

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #114 - Side A

Subject: Edna George

Place:

Date: April 12, 1972

Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

PAULINE BRAYMEN: I'm interviewing Edna George on April 12th, 1972. Okay, now you said that you came to Harney County when you were about 15 years old?

EDNA GEORGE: Uh huh.

PAULINE: Do you remember what date that was?

EDNA: I was --- we landed here I said April 5, 1905, '07.

PAULINE: 1907.

EDNA: Oh, I'm all mixed up lately. 1905.

PAULINE: 1905.

EDNA: Yes.

PAULINE: Okay, where did your family come from?

EDNA: Dayton, Oregon.

PAULINE: Dayton, Oregon.

EDNA: That's where I was born. Went to school there.

PAULINE: Now I understand your parent's name was Howell.

EDNA: H O W E, Howe.

PAULINE: Oh, H O W E. What was your dad's first name?

EDNA: Edwin.

PAULINE: Edwin. And how many were there in the family?

EDNA: When do we start to come up here?

PAULINE: Uh huh.

EDNA: There was four girls and one boy. Little boy.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

EDNA: He fixed up a covered wagon to go in, put what possessions they thought they could get along with in that wagon, and all of us kids (Laughter) and camp outfit. We ---

PAULINE: Go ahead.

EDNA: We went from Portland to The Dalles on that boat, team and wagon and all. Then we started across country down to, I don't remember which town, but I can name the towns that we went through all right, some of them. I'll name some and then ...

PAULINE: Okay.

EDNA: I know we went through Mitchell, and Shaniko, and Bakeoven. I forget some of them now.

PAULINE: Let's move this mike over this way a little bit.

EDNA: So, I don't remember which comes first.

PAULINE: Uh huh. Okay, I'll look at the map and see which town comes first. Now do I understand this right, you went from Dayton to Portland, and you put the covered wagon and everything on the boat and you traveled up the river then to The Dalles, and then you started across country?

EDNA: Of course we had to camp at a certain place every night. Bakeoven was one place, funny names --- Antelope, seems like that was the name. Then we come on up to, before you get to Dayville, what's that out there? I didn't have a map to ---

GENEVIEVE ?: Kimberly? Spray? Did you come up the John Day River?

EDNA: I think so. I can't remember that name, but anyway, there was an April storm, and my Uncle George lived up at Van, that's Papa's brother, and he sent a man and a team

out to meet Papa, and we met on the grade of Canyon City, you know, that long old grade? PAULINE: Uh huh.

EDNA: His name was Mose Dripps. He had a hack and four horses, so you could take one team and make four on the wagon, 'cause we just had two. We walked up most of that grade. Us kids had lots of fun, I guess. Coming across the country though we got into adobe, awful muck, stuck to your wagon wheels, and ---

PAULINE: Uh huh.

EDNA: Our feet, we had just rubber shoes then, and they tore them off. We'd come to a hill and Papa would jump off the wagon to make it lighter for the horses to pull.

PAULINE: How many horses did you have on the wagon?

EDNA: Just two!

PAULINE: Just two.

EDNA: But he made it all right, but when we got to Mitchell, we slept in a barn that night up in the hayloft. And kids like, we woke up early and we said, "Oh, it snowed!" ... it did a foot!

PAULINE: Oh, my goodness.

EDNA: (Laughter) So ---

PAULINE: In April, this was in April?

EDNA: Hardly in April yet, it must have been the middle of March it seemed like. Because he had to get the man that lived there to pull him up the mountain side there out of Mitchell, because he only had the two horses. He had to hire that done. One place he passed, the kids in the wagon 'course was peeking out, and someone hollered out, "Where's the rest of them?" "Oh, they're comin' back there," Papa said. I remember that.

(Laughter)

PAULINE: You were walking behind.

EDNA: We was in the wagon. We got up out of that town and over the points. And the road was muddy, of course, after that storm. And they didn't have good roads then, you know. One place we stayed, I wish I could remember the name, but there was a sheep camp that we got into the next morning. That night though, we couldn't make it to any camp. So he stretched his 12 x 14 tent, and put his bed and Mama's in the tent. The horses with their heads toward them, with their tails towards the door. (Laughter) I remember that. The horses was hungry, and so he had a straw mattress, and he pulled a little straw out and he gave it to them, a handful or so for the night. (Laughter)

PAULINE: That's a handy kind of mattress to have. (Laughter) That's not the first time that I've heard that. Someone was telling me that one winter it got real, real bad, and they had to give the straw to the cows to keep them alive, the straw ticking in the mattresses.

