REGION #3 MORTON COUNTY TAPE NUMBER 11
Alice Conitz

Introduction: This is Larry Sprunk. The following is an interview that I had with Mrs. Alice Conitz of New Salem, North Dakota. The interview was held Sunday, June ~~second~~ 2nd at approximately ~~one thirty~~ 1:30 in the afternoon. This particular interview takes up both sides of this casette as well as side 1 of the succeeding cassette. The interview was held at Mrs. Conitz's home in New Salem.

Larry: Now when did your family start out in North Da....Well, what was your maiden name first.

Mrs. Conitz: My name was Winewright. Weinreich My name was Winewright and my sister this winter she wrote up a story about our family and...

Larry: Well, if it's all the same to you, Mrs. Conitz, could we just get it kind of in your own...just tell me about it.

Mrs. Conitz: I was wondering if this would be too much to read.

Larry: Well, it doesn't sound as natural, you know.

Mrs. Conitz: Okay. Well, I'll answer questions.

Larry: When did your parents come?

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Mrs. Conitz: My father's family came from Germany in ~~eighteen eighty two~~ 1882 and they came to Illinois. My grandfather was a miner in Germany and they moved to Illinois and he worked in the coal mines there too. His brother and family came with him. Julius ~~Winewright~~.

Larry: Now ~~this was~~ these were your grandfathers. And his brother. This was your grandfather here...August?

Mrs. Conitz: His name was August also. August senior and this is August junior back here. He was my dad, yes. Here he is again. These are all my mother's parents. And this is our stepgrandfather.

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Larry: How old was your father when your grandfather came over in ~~eighteen eighty two~~ 1882?

Mrs. Conitz: He was nine years old when they came to America. And they lived in Illinois for one year and then they joined this church and came to New Salem. That was in ~~eighty three~~ '83. And they came out on the train. There were about ~~two hundred~~ 200 people on that train. And New Salem--there

wasn't anything at all. My dad said when we stepped off the train there wasn't anything. There was just a snowbank. It was the ~~sixth~~ 6th of April and well, then the men got busy and built a big building they called the Immigrant House. And these people, all that could, moved into that and used that. So they had a place besides the cars that they came in, you know. And the men were taken out into the country by the land man who was Mister Look. Luch (?) He took them out and showed the different homesteads and my father and his brother both went out and ~~they~~ took homesteads. My dad was about ~~ten~~ 10 miles northwest of New Salem and the uncle went a little ~~farther~~ farther.

Larry: How old was your dad then?

Mrs. Conitz: He was about ~~ten~~ 10 then. He was about ~~ten~~ 10, but I don't think he went out. He stayed with his mother here.

Larry: Your grandfather went out.

Mrs. Conitz: Yeah, grandfather went out. He's the old gentleman. ~~And~~ the two old gentlemen. And they took up that homestead and tried to get started farming. Now they weren't farmers. They were miners. They worked in the mine in Illinois, those two brothers. And Grandpa brought a team of horses with him and that's about all they brought except some lumber to build a house and then provisions so they could live out here 'cause they knew it was...there was nothing. And that was in ~~eighty-three~~ '83. And then during one of the winters, maybe a year or two that they had been out there, then their house burned down. In the winter time. And I don't know where they stayed. They must have gone to a neighbor's or something. There were neighbors out there too in the same shape. They were all living in small places. So then my grandfather built a sodhouse and they lived in there. Begin Here — Well, in ~~eighty-six~~ '86, the fall of ~~eighty-six~~ '86...my grandfather was a miner, so to earn a little money he went down to Sims. That's where they had the brickyard and coal mine. So he was familiar

with that kind of work. And he walked across, over to Sims. That was about nine miles. And, now I can't tell you how many winters he did that, or how many years after the fall work was finished. But in ~~eighty-six~~ 1886 he walked home. As usual he walked from Sims to be with his family for Christmas Eve and for Christmas day. And he got lost and froze his feet. And he missed their home and he landed a couple miles further north from the sod house. And, well they brought him back a day or two later and his feet were frozen and he couldn't walk and they took him down to the Sims Miners Hospital, they called it. There was a building down there. It isn't so many years ago that we were down there and that building was still there but it's gone now. And he lay there from Christmas until [redacted] he died the ~~twelfth~~ 12th of March. He had to have his feet amputated at the ankles. And he died. //And then my grandmother was left there with those two boys. Neither one of 'em were big enough to help much. So she hired a young man that came in to...came from the east. He had had experience farming and so on, worked in Illinois, Ohio and that was this man, my stepgrandfather. That was in ~~eighty-seven~~ 1887 when he came.

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Larry: What was his name?

Mrs. Conitz: Langenhurst. He came from Germany when he was ~~eighteen~~ 18 years old and when he came out to North Dakota he must have been around ~~thirty-five~~ 35, something like that. He was younger than my grandmother. ~~This~~ My grandfather was only ~~forty-two~~ 42 when he died, when he froze his feet. Oh, this stepgrandfather...oh, we called him Grandpa afterwards because he married my grandmother. He helped her with....He worked for her that summer and then in the fall he married her, about nine months after he came to North Dakota. Then they built another house. He took a homestead and they built a house. It was about two miles further west. They built it out of sandstone. Sandstone. And there was a hill

about ~~three quarters~~ 3/4 of a mile east of us and there was a big cave up there and we kids we called that a cave. Afterwards, my mother said, "Well that's where the rocks came from for this house." And the sandstones are about this thick and so they could manage to build a house. The house was about that thick--about ~~fifteen~~ 15 inches.

Larry: Were they laying sandstone on top of sandstone or was there cement or mud or anything mixed in?

Mrs. Conitz: I don't think there was anything between. I couldn't say because it was all covered on the inside and the outside. Now those sandstones are over here right east of the...it's the Gilberts funeral home. little church we used to call...Some people in New Salem they found out about those rocks and they went out there and got them. They took that house to pieces and they made themselves a wall. And it's kind of interesting to see that.

Larry: But then they dug a hole in the side of the hill and cut out the sandstone--your ~~stepfather~~ grandfather did to make this house. That's a pretty innovative idea.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. Nellie thought that that thick sandstone would make a warm house, but it wasn't too warm. The cold would follow the rocks in you know and....I remember my mother, later on my mother was living there and we grew up in that little house. And those rocks would sweat. She had it all painted. She'd paint that thing and she did everything to it. One summer she put oil cloth on it. But it would always peel off because the moisture from the outside would come in.

Larry: So it was probably a pretty sturdy house though.

Mrs. Conitz: It was sturdy. Yes. You bet it was. It stood.

Larry: At the time ~~that you moved...~~ that your stepgrandfather moved over to this house that he had built out of sandstone and your dad by that time would have been about ~~fifteen~~ 15?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, something like that. Fifteen, ~~sixteen~~ 16 years old. But his father died when....He was born in ~~seventy-three.~~ '73 His dad died when he was around ~~thirteen~~ 13 or ~~fourteen.~~ 14. He would have been ~~eighty-seven~~ 87. ~~Seventy three. Yeah. Fourteen.~~ And then I don't know just how long we lived in that sand house... oh, I guess I do too. Grandpa Longhurst put a sign above the door...~~eighteen eighty nine.~~ 1889. So it was in ~~eighty nine.~~ '89. Well then my dad would have been ~~seventy three to eighty nine~~ '73 to '89. Sixteen. ~~I think~~ He told us a story one time about how they were building this house and they had it all built except to plaster on the inside. They plastered on the inside. And he said they plastered with mud. I don't know what kind of mud it was. But Grandpa and Grandma went to town or something. They left the place for a while. And he said, "Well, I was plastering there and working." And when they got back they told him that there had been an Indian uprising. And he didn't know anything about it. It seemed like they were gone several days. Where they went to I couldn't say. But that was when Sitting Bull stirred up the Indians and all around they heard about it and they were warned and they barricaded one of the hills out there. But Sitting Bull was captured so that ended all right. Oh, and this Grandpa Longhurst, he was a very industrious person and he had experience in farming. ~~and so on, you know.~~ So things went pretty good then.

Larry: Was he able to keep the land from your grandmother's first husband then?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. Just that one homestead. It was just a homestead. And Grandpa hadn't ~~lived here long enough.~~ proved up on it yet. But my grandmother did. And so she had that. And then this Grandpa, stepgrandpa, took a homestead. That was our home then. And where the stone house was built, that was his homestead and then he took a piece of

railroad land. And when my dad was ~~twenty one~~ 21 he took a homestead ~~and~~ ON another piece of railroad land. That way we managed to get a big farm together. And then they bought some pasture land. That was a half a section on the south of the homestead, I think. It was railroad land. So when Grandpa Longhurst ~~left~~ worked the place there were about seven quarters I think that they had.

Larry: ~~I wanted to ask you~~ . Did your dad go to school then ~~out in the country~~ in that area all the way through elementary school I imagine. Well he would have gone to school in Germany and Illinois.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. My dad was, as far as he went, he was quite well educated. That is he was thorough, thoroughly educated. And he said when they arrived in Illinois the first thing they did they went to school. And when the English school vacation started, why then he went to a German school that they still had then. Then when they came to North Dakota there weren't any schools and his mother was, (I suppose his father was too) terribly worried about that. But there was a lady...wife of another homesteader living not too far away from their home, a mile or so, so my grandmother made arrangements with that lady to teach him. So he said, "I sat on one side of the table and she sat on the other." She taught him then until they got the schoolhouse built. Now this old gentleman that had his feet frozen he helped build this schoolhouse. And this is an old treasures book. School treasures book. And ~~right in~~ here he got a warrant for his services in helping build that schoolhouse. He got seven dollars for helping build the schoolhouse. But he didn't cash that check before he died. What's the date on that?

Larry: ~~February eighth, eightoon eighty-seven~~ February 8th, 1887.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. See he worked on that schoolhouse and they must not have paid them right away. They were short of money. The

school districts didn't have any money then either. And Grandma ~~I think~~ got that check. 'Cause Grandpa died in March. ~~Yes. And that schoolhouse...~~

Larry: Can you tell me the name of this neighbor lady that taught your father?

Mrs. Conitz: I think her name was Mrs. Krause. But she moved away. A lot of those people stayed until they proved....And then it was just too much for them, you know. Dry seasons and so on. They just moved away. Yes. This is a sod barn that they built. The house is over ~~X~~ there.

Larry: I was going to ask you what the name of the church group was in Illinois that sponsored, or, you said there were 200 ~~two hundred~~ people that came from Illinois to New Salem.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, that was this German Evangelical....~~The church that we.~~ It was a Reformed church later on but at the time they came it was Evangelical, German Evangelical Church.

