope, for my part, that ^{don't} anybody get foolish and panic about it. ~~Because we have some people that can't stand poverty, they can't stand capitalism.~~ The people now that are, look at our ~~oh~~, what the hell you call them- that are kidnapers. those people can't stand capitalism so they're breaking into it. Now then, what are we gonna do about it? It's ^{terrible!} ~~tough!~~ Even this last one down ther in South America asking for one ~~mili~~million, those people are crazier, I think,

~~than the people in the insane asylums. But they're a shrewd crazy bunch of people. And the one's that's working in California is the same way. Those people are not idiots, there not outcasts or anything like that. Some of the are as high as educated people as we have got. But they're trying something else~~

Larry: Chap, why do people call the '20s and the early 1900's ~~call these days~~ the good old days?

wilbur: I just can't imagine why they call those pioneer days the good old days. I haven't any definition for that.

~~wilbur:~~ When we lived just west of ~~here~~ and we used to see the Indians build their camps right east of town, ~~in the original tepees.~~ They made camp right east of Briton there, a mile. ~~And~~ ~~They'd~~ walk into town and they'd all sit down on the sidewalk or outside and one man or one half-breed would do the trading and when they all bought what they wanted then they'd all start back out to the camp. One back of the other in a trail.

~~Larry: Did you ever see Sitting Bull?~~

~~Wilbur: No, I didn't. Sitting Bull was way out there west of us. But there~~ was a man, since ~~I've~~ lived here in Hankinson, ~~there was a man~~ ^{who} came into the store one fall ~~into the shop I had~~ and he stood back of the stove, and looked at me two or three times, and I ~~said~~ said, "Well, Mr., is there something I can do for ya"? "Well," he said, "I understand that ~~you~~ you are one of the oldest men in town." And I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "Just the man I'd kinda like to talk to. I'm related to Sitting Bull." I said, "Are you?" He said, "Yes, I am." Of course, I'm not his brother by any means." ~~He~~ He was a very nice man to talk to. ~~We visited for~~ We visited for awhile and he said, "I am just going through town so I want to thank you very much for the visit and he shook hands with me and he left. From that time I don't ~~know~~ ^{know} anything more ~~about~~ about him. ~~I~~ I don't know anything about him at all for that matter. ~~But~~ ^{at} When I was only 12 years old, ~~when~~ ^{and} just a kid ~~and~~ we moved down around Briton, ~~and~~ ^{and} these Indians, which ~~apparently~~ ^{as} were all nice people to ~~deal~~ ^{deal} with would come

over close to Briton, ~~and~~ do their trading, and then go back out to camp. ~~Then~~ Then after they got through do'n that the'd go farther back into the reservation, see, and take their provisions with them. That was just about the end of them. One-armed Jim, yes. One-armed Jim was an Indian scout.

~~We~~ We lived about one-half way between Briton and where some of these Indians came by. ~~So~~ So one day Jim came along. I happened to be outdoors when I was 12, or about that, ~~that same year~~ ^{one} that fall. ~~And~~ I was shucking corn for the pigs; I don't know what they wanted it ~~shucked~~ ^{shucked} for? But I was shuck'in this corn and they snuck up behind me and they said "Wooh" and I left the shock. If it hadn't been for ~~the~~ the house I said I'd be ~~go~~ go'in yet.

Chape

Larry: Who were the Indians, ~~the~~, that used to travel from over by Lisbon and Fort Ransom? ~~You~~ You said they'd travel to Fargo and they'd camp along the way.

Wilbur: They were pretty much ~~friendly~~. ~~Are you sure you have that on?~~ They was ~~good~~ good and friendly if ~~you~~ you watched them all the time but you wanted to be sure that you didn't turn your back. Maybe you can guess what that means. But otherwise they was always pretty nice to get along with. Sure.

Larry: ~~Would~~ Would they ~~travel~~ travel by Leonard there wher you were living?

Wilbur:; Yes, right north of where we had our farm. They went east and west across there. Sure.

Larry: Did they have wagons then, Chap?

Wilbur: Yes, wagons. And they had covers over the wagons. I suppose some of them was ~~buffalo~~ buffalo skins because they made lots of tepees out of buffalo skins / over around that Briton country. Sure. And I think these down ~~there~~ there did the same thing. ~~They~~ They made a very stable house, see, tepee. Of course, if it got too thick on the inside I think they moved it instead of cleaning house.