EDNA: Uh huh. So the next morning we got up early, and didn't have no way of doing much in that cold place. Got up out of bed and started out, and got into a sheep camp. And they gave us some potatoes, and some mutton, and some milk, and I don't know what all. Just a lot of things. And Mama made what they call flapjacks, and cooked them over a campfire. Oh, we had the best breakfast. I'll never forget that.

PAULINE: I'll bet it was good.

EDNA: Fresh meat and milk, and everything. Then we started on. We got on the wrong road, and went quite a ways on that and then had to turn back and start over again. So it kind of ruined that day.

PAULINE: Do you know about how long it took you to come from The Dalles then on to Harney County?

EDNA: I don't know, because I can't remember what date we started from down there. But it was the 5th of April when we got over to this place where we was going. That's Van, you know. You've heard of Van?

PAULINE: Yes, uh huh.

EDNA: That's where we was going. We got there where Uncle George lived. We ... for a while.

GENEVIEVE: You stayed all night in this valley with Frank's parents.

EDNA: In Silvies Valley, we stayed all night.

GENEVIEVE: I remember Sadie talking about it, that's her sister, how scared the boys were of those girls. (Laughter) They had a whole family of boys, and they had a family of girls.

PAULINE: Was Uncle George's name Howe?

EDNA: Yes, he was Howe too, George Howe. He was quite a family man.

PAULINE: How long did you stay in Van?

EDNA: We stayed there for a while. I think we stayed through the haying maybe. We got a job haying down on the Robbins Ranch. They worked together, the two brothers, down on Abner Robbins' place. That's where I met my husband down there. A whole bunch of men around there, and I got abused just right, and he'd laugh right out loud, and (Laughter) talking to the rest of them. But we drove from up there to down to this Robbins' Ranch to work. And we wore sunbonnets one day, and come up a thunderstorm, we was afraid we'd have to do up our sunbonnets.

Well, they got the hay put up all right, but one little incident I remember. Papa had to take some double trees down in the field and he was running and he met a fellow a horseback, and he said, "What's the matter son, you have an accident or some-thing?" Papa said, "No, I was just a little bit behind." And he was a running to get back to work. (Laughter) Then pretty quick why he bought a place. Over there where we called the Wolf Creek Schoolhouse for a while. He bought a --- He homesteaded part of it and built a house, and that house blew over about

three times before he ever got it to stand.

PAULINE: The wind blew it over?

EDNA: Uh huh. It got so tall.

PAULINE: How many stories was it?

EDNA: Just two.

PAULINE: Just two stories?

EDNA: Uh huh. That's the reason it blew over, I guess. If it was tall it didn't take so much roof, I guess. Have more room.

PAULINE: Is that why they built these monstrous three story things? Where you had two rooms downstairs, and two rooms on the second floor, and two rooms on up?

EDNA: The bedrooms upstairs. I don't know from there on. I was married in 1907.

PAULINE: Let's see, your husband was Henry George, wasn't he? Was he ---

EDNA: William George.

PAULINE: William George.

EDNA: That was September the 20th --- 29th, 1907. He had a place over there, not far from there called Muddy Creek. We lived on Muddy Creek a while, but couldn't make much of a livin' there, it was just so dry. But this WPA come up, and he got on that.

PAULINE: Now, what was that again? The WPA?

EDNA: Yeah, he worked on WPA.

GENEVIEVE: Well, that was after he come to town.

EDNA: Then we come to town to get on the WPA, 'cause he wasn't doing any good over there. And then finally he sold that place for a little of nothing. He raised quite a ---

GENEVIEVE: I remember when I was there I had to herd sheep, and he had a whole bunch of them.

EDNA: Yeah, he had some sheep. (Laughter) We tried sheep, and we tried milk cows,

and cattle, and we tried turkeys, but everything interfered. There was coyotes, and things to pick up the lambs, and the turkeys. It was pretty trying living on the ranch all right. So when we got to town he worked on the WPA, and we got a little bit better that way.

GENEVIEVE: He was on the ranch for about 20 years though, wasn't he?

EDNA: I can't remember how long we was on that ranch. We come back over there and worked for Lou Sitz a while. I don't know, this and that he worked for --- he'd go out shearing sheep some-times for the money to live on. There ought to be something more we did, I don't know.

PAULINE: Well I was going to ask you to tell about going to Bend, in a car, with all the rutty roads.

EDNA: That was later on. My folks left Harney County then. They didn't like it up there where they had bought this little place from Charlie Crater. They didn't like that Eastern Oregon country, and he sold everything he had and went back to the Valley and settled in Albany.