Larry: Do you know if they had negotiations then with a land company? Was it a land company that was finding all these people land when they got here?

Mrs. Conitz: The railroad company was anxious for people to come out here. You see the bridge across the Missouri had just been built in '82 ~~eighty-two~~ and the railroad company was....now this says here, "In the early 1880's ~~eighteen eighties~~ the German Evangelical Lutheran Church of Illinois had been sponsoring colonies of German immigrants to settle in Dakota Territory on homesteads. The Northern Pacific Railroad was instrumental in bringing these new settlers to Dakota Territory."

Larry: Now this fellow that you said his name was Mister Look or F. Look...

Mrs. Conitz: Lifk.

Larry: Lifk. He worked for the Northern Pacific then?

Mrs. Conitz: He probably did. I don't know if he worked for himself or.... But his job was to go out and show the homesteaders.... The house that he built was the very first house built in New Salem. He must have done pretty well because he built quite a nice large house. It's up on the east edge of town here. Still in good shape. ~~Did you ever see this anniversary booklet?~~

~~Larry: No.~~

~~Mrs. Conitz: Well, it gives you an awful lot about New Salem. This is the anniversary booklet of New Salem.~~

Larry: What ever happened to the old immigration house then? Did that last for quite a while or did that...

Mrs. Conitz: I ~~really~~ don't know. I always wondered too just who took that building. Most likely somebody took it over and used it for something else. But generally those old buildings stood there for years. Now it may have been standing there when I was growing up. It surely was. But...I wish I had the sense that I think I've got now, I wish I'd had that when I was growing up. I'd ask my Dad questions. I didn't ask much.

Larry: I didn't either until later.

Mrs. Conitz: This old Grandpa that froze his feet he was buried in a grave right north of Sims. See it was in the wintertime and there was no transporatation, you know, gettin' anyplace. And there was snow. That winter was particularly, very heavy snow. And they buried him there. And he lay there on the hillside from ~~eighty seven~~ '87 until about ~~nineteen hundred and three~~ 1903. And then my dad and my uncle and a couple of cousins that had come out at the same time and this Grandpa Longenhurst moved his body up to the Peace Cemetary.

Larry: What year ~~then~~ did your dad start going to an actual country school after being taught by this neighbor lady?

Mrs. Conitz: Well, the schoolhouse was built in ~~eighty-six~~ '86, before my grandfather died and then the next spring I think they started. In those days they'd only have about two months at a time. And generally in the summer, you know, through the summer, maybe in May and June, something like that. And then we'd have a couple months in the fall. Well that was extended and they had six months later on and seven months and gradually they increased their terms until we had our regular nine months.

Larry: And your dad took a homestead too that, when he was ~~twenty-one~~ 21.

Mrs. Conitz: When he was ~~twenty-one~~ 21 he took a homestead also.

Larry: That would have been in ~~eighteen ninety~~ 189... He was born in ~~seventy-three~~ '73, right?

Mrs. Conitz: ~~Seventy-three~~ '73.

Larry: So that would have been ~~ninety-four~~ '94.

Mrs. Conitz: Yeah. His birthday was in November. Oh, this is the schoolhouse. That school building is still in good shape. It was used until about ~~ten~~ 10 years ago. That's when the Judson school district was annexed to this New Salem district. And then they sold the old schoolhouses out there. And this schoolhouse had three ~~boards~~ floors in it and was very heavy. They could hardly move it. Being such an old school they had worn out that many floors. And now my nephew has it out there and he's using it for a shop. One day I was looking at that old schoolhouse and I said to ~~them~~ him, I said, "Do you know that's...I was baptised in this building? And my grandparents, my stepgrandparents, my stepgrandfather, they were married in that building?" See, The minister would come out from this church in New Salem and put on services about twice a month during the summer ~~so~~ when it was so he could travel. This is how our schoolhouse looked when we had a school program one time. That was in ~~nineteen twelve~~ 1912. I wasn't going to school then.

Larry: That was also used as a church.

Mrs. Conitz: It was used for church services, yes. I think it was until ~~nineteen twenty five~~ 1925 that they decided here in New Salem that the people had transportation now and ~~they didn't have to...~~ the minister didn't have to come out anymore. So people could come into church. So that's what we did.

Larry: How far is this country schoolhouse-church from New Salem?

Mrs. Conitz: Well, it was about ~~two~~ ten miles.

Larry: North and west?

Mrs. Conitz: North and west, yes. At first it was ~~ten~~ 10 miles and then they moved it so the school would be one of two schools in the district. That was the only school at first. And then they moved it a couple miles west and built another school on the east side. Then it was a little bit further, about ~~twelve~~ 12 miles from town.

Larry: Who were some of the early neighbors that your grandmother and stepgrandfather had? Or your real grandfather before he died? Who were some of the other people that settled?

Mrs. Conitz: Well, there was Zetlows, Singers, Bolson, Tridays, Freelings. I have an aunt living in town here. She's my aunt by marriage, she's a Freeling daughter. She's ~~eighty two~~ 82 and she remembers quite a bit, well she remembers everything. And she remembers some of the things that were going on at that time.

Larry: Were all of these neighbors of your grandmother and grandfather, ~~were they~~ all members of this group that had moved up?

Mrs. Conitz: A great many of them were, yes. Nearly all of them were. Yes.

Larry: And they were all Germans from Russia?

Mrs. Conitz: No, no. Not from Russia. They were all from Germany. And most of them stopped off in Illinois and then they came out here. No, the German-Russians came later. I can remember when

they came. Just droves of them come in during, oh about ~~nineteen six, seven,~~ 1906-7 in there. I was a little girl. And they settled much, still further west. Twenty-four miles from New Salem.

Larry: Well, it'd be closer to Glen Ullin, then, do you think?

Mrs. Conitz: More north of Glen Ullin. Quite a ways north. Mes. And there's people living out there yet, except those ones that have died. That came from that. And those people talked German. My dad got along fine with them. He raised lots of horses and that's the first thing that they needed was a team of good strong horses and they ~~would~~ come and buy the horses.

Larry: Now when your dad was ~~twenty-one~~ 21 he took up a quarter section homestead himself.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes.

Larry: Did he live at home yet with his stepdad and his mother?

Mrs. Conitz: ~~Yes he lived with my~~ Yes, he did. Because they just had one other boy and my dad was the main helper. And then when he was about ~~twenty-eight~~ 28 he was married to my mother.

Larry: So that would have been then in...?

Mrs. Conitz: Nineteen-o-one, they were married. And her parents ~~came, they~~ didn't exactly come with the colony, but they got out here through that too. They came a year later. Grandpa Nagel. He came a year later. He came in ~~eighty-four~~ '84 and he took a homestead too and got things started, a house built, a small house and then he went back to Chicago and got the family. There were six children in my mother's family at that time, but there was one born out here and they were neighbors too. They belonged to that same church but they came out a little bit later. The first church group came in ~~eighty-three.~~ '83.

Larry: Now this group that met in the schoolhouse, ~~that had their church services in the schoolhouse,~~ was that a chapter or a regrouping of Germans who were Reformed Lutherans from Illinois?

~~I mean was that the name of the church or the group that met in that schoolhouse?~~

Mrs. Conitz: No, it was this German Evangelical Lutheran.

Larry: Oh, but that was the same church that [redacted] they had gone to in Illinois.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. That was the group. Even in Germany my folks had that kind of a church, ~~little church there.~~ In German it was Deutches Evgaleca Freedons Demindy. (laughs) Evangalica Friedens

Larry: So your parents had gone to school together ~~then probably~~ or had gone to church together out here.

Mrs. Conitz: Oh, yes. All those people went to church together, yes. Funerals and weddings and all those things. Now my mother didn't go ~~to church or go~~ to school out in this country. She had what education she had she got in Chicago.

Larry: Before they came?

Mrs. Conitz: Before they came out here. And she only got to about the third grade. But my dad was probably about fifth or sixth grade. That's what he got. He was a big boy. He was about ~~seventeen~~ 17 years old when he was going to school out here in that old schoolhouse.

Larry: There were a lot of cases of that weren't there? Where people or boys would have to spend so much time at home helping their parents that they would continue going to school even though they were ~~sixteen~~ 16 or ~~seventeen~~ 17.

Mrs. Conitz: Oh, yes. My husband told about that too now. He came in ~~nineteen nine~~ 1909. He was one of the smaller kids. And he said they didn't have a schoolhouse built. So they had school in their house, their living room. Now it wasn't a very big room. And he said then they'd have a teacher. There was one lady teacher and those big boys they were all ~~seventeen, eighteen~~ 17, 18 years old, maybe older, but their parents wanted 'em to learn to read a little

bit you know. There was no education out here otherwise. And he said the teacher called school at ~~nine o'clock~~ 9:00 in the morning and by noon all the boys were out in the barn. ~~As~~ Because they began to act up she'd say, "Get out." And they'd go out to the barn.

Larry: Now where did your husband's family settle?

Mrs. Conitz: They settled out there too, only a little further east, near Youngtown. Close to Youngtown. See, there was Bluegrass, that's where we were and...

Larry: Was that a settlement or an actual town there called Bluegrass?

Mrs. Conitz: There was a postoffice. And a creamery and the families of these two. My husband's family, the Conitzes lived there. In fact they had their home in the same building where the store was. In Bluegrass. And then across the road there was the creamery and then there was the man who ran the creamery, the buttermaker, they called him. And that creamery was kind of a cooperative thing. The farmers all around...I don't know if they put money into it, They must have to build the thing. My dad was in that and had an office, secretary or something. But I was very small then. I can just remember that that building burned up, that creamery. And then they rebuilt. And that old building is still out there. It belongs to my brother-in-law. He uses it for a grainery or something.

Larry: But there were no rail lines from there?

Mrs. Conitz: No. The railroad was down here. And anybody that wanted to come to New Salem, they had to drive for miles on both sides of the railroad. There were people that came down from Hazen, south of Hazen. That was before the railroad was put through up there too. And it would take 'em two or three days to come to town. I remember people coming from the northwest and staying overnight at our house 'cause it was too far to make it in one trip.

Larry: On their way to New Salem.

Mrs. Conitz: Yeah. In the wintertime, especially. And they'd stay overnight and ~~came~~ go back the next night.

Larry: So you had kind of a halfway house.

Mrs. Conitz: That's what it was. All those places were. Anybody would take anybody in, you know. Give 'em lodging overnight and get warmed up and have food and everything.

Larry: ~~Now they were...~~ Your mother had seven brothers and sisters?

Mrs. Conitz: There were seven in the family. There were four sisters and two brothers in her family.

Larry: Did all these people that came up from Illinois, ~~did they~~ retain pretty close contact? ~~I mean, would they...well, I suppose they went to church together.~~

Mrs. Conitz: They went to church as much as they could, you know. It was hard for them to attend services regularly the year round. But in the, from April as soon as the weather was nice and the minister could come out, then we'd go over to the schoolhouse for services. And we got there one way or the other. My dad talked about one neighbor. Kreckles was another family that lived near there. About three miles I think they had to church. And to school. The school was right in the middle of the district. And they came to church with a ~~stormboat~~ stoneboat and a pair of oxen. They passed my grandparents' place there. She was out in the garden near that old sod house. And she didn't hear them coming and when she did raise up, she frightened the oxen. And they took off. Oxen were very hard to handle if they took a notion to go. And it was quite a spill I guess. They laughed about it, but nobody got hurt, I guess.

Larry: Were oxen used a lot in those early days for work animals?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. The horses that were brought up from Illinois, a lot of 'em were horses that had been worked out. Especially from Chicago. One lady told me not too long ago, Mrs. Hayden, she said "You know they had a streetcar strike about that time in

the ~~eighties--eighty-one~~ 1880's 1881 or so in Chicago. And the streetcars were all put in a shed. They used horses to pull the streetcars. And those horses were sold to these farmers that were going out to farm.

Larry: And they were already worked out.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. And they weren't just too good. I heard my dad say one of their horses was fairly good. I don't know where they picked up their team. The other one wasn't too good. Now I don't know, did they have oxen? I couldn't tell you for sure, but the neighbors around there did have oxen and some of them had one ox and one horse and just whatever they could get together, you know.

Larry: ~~What kind of machines would they have used in those days for...well, I don't suppose they had machines to do planting.~~ Did they broadcast by hand?

Mrs. Conitz: Broadcast by hand. Yeah. My dad would tell how they'd do that. They had a bag over their shoulder, you know. Real rhythmic, you know, so it would get spread out. Then they'd probably go over it with a harrow and work it in that way. And I can remember the thing that he used for planting corn. I see there's one out here at this church museum that we had out here. And it was a thing about this high and it had two handles on top and they put the corn in and they opened up one, stomp it into the ground and open it and the right number of kernels would fall into the earth and then they'd close it again. There wouldn't be much of a hole down below and they'd stomp that. ~~And had a good time pumping seeds and....~~ And plant pumpkin seeds and... until I guess they tried planting corn with a regular grain drill later and then they got the corn planter.

Larry: How would they do the threshing in the ~~eighties~~ 1880's and early ~~nineties~~ 1890's?

Mrs. Conitz: They did it with horsepower. My folks belonged to

the company. A bunch of fellows went together and they had [illegible] horsepower. I can just remember that horse power. I was quite small. A man sat in the center of this thing and the horses went around and they had about five teams, I think, something like that and he had to keep them moving. And there was the power takeoff that went over to the thresher and you know at first they didn't even have feeders on those threshers. They had to work back there and put the grain in. And in front where the blower was they had to be taken away by hand. So it was a dirty job. Here's a picture of an old threshing machine. Here's Mister Wood. They pronounced it Kuck because it's a German name. He was quite a slicker, I guess. He got the farmers out there and he took 'em for all he could get.

Larry: Oh, that's right. The wrong side up thing happened outside of New Salem, didn't it?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. Right over east here. Mister Christianson and Mister Christianson got here about ~~twelve~~ 12 hours before the regular train came through with these settlers. Somehow the train that he was on dumped him off about two miles east of New Salem and all his stuff. He had horses and wagons and a plow. He had one plow, picked that up somewhere. And dumped him off there and he stayed overnight under a ~~loader~~ wagon box. He was ~~twenty~~ 21 [illegible] years old. And the next day the group came on the train.

Larry: But he was with that group?

Mrs. Conitz: He wasn't with them. He was ahead of them, but still he belonged to this church. He must have gotten the idea from that group of settlers that came out of the church.

Larry: He sounds Scandinavian.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. He was born in the northern part of Germany, [illegible] close to Schleswig-Holstein. Or in there. That's where he was born, I think, and it was close to Denmark. So that's where he got his

Danish name. Otherwise, he was German. He has two daughters living in town now.

Larry: You don't remember then your grandfather or your step-grandfather or your father telling you about early farmers using threshing floors or these flailing sticks that they would thresh with.

Mrs. Conitz: No. The only thing that I ever saw of that was when my mother threshed beans or things like that. There was a man down in New Salem, a little bit over to the side there, and he had a threshing machine and he came through the country there and threshed for the people after ~~that power or~~ that horsepower deal was given up.

Larry: But your stepgrandfather had gone in with some other people to buy the horsepower rig that they used.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. It was a company outfit. And then the threshing machines would come through. I remember there were a Johnson outfit from Sims. There were several brothers and they had a big outfit and they came through and they threshed for us a couple of times. Nineteen hundred and eight, or earlier than that--~~nineteen six, seven, eight.~~ 1906, '07, '08. But in ~~nineteen nine~~ 1909 my father joined up with a --we called it a company rig--there were ~~fifteen~~ 15 farmers in that and they were the Hawleys and those people. They were further south. We were about the furthest one northwest here and there were ~~fifteen~~ 15 farmers. They had to have enough so they had ~~fifteen~~ 15 rigs--hay racks, you know, to haul the bundles. And it was a big one. When they came in, there was around ~~twenty~~ 20 men or so. And my mother used to bake bread, piles of it, you know, so that she'd have enough food. And they had their own meat. Pork and cured hams and things like that.

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Larry: So when farmers would go together and ~~buy~~ form a company to buy a threshing machine, they wouldn't use a cook car then to feed

the people that were on the threshing crew?

Mrs. Conitz: No. Our crew didn't, but there were some that did.

Larry: You were saying there was a man who came from Glen Ullin...

Mrs. Conitz: Hebron, ~~I believe he was.~~ Between Hebron and Glen Ullin. His name was Stachey and he had a cook car. But they never came to our place to thresh so I never saw a cook car. In fact, that cook car was purchased by my brother-in-law later and he added it to his house. It's in that house. You can't see it now, but it's in there just the same. It's a kitchen.

Larry: Would these threshing crews hire extra men, ~~hired men besides the farmers that would~~ to help do the threshing? Would they have to take on added help?

Mrs. Conitz: Oh, yes. Every fall when it was time to go threshing why generally my father would go himself but sometimes he would send a man and they each had to furnish a wagon and a team of horses.

Larry: ~~Did you or~~ Did your dad always have a hired man through those years?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes he did. Even when my grandfather was there. There were three...he and my father and they would hire a man. ~~and when~~ They had one man by the name of Charlie Keller. He was a cowboy. He stayed there, oh, ~~indefinitely~~, for years, especially during the winter. Those hired men would ~~they~~ were glad to get a place to stay for the winter and they would just work for their board and room.

Larry They'd get wages in the summertime and in the wintertime they'd work for...

Mrs. Conitz: But I think my folks always paid their men. It wasn't so much. Fifteen dollars a month, maybe. But the fellows that came to work for us, they would tell us. "I worked a certain place, worked for my room, board and tobacco." They had to have their tobacco!

Larry: Did your father and your stepgrandfather ~~did they~~ have most of that acreage cultivated then or was most of it grazing land?

Mrs. Conitz: Lots of it was grazing land because they just couldn't plow up all that land. My dad got a tractor in ~~nineteen eighteen~~ 1918, a Titan tractor, and then he began to break bigger fields. They would break where it was easy, ~~the~~ you know, where the land was smooth and everything, but there was just lots of grass for grazing.

Larry: Can you remember or did your dad ever tell you about when that area was just open range? ~~when you could take your cattle out and just let them run~~?

Mrs. Conitz: I remember that because they would let the horses... when the fields were cleared, why the horses would just go and the cattle could go as far as they wanted to. And in the spring they'd round up their horses. The cattle they sorta kept their eye on so they didn't get too far. There were some children going to school, our school there, and they had to stay out of school every other day to herd the cattles. That's the way they'd say it. And they didn't have any fences to keep the cattle in at first and they just had to herd the cattle. And my mother's brother, he herded cattle. He didn't go to school. He had very little education because he herded cattle. This story is interesting...

Larry: Your mother's brother.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. Fred Nagel.

Larry: ~~I wanted to ask you something else about... oh,~~ would the farmers wives, the farmers that joined together to form the company or cooperative to buy this large threshing machine, would the farmers' wives help out the lady that was doing all the cooking and baking and everything?

Mrs. Conitz: Oh, yes. Very often. Different ladies would come and help my

mother and sometimes we'd have a girl helping us through that period.

Larry: ~~This might sound like a strange question but~~ Can you remember examples of threshing meals? You know, what a meal would consist of--the average meal, the basic things that were in each meal.

Mrs. Conitz: Well, we always had ham. We had bacon for breakfast, of course, and lots of eggs. But they used quite a bit of pork== ham and then...

Larry: Would the breakfasts be one of these big German breakfasts?

Mrs. Conitz: A big one, yes. And my mother would fix a pot of beans. She had a big beanpot. It was a gallon jug. And she'd have those beans ready to bake. She'd put 'em in the oven at night and have that stove going good. It was an old coal stove. By morning she'd have the best baked beans you ever saw. They were just delicious. I enjoyed those meals too. I was just a kid. And then they would butcher something, maybe butcher a pig, so we had fresh meat. And there were a lot of people who...we didn't do it... maybe my grandparents did, but I, Grandpa Nagels 'cause they raised sheep,they would butcher a sheep so they'd have fresh meat. Course that meat had to be all cooked and used up 'cause it wouldn't keep when it was warm, you know. And later, after we had our little Ford car, my dad would run into town and get maybe a big chunk of meat, ~~ten~~ 10 pounds or ~~fifteen~~ 15 pounds or more, bring it home and my mother would roast it right away so it would keep and that would take care of a couple of meals. And the men would sleep out in the barn. They all had to bring their own bedding and sleep out in hay-lofts.

Larry: What meals would there be? ~~a breakfast and a lunch and, I mean, how were the...~~

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, there would be a good breakfast and that would

early, about ~~five-thirty, six.~~ 5:30, 6:00

Larry: What would the breakfast consist of?

Mrs. Conitz: Oh, cereal--oatmeal, especially, and lots of bread and bacon, eggs, beans, those baked beans my mother used to make. They had a lot and just a lot of good food that she could prepare herself. Pancakes, not waffles, but pancakes. She made pancakes, but I can't remember that she made pancakes for ~~breakfast~~ threshers too much because things had to be ready when they came in. But I know they had pancakes out there.