PAULINE: Well how did he happen to decide to come, was it because his Uncle George had written and told him that it was a pretty great place?

EDNA: Yeah, and he could probably make some money there, and get some cattle, and they'd increase and make him money. But, he didn't like the country.

GENEVIEVE: You didn't tell her about the telephone line he put in there.

EDNA: While he lived on that place, he had brought his telephone with him from down in the Valley. It was one of these crank up kind.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

EDNA: And so he talked to a neighbor, Joe Williams lives on what they call the Lillard Place now. They named that the "Valley of the Moon". And got them interested to get them a telephone, and they connected them up with barbed wire fence.

PAULINE: Oh, for heavens sakes. About how far apart did they live?

EDNA: Oh, it wouldn't have been more than 5 miles, would it Genevieve?

GENEVIEVE: Maybe 10.

EDNA: Oh, no, I don't think --- Oh, just 5 or 6 miles I think. Just up over the hill and down. So that was the first telephone that they had there.

PAULINE: Uh huh. And they used the barbed wire fence for the line?

EDNA: Uh huh. So when it would rain, why the wire would get kind of wet from the posts so they went along and cut rubber, from rubber boots, and slid it in between the wire and the posts so it wouldn't short. That's the way they made it work.

PAULINE: Oh, for heavens sakes. Well that's interesting. That's ingenuity.

EDNA: Yeah. So they talked over that to each other. Mama raked hay for Joe Williams there one summer too. And she taught school over there too.

PAULINE: What was her first name?

EDNA: Lou.

PAULINE: Lou?

EDNA: L O U.

PAULINE: Was this at Wolf Creek that she taught school, or at Drewsey?

EDNA: Yeah, it was Wolf Creek. That schoolhouse isn't there now.

GENEVIEVE: They combined it with Pine Creek School. Us kids went to both Wolf Creek and Pine Creek when we lived on the ranch.

EDNA: They had to ride a horse to go to school.

GENEVIEVE: About 10 miles.

PAULINE: Oh wow, that's quite a ride!

GENEVIEVE: It was a long ways. When it was cold and the blizzards --- in the time that we used to ride. Mama used to heat rocks and flat irons, and we rode one-horse shay

buggy, and we'd get in there and wrap up with quilts, and put those hot rock and flat irons and one thing and another around us, under the quilts to keep from freezing. This one horse we hooked up jumped out ...

EDNA: They just rode one horse, and come up a blizzard so my husband said, "I'd better go meet them kids." So he got a quilt and took it along and put it up over their heads, and led the horse. (Laughter) Remember that?

GENEVIEVE: Yeah.

PAULINE: Well do you remember how your husband's family happened to come to Harney County?

EDNA: My husband's family?

PAULINE: Uh huh.

EDNA: Well, they roamed around a little bit, but they settled on Malheur Lake country down in there. Way back there. My husband had a little place over there; he traded off for the place on Muddy Creek. He got it about 1904, that place. I've got some dishes he got on that place. They are pretty old dishes.

...

EDNA: When we got up to Albany, why Mama was going to have a operation. It'd be a certain day, and we was supposed to be down there and be with her, Sadie and I. So we drove this old car to get down there, I believe that's why we went. I know we did do that once.

GENEVIEVE: Yes.

EDNA: It took so long to get there but we was there.

GENEVIEVE: You bought that old car from Lester Hamilton, didn't you?

EDNA: Yeah. Traded it in ---

PAULINE: Was it a Hudson?

EDNA: Traded in some cattle for it.

GENEVIEVE: Oh, it was huge! It held about 9 or 12 passengers. It was a great big thing. ... One of them real old antique ones. (Laughter)

PAULINE: Do you remember about what year this was?

EDNA: No, let's see, Lois and Genevieve was the kids. Doris wasn't born.

GENEVIEVE: No. It was about in --- 1920 I'd say.

PAULINE: Well, that's close enough.

GENEVIEVE: Could have been father back than that.

EDNA: No great roads, just trails across, and camp out.

PAULINE: Was this the time that you had the trouble with your tire coming off the rim?

EDNA: Uh huh. It separates off that rim all the time.

GENEVIEVE: I think we were 7 days going to Bend.

EDNA: I can't remember how many days it was; it was quite a while.

GENEVIEVE: I think it was a week. We'd go just a little ways and them tires would break down, and Dad would patch them and fix them all back, and then we'd try again, and camped out. And we was a long time getting over there.