Larry: French toast?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, my grandmother used to serve French toast and they liked that real well. And for lunch, well it was bread and sliced sausage and cheese and coffee, a big potful of coffee It'd be so hot that they couldn't drink for a while. And for dinner beef, pork, ham, sauerkraut. Lots of potatoes. I remember when the threshing machine was coming, we kids would go out and dig potatoes and we'd dig a whole sackful, a ~~hundred~~ 100- pound sack, grain sack, and we had a little wagon and there had to be enough to last and there wouldn't be many left.

~~Larry: Potatoes were usually...well, they still are, I suppose, for a big crew like that they'd be fried or mashed.~~

~~Mrs. Conitz:~~ My mother would make fried potatoes for breakfast. French fries, you know. Have the grease real hot and then put the potatoes in, put the lid on; oh, they were good. Threshers got that, too. And maybe for supper we got something like that, you know. Lots of vegetables. Cabbage, beans...

Larry: Would you put up a whole crock of cabbage?

Mrs. Conitz: Oh, yes. She had big stone ~~pots~~ crocks, she called 'em stone ~~pots~~ crocks and one was especially large. I think it was ~~twenty-five~~ 25 gallons it would hold and she'd make that full of sauerkraut.

And, oh that was good. She had a big slaw cutter--this long. You don't see 'em very much anymore. She also put up beans that way. They called 'em schnitzelaum. They'd take the bean, you know, long bean, and they'd take a sharp paring knife and they'd slit. Schnitzelaum, you know, that's German for slivering and they were in real thin slices, cut on the diagonal, ~~you know~~ and then she packed them in jars just like sauerkraut and sprinkled a little salt on now and then and keep tamping it down with a potato masher ~~paddlemash~~ or something flat, you know. And then when the jar was full, there'd be a juice on there just like ~~like~~ with sauerkraut and she'd put a piece of ~~a~~ cloth on top and a dish with a stone on top. She'd tell me ~~"~~"Go get a big rock, Alice, and wash it off nice and clean, put that on top." Then she'd cover it with cloth, just like the sauerkraut and it would ferment and it would keep. That was before we had canning.

Larry: Would you add any water to the sauerkraut?

Mrs. Conitz: You didn't have to. You'd have the juice out of the sauerkraut. And the beans the same way. So it was quite a strong brine. She ~~I~~ would taste it to know just how much you had to make of it. It was quite salty. And then in the wintertime she'd go down in the basement and get a potful, a panful, as much as she needed for a meal or a few meals and freshen it. She'd boil it for awhile with clear water, maybe a few minutes, ~~you know~~ and then pour that off to get the salt out of it. And then she would boil it until the beans were done. Now those beans weren't as good as the beans we get now, those nice green beans, but with pork, especially, they were good. And she'd fix 'em with a cream sauce, make a cream sauce with milk, you know, and they were good.

Larry: You would do that with beans and sauerkraut both, boil them in fresh water to get the salt out?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, to get some of the salt out.

Larry: And then add some more fresh water and boil them just for a little while until...

Mrs. Conitz: M[illegible]. Boil them until they were done, you know. Test the beans. They were a little bit tougher. Sauerkraut didn't take so long.

Larry: But you could or your mother could keep that then, all winter long.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, that would keep. Until we got it used up, you know, during the winter. Never had any left by spring.

Larry: Would you have a barrel of pickles, then, too?

Mrs. Conitz: Oh, yes. Lots of pickles.

Larry: Would they be cured in crocks or barrels?

Mrs. Conitz: Yeah, in barrels. She didn't use wooden barrels very much. She just had these crocks.

Larry: Would they stay hard all winter long or would they get soft by spring? The pickles at the bottom of the crock?

Mrs. ConitZ: Well, as I remember it, those pickles, if there were any they were always good eating. Yes. I guess we'd clean 'em up, you know. Yes, they were always good. And then she would dry corn too. Sweet corn. She liked to raise sweet corn. We didn't like the field corn. That was a little tougher. We ate that if we had to. But sweet corn, she'd parboil it a little bit to set the milk. And then sliver it off, you know. And then spread that on cheesecloth on a frame. I think she used a window screen and put the cloth on top of it and set it out in the sun to dry. And when it was good and dry she'd put that in bags and hang it up in the pantry.

Larry: How would she fix that in the wintertime?

Alice: In the winter they would ~~do just like~~ put water on it and let the corn soak. Maybe it'd take, maybe all day. Or she'd set it. At night I think she'd put the water on the corn--a dishful, you know, as much as she was going to use. 'Cause it would swell. She'd let it stand overnight. And in the morning, then she'd boil that corn until it was done.

Larry: Was it good?

Bob: Yes, we just loved it.

Larry: That's the first time I've ever heard of doing that. Thank you very much, 'cause it sounds to me like it would be delicious.

Mrs. Conitz: It was good. Oh, yes, we...yes, you fixed it just the way you wanted it. My mother always creamed it. We milked cows so we had lots of cream. She'd dump a half a cup of cream in the corn and butter, salt and pepper.

Larry: Well, that sounds great. ~~Did she do anything?~~ Were there any other methods of preserving things from the vegetables that she would use, dry peas and navy beans.

Mrs. Conitz: They were all dried too, you know. Dried in bags. My grandmother--both grandmothers--would have bags of that stuff to last over the winter. Didn't have to buy much. They'd buy sugar and coffee, and my mother's parents, when they ran out of coffee, they brought a barrel of coffee with them when they came out and when they ran out of coffee, instead of buying all the coffee, they took barley and roasted it. Made coffee out of that. It was a brew, you know, but it wasn't too good. She said she couldn't stand that old barley coffee. I imagine it tasted like Postum.

Larry: Now when you dry peas, you don't want the pea to get too ripe, do you,? ~~even with.. they're dried when you would want to eat them. You don't let them get dry in the hull or in the~~

~~or in the pod?~~

Mrs. Conitz: Well, they did. They let 'em get ripe. Yeah, they were ripe. Just rattledy ripe. They could be planted in the spring.

Larry: So they were allowed to dry in the pod then?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. Yes. They let 'em get dry and then we'd pound 'em out, flail 'em out with something flat, ~~you know~~ and take away the leaves and the pods. Hold up in the wind like this and...peas and beans ...there were different kinds...dark ones and... then there were the China peas. My grandmother, my mother's mother had what you call China peas and they were kind of little three cornered things and they were yellow. These garbanzo beans make me think of them but then they weren't that large. They tasted like them.

Larry: And they would plant red beans, too? Kidney beans?

Mrs. Conitz: Oh, yes. Red kidney beans. They saved all their own seed, ~~you know~~ and then a neighbor lady might have a different kind and they'd exchange. And stay pretty much right in the neighborhood.

Larry: Did they have a root cellar ~~on their~~ below the ~~house~~ house? ~~or the sod house or the shale house?~~

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, I guess you could call it a root cellar. It was a cellar, and it was cool down there. We'd pack our potatoes down there, we'd have a big...

Larry: Now this was below the house.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, it was underneath the house. It was a cellar. We called ~~the~~ it the cellar and that's where everything was put--the sauerkraut and the beans, that's where we kept them.

Larry: Could you keep carrots and turnips and potatoes and things like that?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. Those things could be kept there too. We never had the kind of a root cellar that some people had. They would have dug in the side of a hill and things like that, but my mother had carrots. We had carrots until they were used up.

Larry: Were those packed in sand?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. Very often she'd put 'em in sand. I can remember that.

Larry: Were there any other kind of vegetables that you could keep fresh in the basement besides potatoes and carrots?

Mrs. Conitz: Oh, rutabagas, turnips.

Larry: Parsnips, I suppose.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. And pumpkins. My dad told about when they ~~when we~~ were living alone there before, during those years we found my grandfather died and we didn't have much. ~~you know~~ We couldn't raise much, but We did raise a lot of pumpkins on that newly broken-up land. And my dad said we had pumpkin soup every day. And he ~~said~~ said he got so sick and tired of it. It was bread and butter and this pumpkin soup. They had a cow so they got the milk and it was pretty slim living there, I guess, at that time. When they were first getting started. But later, after Grandpa Longhurst got into the family he took charge. He got pigs and...he was a farmer, he was trained for that, so we never worried about not having enough food. end.

Larry: I imagine a garden was a pretty big thing, though. You were pretty dependent upon a good garden. Do you know if farmers around that area had any trouble finding water?

Mrs. Conitz: Oh, yes. That water problem was a real bugaboo. This first grandpa of mine, he made a deep well and he never struck water. And that's why when they moved up to Grandpa Longhurst's homestead they could get water up there. It was up on a hill but they still could get water. They only had to go

down about ~~twenty-eight~~ 28, 30, ~~thirty~~ feet, something like that, and they would get water. But there wasn't a lot of water. Maybe three or four horses could drink the well dry. Then you'd have to let it run in again. So ~~we had~~ I don't know how many wells we had around the place--I can think of three right offhand. And the one near the house was very good water. It was hard water--made the best coffee. And my dad had, instead of having a wooden creamer, they had that all stoned out with niggerheads.

Larry: What were those?

Mrs. Conitz: Those rocks you see up on the prairie, ~~here~~, those real hard ones you know.

Larry: Oh, those granite field stones.

Mrs. Conitz: Yeah. And King would just go down that well, put his feet out and walk his way down. Oh, yes, they had a lot of trouble with water. Not being able to get water. Then finally a well driller came to our place. They hired him. And they had a well made down in the pasture, about ~~three quarters~~ 3/4's of a mile from the house. And got all kinds of water. Now they had plenty of water for their cattle. The cattle would have to go down that hill and my dad got a big storage tank and I can remember he'd say at night he'd say "I turned the windmill on now." He said, "At ~~twelve o'clock~~ 12:00 I'll go down and turn off the windmill." And he'd set the alarm and then he'd get up and walk down and turn off that windmill. But that way he kept the water for the cattle.

Larry: ~~Now~~ The wells that you had up by the house, ~~they~~ didn't have a windmill on them?

Mrs. Conitz: Not the first years, no. We pumped 'em by hand. They were all fairly easy to pump. But after we had the pasture

well, had used that for several years, then my dad said, "We'll try once more and see if we can get a deep well here and maybe we'll have water closer to the place by tomorrow." And they did and that was in ~~nineteen twenty~~ 1920 and they put a windmill on that right away. And that well is still working. My mother sold that farm to the Johnny Dahls out there and as far as I know that well is still working. They didn't pump it dry.

Larry: But ~~that was~~ one of the problems that different farmers ~~would have around there~~ had was getting a good well?

Mrs. Conitz: ~~Was getting a good well~~. The water wasn't very far down but not enough of it right where we lived. Now at Bluegrass, that's only two miles over. That's where I went to live after I was married, why they could dig a well in a half day and it would only be about ~~twelve~~ 12 feet deep. I know we hired a young kid and he dug that well. All of a sudden the water just ~~got struck~~ gushed up. But it was in a lower place and there was a spring nearby. And the water was close up.

Larry: And under pressure apparently.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. It just came in. But when we started a farm after we lived in Bluegrass for about ~~twenty-three~~ 23 years. My husband was a mail carrier out of Bluegrass. His folks owned this store and they had the post office there. And then the rural routes were just being started. So they got one started out there and that was nice. The farmers could get their mail and they'd been running way to New Salem and Bluegrass to get it. And we lived in Bluegrass, so it would be handy for his work. But he wanted to farm. He wanted to give up the mail hauling after all that time. It was a hard job in the wintertime. So we started a farm. And we had a lot of trouble getting water. We had one well made and then another one made. The sand would just come in and close it up And finally we

had one that we had to handle very carefully, not pump it too fast and we had water. But it was brown. So if we wanted wash water we'd have to get that from the dam, out of stock ponds. Every quarter of land had a couple.

Larry: I wanted to ~~go back now to your grandfather and~~ ask you what people used in the ~~eighteen nineties~~ 1890's and ~~nineteen hundreds on up to when you were a little girl~~ 1900's for fuel in the wintertime.

Mrs. Conitz: Kerosene. That's what we almost always had to burn. And then we had the old kerosene lamps.

Larry: But what would they use for heating?

Mrs. Conitz: For heating, it was coal. It wasn't too good a grade of coal from most of those mines there. We had one right down on our pasture. And we'd go down and get the coal and bring it up and store it in the shed.

~~Mrs. Conitz:~~ But later years we would haul our coal from a better mines that was over near Youngtown where they had a good hard coal and it was down deeper. It was very heavy, I mean, good lasting coal, hard coal. You'd put a chunk in, it would last awhile.

Larry: Now where was Youngtown? ~~from where your grandfather your stepgrandfather~~...

Mrs. Conitz: ~~East. Yes.~~ Youngtown is just about due north of New Salem and Bluegrass was about five or six miles west of Youngtown. See, they had those little post offices and prairies ~~you know~~ located different places to make it handy for the people.

Larry: Was Youngtown any bigger than Bluegrass? ~~or was it...~~

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, I'd say it was bigger. They had two families living there and then a blacksmith and a store and a post office. It was ~~just~~ a little bit bigger. Yes. Not too much. During those years, ~~We~~ were bustling, I'm telling you, those little post offices and country stores were

really bustling places. And [redacted] all that stuff had to be lugged out there on wagons. I remember my husband working with his dad, you know, and they'd have a wagon, they'd have to have three boxes on it, you know. And then they'd have a seat up on top of that, and it took three of four horses to pull it. From New Salem out to Bluegrass store.

Larry: Just delivering goods from New Salem to the store.

Mrs. Conitz: Getting it out there to replenish the shelves, [redacted] and then the farmers would come there and get their supplies. They had almost everything that you would need. They had shoes and stockings and overalls and nose baskets for the horses. (laughs)

Larry: Saddle blankets, I suppose.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. Just about everything that a person would need. I don't know how he got it all packed in that little store although he did get a bigger store later.

Larry: But in the early years your stepgrandfather burned his own coal.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. Yes, we had our little coal mine there. My mother called it dirt hole 'cause she didn't like that coal very well but it worked. It kept the house warm.

Larry: Did you ever use coal from the Sims mines?

Mrs. Conitz: No, that was a little bit too far. They had pretty good coal down there, but that was too far. There were coal mines all around. There was a good mine about three miles from our place. It belonged to my uncle, the Carricks. And every fall [redacted], during those years, my dad would send the hired man or he'd go himself with a team of horses and go over to that mine and then they would scrape [redacted] coal, get the dirt off of it and then they would get the coal out and load it up and haul it home. But it would always take several weeks of

scraping to get that. And anybody that wanted coal, he'd go down there and do that and that way he'd get part of his coal bill paid. Yeah. He had good coal. It was hard.

Larry: Now the other places you mentioned before...the coal mine that had good hard coal...was that a mine that went down in the ground?

Mrs. Conitz: No. It was scraped. Around here they were mostly scraped off, you know. ~~There weren't, not out in the country.~~ Well, I suppose you heard about the big mine they had in New Salem. That was a deep mine.

Larry: No.

Mrs. Conitz: There's an air shaft I guess it's called. It's right over here on the edge of town. Yes, that was a deep mine. ~~I don't know just what years...~~ In the ~~twenties~~ '20's it was still running, and it belonged to McCormick family, McCormick and Jib (?), when McCormick was here. And they'd get the coal out of the mine. They had their donkeys in the bottom. Quite a few people worked in that mine, men around town here yet that worked in that mine. And then one time they had a fire over there. It must have been the later part of the ~~thirties~~ '30's. They had a fire and it burned things so that they never could use it anymore. Burned timbers. They didn't even get the donkeys out of there. They got a lot of coal out of there. They also had a mine over ~~at~~ Easton, of New Salem just across ~~thirty-one~~ #31. I remembered that. Hearing about it.

Larry: Was that a surface mine too or was that a deep mine?

Mrs. Conitz: No, I think that was down. ~~I think it was down. I'm not sure.~~ Yeah, I'm sure that was down because later in some places the prairie caved in. And one man lost a team of horses that way. They got into one of those, just enough that ~~you know~~, the horses couldn't get out.

Larry: Did you ever go to Sims when it was still a prospering town? ~~As a girl?~~

Mrs. Conitz: The first time I went through Sims, it was in ~~nineteen seventeen~~ 1917 and it was pretty much on the downhill then. And then they had so many fires after that and finally there wasn't anything left of Sims. Not much. ~~I don't know... maybe you're not interested in pictures.~~

Larry: ~~Well, let's see. We don't have too much time left on the tape so we can maybe finish talking about this and then we'll...~~ Were there a lot of big farms or big ranches around this area when ~~your grandfather or your father or when~~ you were a little girl? ~~living around here?~~

Mrs. Conitz: Not so many big ones up around our neighborhood. They were all homesteaders with their little quarter or two quarters or three quarters, you know. But the bigger ranches were south, along the Heart River, ~~down south here~~.

Larry: But there were some bigger spreads down there.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, ~~I'd say they were quite...yes,~~ there was a Wicks ranch, my dad talked about that. That was closer to Flasher. The Ornstens had quite a bit down there. A lot of people I didn't even know.

Larry: Were there any other foundries, brick foundries around, besides the one at Hebron and the one down at Sims.

Mrs. Conitz: Not that I know of. ~~Not that I know of.~~ Just that there was a good grade of clay down here at Sims and that's what they used for the bricks. They made the schoolhouse in New Salem ~~here~~ from that clay and my sister saved a brick. She found it up there. I'm going to put it out here in this museum. (laughs) To look at that brick I don't think it was very good. But that schoolhouse was still standing.

Larry: The old capitol was made out of brick.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, that was Sims brick.

Larry: ~~How often....~~ Well, let's talk about transportation for awhile, now. When your stepgrandfather was farming, where would he deliver his grain~~s~~?

Mrs. Conitz: To New Salem.

Larry: Did a lot of farmers north and west of New Salem ~~in the area where your grandfather and your father farmed did they~~ get their flour in the fall from this New Salem flour mill?

Mrs. Conitz: Some did, yes. Some did. And some went to Glen Ullin. They had a flour mill there. But I think years back there was a Mister Dietz. I think that he made flour. My folks didn't do that. They would buy their flour. I don't know why. My mother I guess probably thought that she got better bread from the flour that was shipped in. But in ~~nineteen eighteen~~ 1918, ~~when~~ during war time, ~~nineteen seventeen, eighteen,~~ and we just couldn't get decent white flour. I remember my father took grain to Glen Ullin and had it ground. And then we had a pretty good grade of flour.

Larry: But this mill ~~here~~ in New Salem, ~~they~~ did custom grinding, didn't they? You could bring your grain in and get it ground into your own flour.

Mrs. Conitz: I think they did. Now I couldn't say for sure. I'm sure they did. ~~I'm sure they did, yes.~~

Larry: Where was the dividing line between New Salem and Glen Ullin? I mean, how far would, how far west would New Salem draw farmers for marketing and buying groceries and stuff like that? Ten miles or ~~twelve~~ 12 miles?

Mrs. Conitz: I think not more than ~~ten~~ 10. From there on to Glen Ullin. There just seemed to be a dividing line there. ~~I think that's about halfway to Glen Ullin.~~ ~~About seventeen~~ 11

~~miles to Glen Ullin.~~ Probably ten, twelve miles. And then they went over there to do business, their banking and everything.

Larry: Did New Salem have more drawing power ~~do you think~~ than Glen Ullin? ~~I mean, if you lived between the two would you be more apt to go to New Salem to do your marketing or Glen Ullin?~~ Or wasn't there any real difference between the two?

Mrs. Conitz: ~~I just don't remember.~~ It was just whatever place was easiest to get to, ~~you know.~~ New Salem was quite a busy place ~~at the time.~~ They had churches. The business people saw to it that they got their Catholic church and Presbyterian church besides this German Evangelical Lutheran Church that we had because people came in that belonged to other religions, faiths. ~~you know.~~

Larry: And the road to New Salem and Glen Ullin was along the railroad tracks. ~~You would go north or south until you hit the railroad track and then...~~

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. The road was pretty much straight west to Glen Ullin. The railroad swung on down into Almont and it isn't so many years ago, ~~you know,~~ the change that made it straight across. Thirties, I think it was. The railroads tried to help as many people as they could, take in as much territory as they could. By going down to Almont they ~~brought~~ could take care of the settlers that were south of Almont, almost down to Carson. But we had friends living down there and they came up to Almont to do their shopping for lumber and stuff like that, because the railroad was up here. That really attracted, really was what brought in everything that they needed.

Larry: ~~Now we've been talking about your parents and your~~

~~grandparents.~~ You got married in ~~nineteen~~ 19...