EDNA: Sadie would get so discouraged because we had to stop, and you girls would sing, "S S S Sadie, beautiful Sadie." (Laughter) ...

GENEVIEVE: We was just little kids.

EDNA: Yeah. ...

GENEVIEVE: ... Because Doris was born in 1919.

PAULINE: That would have been in about in 1818, 1918. Don't want to go too far back here. And you were stuck in the sand?

EDNA: Oh, yes.

GENEVIEVE: Yeah, we would get stuck in that sand and lay down quilts and old pieces

of sack and one thing and another to get started again. It was terrible hard to get the car going in that sand, it would spin, you know, right out. But when we got to Bend, why Dad said, "I've had it, better get on the train." So we all got on the train and went on.

EDNA: He traded that car off I guess to Lanfear.

PAULINE: Well I was just going to ask how you got home then, if you tried to drive it home.

GENEVIEVE: Didn't he sell the car before we went on?

EDNA: He left it there, but I don't know now.

GENEVIEVE: We never did bring the car back, I know that.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

GENEVIEVE: Whether we traded it for another one or ---

PAULINE: Well after 7 days --- you could almost go in a covered wagon in that time. In fact, I think it was Bertha Carey that told us that it took them 3 days to come in the buggy from Prineville. So it must have been lots of trouble.

GENEVIEVE: Well there's no water holes through there, you know, you just go for miles. It's just like it is now really, there's no water along the road any place outside of ---

EDNA: And some of them places you just practically have to buy water to get some.

GENEVIEVE: There at Brothers it used to be real hard to get water there. That was the only place.

EDNA: A lot different than it is now. Genevieve can go to Bend in a couple of hours.

PAULINE: Yeah, yeah. I went the other day and the road was bad and it didn't take me much more than two hours to go.

EDNA: No. There's some pretty bad chuckholes in the road now ...

PAULINE: Yes, it's really --- I've never seen it so torn up.

GENEVIEVE: I never did either. Terrible! I think they are making it get real bad so that

they can get the money to have it fixed.

PAULINE: ... They worked on it last year, you know. They repaved from Bend --- over top of Horse Ridge there, oh, to this side of Brothers I think. They've got quite a big stretch there, and that's all right.

GENEVIEVE: Yeah, that's a nice road there.

PAULINE: So I think they were intending to come on anyway, maybe they just didn't --- I don't know.

GENEVIEVE: We went down to Albany here a while back, and coming back why it was lots better than it was when we went over, so I think they fixed some of the holes.

PAULINE: Yeah, they were working the day we went over. They had patched a lot of the holes ... with more asphalt, I guess. And they had got sand in most of the other holes. That works out if you ... Well ---

EDNA: Can you think of something else interesting ...

PAULINE: Well, I'd like to hear some more about this doll that

EDNA: What's that?

PAULINE: The doll, it had a kid body with the jointed arms and legs. Do you remember where you got it?

EDNA: Well, it's really Doris' doll, but she wouldn't take care of it and keep it, I've got it. She don't want it, she said, so it's in my house down there. And she had an operation for appendicitis and the doctors brought it --- and supposed to be the one that gave it to her while she was in the hospital in Lebanon, and it was old then. The last one they had in the store, I imagine. How old was she then, about 8 probably. Huh?

GENEVIEVE: I was working for that doctor, that's probably the reason that she got the doll.

EDNA: Yeah, if I could go down there I could show it to you. If you're interested and wanted to see it.

PAULINE: Well, it sounded interesting and, well, I was talking to Lou Barrett, and she saw it and mentioned that you had made it. But maybe she had meant that you had made the dresses.

EDNA: I made dresses for my dolls down there, but no, I didn't make hardly any dolls. I made a body for one doll and it had a head kind of like, what did they call it, a China doll. The head was pretty near like a China doll. But I didn't do it very good.

GENEVIEVE: And since she's come to town she's pretty near wore out a sewing machine, I think, making quilts.

PAULINE: Well, I've heard that you've spent a good many years sewing for all kinds of --- I see it's a treadle machine too.

EDNA: Well, it's electric.

PAULINE: You've converted it now?

EDNA: Its been converted into electric. There's a quilt ... Genevieve, if she wants to see, whatever, I've made since I got up here. A lot of it I made before I come up here.

PAULINE: Isn't that pretty.

EDNA: They're soft and ---

PAULINE: Those are nice. They've got that Dacron filling, yeah. Oh, that's pretty. I like quilts, I think that ...

EDNA: There's one or two up there, I think.

PAULINE: Oh, isn't that pretty.

EDNA: I've got more down to the house.