Mrs. Conitz: ~~Twenty-eight.~~ ...28

Larry: Twenty-eight. So you would have been about ~~twenty-~~ 27 ~~s~~ then. Did you go to school ~~yourself~~ in that same school,? ~~the one you showed me a picture of?~~

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, the school that my dad went to. When I started school there it was just a bare schoolhouse. And there was a splotch of ink on the ceiling. My dad said that happened when he was going to school. The stove stood in the middle of the room and one morning the ink bottles were frozen, so this one boy set the ink bottle on the stove and he left the top on it and it all of a sudden exploded. And that ink hit that ceiling. And when I started school in ~~nineteen hundred and nine,~~ 1909 that ink splotch was still up there. They had never painted that schoolhouse. And then in later years I taught in that school and we had basket socials to raise money. We usually didn't have any books and o'course some of my teachers had basket socials too, so they started the library. But when I was there, I added to that, and one day I told the school board, I said, "Now, if you fellows will furnish the labor, I'll buy the paint for the schoolhouse inside." Because it looked so bad. And they felt a little bit ashamed of themselves. And I guess they had the money. So they said, "That's all right, we'll paint the building." And they did a good job. They not only painted but they put sheet rock in there so that it's warmer. It was a very cold schoolhouse. We could only have school until Christmas. And then we'd have two or three months off. And then in the spring when it got warm we'd have school again.

Larry: What years was that then? In the ~~twenties~~ 20's?

Mrs. Conitz: I started teaching in ~~nineteen twenty~~ 1920. And I taught in that district for ~~about five years~~ six years, ~~it was~~. I taught in different districts before that.

Larry: Did you go to that school yourself for all eight grades?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. We all did. There were five of us children and we all went to that school until we finished the eighth grade. Then we came into town. Stayed with our grandparents or some relative or boarded out and took our high school.

Larry: Did you go on then to college? ~~too, after that?~~

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. I went to school in Dickinson and Valley City. We all did.

Larry: And then came back and taught in the same school that your father had gone to school in.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. In fact I started to teach right out of high school. No training at all. They could do that in those days. The certificate I got was called a fourth grade certificate. And you could teach right out of high school. And then after you had had two years of experience it would be extended another three years. So I took advantage of that. I taught ~~for~~ the two years. And then when it was done I could teach another three years and before the three years were up I thought I better get myself to school. So I went to college and ~~got~~ finished enough so I could get another certificate. A Higher certificate that lasted longer. And I did that until I was married and then I wasn't interested in teaching anymore.

Larry: Now there were five of you in your family. How many children did you and your husband have?

Mrs. Conitz: We just had one daughter.

Larry: And you were married in ~~twenty-eight.~~ '28. Did your husband then have a farm then of his own ~~at that time?~~?

Mrs. Conitz: Well, yes, he was getting started. He had purchased a quarter of land from his dad and his dad had given up the place at Bluegrass, and then we bought some more land about a mile away and then later on we moved out ~~there~~ and built a farm there. So we had nine quarters at one time and then he sold some. And when he died in ~~sixty-five~~ '65--well, we moved to town in ~~sixty-three.~~ '63. We sold our farm in ~~sixty-three~~ '63 ~~and~~ So I just have two quarters left out there that I just kept ~~worked~~ for sentimental reasons I guess, because one quarter of land came from my dad and I just kept it. It's just handy.

Larry: And your husband was a rural mail carrier?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes.

Larry: For four years did you say or...?

Mrs. Conitz: For ~~twenty-three~~ 23 years. He started in ~~twenty-one~~ '21 and he resigned in ~~forty-four.~~ '44. ~~Yes. Twenty-three years. And~~ By that time he had gotten himself established with cattle.

Larry: So you lived on the farm all the while, ~~or kind of on the farm, all the while that he was delivering mail~~.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, we lived on the farm then. Yes. He'd hire a man to take care of the farm work in the mornings and then he'd be home in the afternoons. ~~And then~~ Later on he changed over to registered polled herefords. But he got sick. He had a heart attack and that was the end of that. We had to quit. Sold the cattle. We kept the land for a few years yet. Rented some of it out and tried to handle some of it ourselves. See, we were alone so I helped him many times out there on the tractor.

Larry: Did your daughter go to that school too?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes.

Larry: She did. ~~I imagine in~~ Three generations in the same little one-room schoolhouse.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, she did. Until eighth grade. Then she went to high school and junior college and university. She teaches out in California.

Larry: Was that customary for the children of farm families out in the country to go ahead and finish the eighth grade in their country school and then board in New Salem if they wanted to go to high school?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes.

This is Larry Sprunk and the following is the completion of the interview with Mrs. Alice Conitz that was held Sunday, June ~~second,~~ 2nd, ~~nineteen seventy four~~ 1974, at Mrs. Conitz's home in New Salem at approximately ~~one thirty~~ 1:30 in the afternoon.

Larry: I was talking last night to ~~Ernst Kaidl~~ Ernest Kaiedel, over south of Mandan ~~and he said that I was~~ and asking him where he ~~did his shopping~~ and ~~where~~ his parents bought most of their merchandise ~~hardware and stuff. And~~ He said that ~~a lot of~~ many people ~~back~~ in the early days would order from the catalogue. Was that done around here very much?

Mrs. Conitz: I can remember the first time we ordered anything from a catalogue. I suppose it was about ~~nineteen hundred and nine~~ 1909 or so. ~~And then~~ My mother ordered dried fruits, raisins, prunes, pears, apricots. She ordered codfish ~~fish~~ 86 We'd have a change ~~you know~~ of menu.

Larry: Was that ordered through ~~M~~ Montgomery Wards or Sears and Roebuck?

~~Mrs.~~ Conitz: Yeah, I think it was Montgomery, most likely. And then we gradually began using those after parcel post came in, why then we could order things from the catalogues. Otherwise we came to town here and got our clothing and everything. They had quite a few stores in town at one time. They must have had seven or eight.

Larry: And I suppose you would have to wait awhile when you ordered through the catalogue ~~before...~~

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, we waited a couple of weeks, you know, maybe two weeks or so. To mail the letter and for the things to get back.

Larry: ~~Now let me ask you about something that I have just thought about recently too because they used to come to my parents' place. I was born and raised outside of Enderlin, North Dakota. And I can remember fish salesmen coming around.~~ Can you remember people ~~coming~~ selling fish in the old days?

Mrs. Conitz: That wasn't so far back. I was ~~fifteen~~ 15 or ~~twenty~~ 20 years old--before I was married. Yes, they used to come out with fish.

Larry: In the wintertime.

Mrs. Conitz: Yeah. I can remember one time a man came through and he had horses on kind of an enclosed wagon. And he was selling fish. It was cold so they kept.

Larry: He had a trailer house or a sled house?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. But then later we sent for the fish ourselves. We'd send to Minnesota someplace and we'd geta ~~hundred~~ 100 pound box. There really wasn't a ~~hundred~~ 100 pounds in the box. There were ~~eighty five~~ 85 pounds. That's what it was. And we'd get any kind of fish we'd want. Just pay the difference in prices, you know. Herring were the cheapest. We ordered herring the first time and then my dad said, "Next time we'll get some better fish."

So we did. We had good fish.

Larry: They were shipped in on the railroad.

Mrs. Conitz: They were shipped in on the railroad. frozen, see?

~~Larry: From Detroit Lakes.~~

~~Mrs. Conitz: Yeah. It was lakes in Minnesota. I'm not sure that it was Detroit Lakes. It was where it was good and cold.~~

Larry: On the east side of the Missouri, ~~down along LaMoure and Dickey County,~~ there were ~~a lot of~~ gypsy peddlers or just gypsies and ~~then there were~~ Jewish peddlers that would come around ~~selling~~ with ~~hard wood or they would have...or this is what people tell me, they would have~~ wagons full of pots and pans and knives and forks and axes and hatchets and so forth. ~~and they would come around to farmers and peddle~~. Were there any peddlars around here?

Mrs. Conitz: I don't remember that kind of merchandise but they would come out here and peddle clothing--shirts and clothing and trinkets. And some real stinky perfume. It smelled you up. They'd give us a bottle of that and they'd stay overnight at our house because we had a big house. And in the evening if we'd see a peddlar coming, we'd run downstairs. "Peddlar coming." And they'd put the horse in the barn and stay overnight.

Larry: But most of these people would be peddling dry goods? ~~clothes or~~.

Mrs. Conitz: Yeah, clothing. Shirts and things like that. Socks.

Larry: Were there any gypsies traveling around here?

Mrs. Conitz: I don't remember ever seeing a gypsy. ~~There were a lot of~~ we read about them in stories.

Larry: They must have been just east of the Missouri. Because a lot of people that I talk to, you know, south of ~~ninety-four~~ #I-94. In the German-Russian area around Ashley and Ellendale, LaMoure and Oakes, they all remember gypsies coming, stealing chickens

or wanting a handout.

Mrs. Conitz: No, we never had any bad people going through. These peddlars, there'd be one man at a time and most of them Jewish. They never could talk very good English. ~~German or some foreign language.~~ They could understand us and we could understand them, but they were fairly decent. As far as I know they never did anything. We were just a little bit afraid of them because they were strange people, ~~us kids, you know,~~ but the folks always kept 'em overnight. Never turned ~~any~~ anybody away.

Larry: Did you have a wind charger or a standby plant? ~~thirty-two volt.~~

Mrs. Conitz: We never had a wind charger. We didn't when I was a girl. We bought a ~~stamp I-S~~ standby on our ~~thirty-two~~ 32 volt outfit. And we used that several years before the REA came in.

Larry: When did you get the standby plant. Do you remember?

Mrs. Conitz: We didn't get that until--oh, in the ~~forties~~ '40's, I think. Yes.

Larry: So then the REA came in the later ~~forties.~~ '40's

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, in ~~forty-seven~~ '47. I think that's when the poles came. We didn't hook up ~~until I guess~~ until the ~~fifties~~ '50's because we had just gotten the standby. Thought we'd get some use out of it first.

Larry: Was there a rural telephone line before that? ~~back in the thirties or twenties?~~

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, the first telepone line was built from out north west of Bluegrass and way down to New Salem. In ~~nineteen fourteen.~~ 1914. The farmers got together--they always had to help themselves--and certain ones, my ~~father~~ husband was one of 'em, he was a young fellow and wasn't married then. ~~married.~~ He went around with a paper and they got signers. They had to have so many so that they could handle it, ~~you know, so much a mile.~~ And at first we had two lines to New Salem, line

number one and line number two. I think we were on line number two. And there were ~~some~~ probably ~~thirty~~ 30 people...I'm not certain about the number. And later on they had from ~~eighty~~ 80 to ~~ninety~~ 90 people. Farms, you know. And they had four or five lines. ~~I can't remember exactly.~~ And ~~they would have up to~~ they had a limit, ~~twenty~~ 20 on a line. And we got along.

Larry: That's a lot of people to have on a phone line.

Mrs. Conitz: Now they have telephone lines out there. They have four people on a line, they don't get along. Very well, anyway. There's trouble. Too much phoning. And even two. So a lot of them are on a line by themselves.

Larry: Would people have group conversations on the telephone then?

Mrs. Conitz: Oh, yes, (laughs) that could be done because when you'd hear the long ring for central, everybody would listen because "Now, what's going on?" Maybe they wanted a doctor or something, you know. ~~They~~ We were kind of nosey. But you could hear every ring. Every ring. It all came out to your house.

Larry: But the central was in New Salem.

Mrs. Conitz: Our Bluegrass telephone company had to pay for use of the central.

~~Larry: But it was hooked up to New Salem. There wasn't a phone line that would connect you to New Salem and Glen Ullin and Hebron and...~~

Mrs. Conitz: ~~Well,~~ If we wanted to talk to Glen Ullin, we could go through New Salem and they'd hook us up there. Be long distance. But the service wasn't too good. Now over at Youngtown, ~~the~~ they had a girl ~~had~~ to take care of the switchboard there for the few lines that they had. I don't know how many it was. Three, four or five. It all came in there. And then if you

wanted to phone to New Salem then she'd hook you up to New Salem or to any other line.

Larry: But you got a phone then in ~~nineteen fourteen?~~ 1914?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. Youngtown was a little bit earlier I think.

Larry: So a telephone has been a pretty old addition.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. It was a long time back. My dad, from the time they came in ~~eighty three~~ '83 ~~up~~ until ~~nineteen fourteen~~ 1914, they didn't have any.

Larry: What were the roads like out in that area? Trails, kind of?

Mrs. Conitz: Trails. There weren't any roads, there were trails. We could start from our place and the road went right straight north and south east. And then we hit New Salem. And that's the way it was all over. And then other roads would come in. As you got closer to ~~this end~~ New Salem, there was more traffic. But up until we started getting cars out there, ~~you know,~~ it was just country roads. That's why those old Fords were good because they had a high center. You wouldn't get hung up.

Larry: Do you remember what period they really started ~~working~~ working on roads? ~~and putting decent roads in?~~

Mrs. Conitz: I suppose it was ~~in the~~, maybe in the ~~thirties.~~ '30's. During those dry hard years there, the WPA came in and they did more working on the roads because those townships ~~they never~~ newer seemed to have too much money. They were very tight. Well, they didn't need such good roads. But once there were a few cars around, then they needed culverts and things like that. And the WPA, now when was that? In the ~~thirties~~ '30's. They had to work off their poll tax. They could work it off or pay it. I think it was a dollar. So in the summertime, or in the spring,

when they were through with their work, they'd have an overseer in each part of the township and then the people would take their horses and their slip scraper and go and work at the roads. They'd pay their poll tax that way and earn a little money on the side. Take their lunch. And generally they'd take two horses and then if they used a big scraper, those real big ones, they'd have two teams on there then and maybe two farmers would go together, you know, and one wouldn't have to furnish all the horses. But if you did, you got extra pay.

Larry: ~~While you were telling me about that I thought of some thing else I wanted to ask you about.~~ What did you read in the home? ~~Back to when you were a little girl and even before that, I mean, did your dad ever tell you what kind of...?~~ Could you get books from the school to bring home for families to read or did they get a weekly paper?

Mrs. Conitz: We didn't have books at school. When I started to school I don't think there were a dozen readable books in there. Nothing for us to read. It would be ~~things~~ maybe some advertisements, pamphlets, you know, but as for reading otherwise, my folks were a little better than most places I think. I can remember my dad ordering the Chicago Examiner, ~~I think it was~~, a paper, and there was a kid's portion there. And I was big enough to read. I was about seven or eight. ~~I could read some--the funny papers~~. And my dad had the German paper.

~~Larry: Where was that published?~~

~~Mrs. Conitz: Seems to me there was some German paper that was printed in Mandan, now I'm not sure. I think this came from... I don't know. Was it Missouri or it had to be someplace.~~

Larry: Where did this Chicago Examiner...was that a monthly or a weekly or?

Mrs. Conitz: A weekly, I think

We'd get it whenever my dad would happen to go to town. We got our mail from New Salem all those years until about ~~nine-teen eight or nine.~~ 1908, or '09. We'd get our mail from Bluegrass because the mail was brought out from New Salem to Bluegrass Post Office. ~~there~~. And it would be closer. ~~Could just go to Bluegrass.~~ That was only about two and a half miles and then one day he came home and he said, "Now I've got a box over at...post office box number seven and then we got our mail from there. But otherwise we had to wait until he'd go to town. In the winter-time he'd maybe go once in two weeks. When we needed something out there. Or take in a load of grain or something like that.

Larry: Did you have butter and eggs when you were growing up to barter or swap? Bring into the grocery store...

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. My mother didn't sell the butter too much. 'Cause we didn't have too many cows in those days before we had a separator. Three or four cows. She never milked. And she'd take the milk down into the basement ~~into the cellar~~ and skim off the cream and butter, ~~you see.~~ And then we had just abut what we needed for our own use during those times. And the eggs was that way too. They may have taken some into town, but not too much. But after we started getting our mail ~~over~~ at Bluegrass, then I remember taking eggs over to Bluegrass and they had that creamery there. They called it a creamery, but they took milk at first. But we didn't take much milk over there. ~~Not much.~~ Then we switched to separators and we took cream. And, yes, we'd take our can of cream, send the kids over with a can of cream and get the groceries.

Larry: Would the cream that they got at the Bluegrass Creamery, ~~would that~~ be made into butter and then hauled to New Salem and sent out on the railroad?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. They had a regular buttermaker out there and he stayed there and lived there. He made the butter and my husband's father had that store and ~~It was handy for them,~~ they had the contract, to take the butter to town. Then they'd bring out their supplies, their groceries, ~~you know,~~ or There were other people that hauled butter, I suppose, but the Conitzes did it because it worked in with their store. And they'd load up that butter and haul it in and ship it out.

~~Larry: So they would get it out of New Salem?~~

~~Mrs. Conitz: Yeah.~~

Larry: And they would give the farmers credit for groceries for the butter, ~~and then they would bring the butter to New Salem and they would get groceries in New Salem and take them back out to the store.~~

Mrs. Conitz: No it was each person for himself. You see, Grandpa Conitz, ~~I call him Grandpa,~~ he had the store, and ~~he~~ would get paid for taking the butter in, but we farmers didn't have anything to do with that. No, we delivered cream over to the creamery, and We'd get our cream check right away. And then we'd take that cream check and we'd go over to the store and buy our groceries or whatever else we needed. We could get everything there. That was everyone for himself.

Larry: Did your family do their banking and things like that ~~where you couldn't do something because Bluegrass didn't have the facilities, that would be done~~ in New Salem?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes.

Larry: What kind of lighting did you use before you got the ~~thirty two~~ 32 volt or the standby plant?

Mrs. Conitz: Kerosene. Yes we used kerosene lamps and then we ~~were very, my husband and~~ got an Alladin lamp. That's much better. Makes white light. That's quite a lamp. But at home ~~my folks had~~ a man came through and he was peddling gasoline

lamps. And that type of lighting system. They had a gasoline tank. We had a tank standing in our pantry. It was, oh I think it held about three gallons probably, of gasoline. And there was a wire, hollow wire that went up along the ceiling there and it came out in the kitchen and the living room and in the dining room. We just had those three lamps. ~~Didn't you ever see a lamp like that?~~

~~Larry: No.~~

Mrs. Conitz: The wire came out of the ceiling here and then the lamp was on that. And it was a mantle lamp. And to light those things you had to heat them first. And then there was a swab, we called it a swab, it was a wide sheet thing, and it had asbestos wrapped around on those two places. So we dipped that in denatured alcohol and lit it and held it under that lamp until it got hot and then turned on the gasoline. And it made a nice light. Oh, we were happy about that because we could see the corners after dark, you know. Otherwise, we had a lamp in the middle of the table or a lamp hanging from the ceiling. It just wasn't too good a light, but then we got along. But the trouble with those mantle lamps was we had to cover the mantle with something. My dad took a screen and put a thing over it like that because of flies and bugs. Then later on we had the portable gasoline lamps.

Larry: With the mantles.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, two mantles and we'd carry them around a little bit better.

Larry: Now the kind that ~~you had where you~~ had the mantles hanging from this tube from the ceiling, if the pressure went down then you'd have to go to this gas tank and pump up the pressure.

Mrs. Conitz: Yeah. There was a guage on there. It did the job there for quite a few years. There were some farmers out there that had ~~I think they called it~~ sedum lights. Anyway, they...this stuff that they'd get, it was big chunks, kind of, and they'd put it in a tank and water would drip on it. And that would form a gas and they had that piped up and would come out too. It was the same system that they used on those old Ford cars. Carbide is what I mean.

Larry: Those were kind of dangerous, though, weren't they?

Mrs. Conitz: I think they were. They'd forget about this water. If it happened to drip, you know, and ~~they~~ if didn't know it, it would explode. Yes, they were. All these gasoline lamps, we were always very careful. We respected those gasoline lamps. My mother got an iron one time from a peddlar and, that's one thing a man came through and sold us, and it was gasoline. I remember, I think she used it once and she never used it again.

~~Larry: My mother had one of those. She was kind of scared of it too. She didn't like it.~~

Mrs. Conitz: Yeah, those flames would come up and around, you know.

Larry: But usually she would use flat irons, the kind you could heat on the stove?

Mrs. Conitz: We always used a flat iron. We would iron on baking days--bake bread and the irons would get hot and we'd keep alternating. So the nicest thing I ever had was when I could use an electric iron. That was the best thing.

Larry: Now with these old flat irons you would have to iron a cloth on top of what you were actually ironing, right?

~~Mrs. Conitz: Sometimes if you wanted to be careful.~~

~~Larry: So you wouldn't get a rust smear or dirt...~~

Mrs. Conitz: Well, those irons were nice and clean. They were rubbed on something so that they were perfectly clean. But you had to be an expert to not have it too hot, ~~you know~~, and how long to leave it in one place. you had to touch it, (laughs) ~~you know.~~

Larry: ~~Did your mother or~~ Did you ever use a curling iron? ~~One of those irons that you could heat on a stove.~~

Mrs. Conitz: We heated 'em up on top of lamps, you know. The handle was flexible and they'd hang over the lamp and they'd turn the lamp down a little bit but they'd get just boiling hot. And my mother used it ~~some~~ when she was younger, but she had one. I can remember trying to use it once and I knocked the chimney ~~my chim~~ off or something and that was the last time I used it. But our teachers once in awhile, they would use those things.

Larry: Did they board at your place?

Mrs. Conitz: Yeah. There is a teacher that stayed at our house in ~~nineteen twelve~~ 1912 and I still correspond with her. She lives in Yuma, Arizona, now. A very old lady.

Larry: What was the social life like ~~in~~ around Bluegrass when you were a little girl or from what your father told you before you were born?

Mrs. Conitz: Well, they did more socializing ~~I think~~, than they do now. Now. they go to the movies or something like that, but in those days we'd get together at the neighbors. We'd always visit back and forth. And we had very nice times, you know. Families were closer together all the way around. Lots of interesting evenings that way. We'd play cards, go on a sled, straw on the bottom and lots of blankets. And I remember those things...I liked it. I'd like to go through it again. I wish that ~~the~~ my kids nowadays could have something like that. I don't know whether they'd enjoy it or not, but it was fun then.

Larry: And when the parents went, the whole family went.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, we all went.

Larry: No babysitters.

Mrs. Conitz: No, no babysitters. If a babysitter was needed my mother wouldn't go. But it was very, very seldom that we didn't all go. It was just after we were all grown up or in the teens or something like that, once in awhile my dad would take us where we wanted to go. Because there were smaller children in my family. My brother was ~~fourteen~~ 14 years younger than I. He was a baby when I was pretty well grown up.

Larry: Would most of the social activities in the wintertime then be just visiting the neighbors and playing cards?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. ~~Some places, my in-laws, my husband's parents,~~ My in-laws we had a couple of ministers that ~~they~~ they were acquainted with that lived up northwest, you know, and they would stop in there and then all the neighbors would come and then they'd have services. We had our services at the schoolhouse. There was a baby that was supposed to be baptised, well the minister came through and baptised the baby. Things like that.

Larry: The box socials and basket socials, those were predominantly school fundraisers.

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. Oh, yes, we had them all...I think every year we'd have a basket social. Generally in the fall, after school had started. And probably have a little program. If it wasn't the kids then it would be the grownups would have to put in their two cents worth--sing some songs or recitations or something like that. They went for that. My husband told about how they had a literary society over in their school. So the young people got together there. Tried to learn a little bit that way, I guess you'd say.

Larry: A basket social or a box social at the school would not be a monthly thing...

Mrs. Conitz - No, once a year.

Larry: Would there be a Christmas program then too.

Mrs. Conitz: Yeah, but we generally had, almost always had a school program at Christmas. And in the spring we might have a program for the last day and then a picnic to go with it. Something like that. Unless we had the picnic in somebody's grove and then we wouldn't have the program. It just depended on the teacher. Those basket socials were fun. (chuckles)

Larry: Would the money from a basket social or a box social at the school go for textbooks?

Mrs. Conitz: Not for textbooks, but for whatever supplies they needed. Because the school didn't furnish anything. We bought our own pencils and tablets. And our books--everybody would bring the book that he had at home, a reader, you know, I've got some old books here. Here's one of 'em. When he finished that, then he'd read the next grade. The books were so difficult, that it would take a whole year for a kid to get through a book. Sometimes if there were more than two children in a grade, they'd each have a different book a lot of times. But that didn't make any difference, the teacher would help you. A lot of times, we'd get more help that way. There was more individual help then.

Larry: Did you use flash cards then to teach reading?

Mrs. Conitz: No, they didn't. Not when I was going to school. I started on what they called a chart. Then I got into the first reader. But when I was teaching then they had those flash cards and things like that. Quite a bit of time was spent on teaching our children to write a nice hand I know that those older people to this day they can write a better hand than these young people. We had our penmanship every Friday afternoon. For a half an hour or so.

Well, with that basket social money, they'd buy what they needed around in the school.

Larry: Did you have to take exams when you were a student or give them later when you were a teacher to establish graduation from the eighth grade or passage from one grade to another?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, the teachers would do that on their own. At the end the superintendent would come out and visit... the county superintendent. And the eighth grade was sent out from the county. The seventh and eighth grade. They would take agriculture.... (inaudible)

Larry: What were the responsibilities of a rural schoolteacher back in the ~~eighteen nineties, as your father might have told you,~~ 1890's or in the early ~~nineteen hundreds~~ 1900's when you were in school? They were the janitor and the school nurse and everything, I suppose.

Mrs. Conitz: Yeah. It said right in the contract the teacher was to do all janitor work. They didn't need to be told because ~~they knew~~ they had to do it. They had to keep the fires, clean out the ashes, and if they were good conscientous people they took care of the schoolhouse.

Larry: Do you remember as a student or later as a teacher, any discipline problems, or were the kids pretty straightened around by the parents before they got to school?

Mrs. Conitz: ~~I think they were~~. I think they were. We didn't have any discipline problems. Oh, I remember one big boy kind of got out of line one day and I went down there and I cuffed him on the ears and he was so surprised he never did anything wrong again. (laughs) And we didn't have any trouble, not in my school. The

schools that I taught. I taught in four different districts, four different schools.

Larry: Do you think ~~then~~ that the parents were more apt to ~~be... if they had a child that was a discipline problem, they would~~ back the teacher ~~s~~ rather than backing the child up against the teacher.

Mrs. Conitz: They were scared to go home if they didn't behave in school. My dad said, "If you get a lickin' at school you're sure going to get one at home." Well, we never got a lickin'. But we didn't have trouble. Not in our school. If they had had a discipline problem, I don't know what they would have done. With all grades and a big school.

Larry: How were the lessons handled ~~in, when~~ when you were in school yourself? Or how did you handle them later? Would the third grade be brought to the front of the room and did you have a table there?

Mrs. Conitz: A recitation seat. Yeah. We had a long bench and they'd line up on that. Sit on that. And then they'd recite their lessons. It was a little ~~quieter~~ Quieter on this end and they wouldn't bother the other... 'Course then later on we got the single seats. Then the teachers would walk up and down the line. I know I did. I'd walk up and down the line and watch them as they did their work, you know. Help them with their arithmetic and things like that.

Larry: Would the kids that were ~~in the~~ the fifth or sixth grade disrupt the fourth graders when they were up ~~at the head of the room~~ at the recitation...

Mrs. Conitz: There wasn't too much of that, no, that I know of. They would listen.

Larry: ~~But if you were in the fifth grade and the fourth grade was going through their recitation period and suppose you were the teacher~~, If one of the kids in the fifth grade knew the answer to a question that you were asking the fourth graders, he couldn't sit in back and raise his hand?

Mrs. Conitz: No, no. They might laugh at the kids for not knowing the answer, on the side ~~you know~~ at recess time, but the place up in front where they recited, that was for their class.

Larry: Would there be a ~~fifteen~~ 15 minute recess then I suppose about...

Mrs. Conitz: At ~~ten thirty~~ 10:30 and at ~~two thirty~~ 2:30 in the afternoon.

Larry: And then an hour from ~~twelve~~ 12 until ~~one~~ 1.

Mrs. Conitz: Yeah. And then in the wintertime when the days were short, like in November and December, towards the end of the term, when we had probably only a half hour. So we could let school out at ~~three thirty~~ 3:30.

Larry: Do you remember any particularly bad winters when school would be called off for a couple weeks at a time?

Mrs. Conitz: ~~Yeah, see~~, That's why we didn't have school in the winter. Because it was cold and stormy and everything. But once in awhile we would get caught in the fall or there'd be a blizzard ~~you know~~ in December or even in March. And then well, we always had orders not to let anyone go home until the parents would come. And the parents were always there to get their children if the weather looked bad. That was a rule. Never let the children go home. Because that did happen, you know, where the children were lost on the way home, frozen to death.

Larry: Let me skip ahead ~~a little~~ to the Depression. ~~Now then~~ You were living in Bluegrass and your husband was a mail carrier then yet in the ~~thirties~~ '30's, right?

Mrs.

Mrs. Conitz: Up to ~~forty-four.~~ 144.

Larry: Were times pretty hard around here for farmers in the Depression?

Mrs. Conitz: It was. It was dry. They didn't have crops. And I saw at one time where they had to sell their cattle. ~~They~~ The government bought them real cheap. Yes, there was hard times. They were glad to get what they did. They were very close. They had to run things just real close. One family had come out from Minnesota and settled on one of the farms out there. And they didn't know how to take care of things here in a storm. ~~you know.~~ I remember this man coming to Bluegrass and he didn't even have overshoes. He had his feet wrapped in a gunnysack. But then that was an extreme case.

Larry: Was there a lot of dust storms? Can you remember the dust?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes. We had some dust storms during the ~~thirties.~~ 30's. They call 'em the dirty ~~thirties~~ 30's and they were dirty. Yes. And you could see those fields, ~~the~~ just like a spirals, you know, the dust going up. And there were several fields close to Bluegrass that did that. It was....(inaudible)

Larry: Were there grasshopper years too?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, we had grasshoppers a couple years. In ~~thirty-six~~ 36 was it was dry and there were lots of grasshoppers. And then the farmers tried to poison those grasshoppers with arsenic and whatever it was, bran or something that they had mixed. They'd go to town and get it and spray it out in the fields early in the morning. We did too. But I don't know whether it killed any grasshoppers or not. Maybe it did. I just don't know.

Larry: Do you remember people as being very demoralized or discouraged during the ~~thirties,~~ 30's? ~~depressed because of the~~

~~drought and the stock, you know, money wasn't around and the banks had closed...were they down in the dumps or...~~

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, I think they were. There were a lot of them that gave up. They had these barnyard sales, you know, and everything was sold, even the flyswatter. I remember being at one of those sales. And then those people went back to Minnesota where they came from. They had moved in there later. Yes. It was really kind of discouraging, especially when the banks closed. I remember my dad h[redacted]...well, we had quite a few cream checks saved up and just didn't need the money and didn't spend it then so one day he was going to go to town. I was married already then. That was in the ~~thirties~~ '30's. And he said, I happened to be over= there and he said, "I think I'll just take these checks and put 'em in the bank." And, you know, next day the bank closed. And it wasn't such a big amount of money, probably a ~~hundred twenty-five~~ $125.00 dollars or something like that, a bunch of cream checks and maybe something like that. And then the bank closed. Then they couldn't get the money out of the bank and we couldn't get any money out of the bank and we didn't have any at home. It was really bad. I've kind of forgotten those things, I just don't like to remember that.

Larry: Maybe the human memory is a good thing.

Mrs. Conitz: It's a good thing to be able to forget.

Larry: We're getting down to the end of this tape. ~~There's some questions that I like to ask everybody and one of them is~~ Do you remember people as being more helpful and neighborly and generous with their time and with their encouragement in the early days of the ~~twentieth~~ 20th century?

Mrs. Conitz: Yes, I think they did, because I know that my dad was always going to help a neighbor--dig a well or ...