PAULINE: Oh, those are beautiful. You know I, I ---

EDNA: That's got a piece of blanket in it. It's a blanket ---

PAULINE: Blanket in it. Those are so warm. I've got to get a quilt for our bed. My husband doesn't think too much of this Dacron, you know, lightweight blankets aren't heavy enough. You can't keep warm unless you're weighted down.

EDNA: Is there another one up there?

GENEVIEVE: No, I guess not. What did you do with the little pieces?

EDNA: It's down here.

GENEVIEVE: That one is cute.

EDNA: ... It's in that plastic ... I'm expecting to be a great-grandmother pretty soon so ---

PAULINE: Oh, so you've been busy making baby quilts. Isn't that pretty! Oh, that's pretty. I like that backing, it's so, it looks like a baby ---

EDNA: ... Down at the house I've got one that I'd kind of like to sell it for about \$30, \$40 or \$45. It's all corduroy, and different colors.

PAULINE: Oh, that would be pretty.

EDNA: It's in different blocks like that. I hate to just give it away.

PAULINE: Yeah, well there's a lot of work that goes into one like that. You said Sadie Williams was your sister?

GENEVIEVE: No.

PAULINE: Oh, Sadie ---

EDNA: Sadie, down in the Valley.

PAULINE: Oh, down in the valley, well, I wondered if I heard that right.

EDNA: Ashford.

GENEVIEVE: Her name was Drewitt. Then she lived out to Drewsey, and she married Jack Drewitt.

EDNA: This woman in here grew up, and she was married to Elmer Drewitt.

PAULINE: So it would have been --- so they were brothers. I talked to Jane a few days

ago.

EDNA: Did you?

PAULINE: Uh huh.

GENEVIEVE: My sister and her used to be related.

EDNA: We both had a baby just about the same day. (Laughter) My youngest one and one of her babies ---

GENEVIEVE: Well Sadie, her sister Sadie has never had any children.

EDNA: No, but Jane I mean.

PAULINE: ... Well now in your children --- I know that Doris and Genevieve ---

EDNA: And Lois.

PAULINE: And Lois.

EDNA: Lois is in between them.

PAULINE: And who is she? I don't know her.

EDNA: Leonard. Lois Leonard.

PAULINE: They don't live here do they?

GENEVIEVE: No, they live in North Bonneville, Washington.

EDNA: She thought she might come up in a few days, maybe.

PAULINE: Just the three children then?

EDNA: Uh huh. Yes, I have 3 daughters, who each had 2 boys. (Laughter)

PAULINE: If there is a lesson to that --- I don't know just what.

(Laughter) Then Gerry is your son?

GENEVIEVE: Uh huh. Dean is my older one, then Gerry.

PAULINE: Well, I'm getting lots of people sorted out that I wasn't sure of before. It's strange how you know people all your life, but you don't sometimes realize, sometimes how they're related to one another.

GENEVIEVE: Well, Mama's husband's dad, his father lived with us for quite a long time.

EDNA: About 6 years.

PAULINE: Was this Adam? ... I heard a story about Adam George. That he was quite a carpenter, and that he was noted for his beautiful staircases. Can you tell me anything about those?

EDNA: ... here earlier today.

GENEVIEVE: I don't remember his staircases, but there is a building still standing here in town that he built. It's the one up here by the Ereno's Store.

EDNA: ... that stone building.

PAULINE: Let's see, that would be between the bank and the ...

GENEVIEVE: No, it's on the other side, by the Burns Department Store side.

PAULINE: Oh.

GENEVIEVE: Oh, I was thinking ---

EDNA: They call it the Brown Building, or something.

PAULINE: That's what I was going to say, that would be the Brown Building.

GENEVIEVE: Uh huh. He helped build that, it's old.

PAULINE: You go ahead with your lunch Mrs. George, before it gets cold.

EDNA: ...

...

PAULINE: Then he worked, it was all part of ... a real estate man in Harney County.

EDNA: Yeah. ... I guess or something like that. Seems like. They kind of worked as opposites, or together or something like that.

PAULINE: The same business, or something.

EDNA: Yeah.

GENEVIEVE: There is only one of the family living in the George family, and that's his

sister Liza Shoemaker in ...

PAULINE: Well, did they --- Was Adam George the first one that came to Harney County, or did his parents come here first?

EDNA: No. ... Irish family.

GENEVIEVE: He came here from Ireland. And they were in Canada awhile, weren't they Mom?

EDNA: Uh huh.

GENEVIEVE: They were up in Canada awhile, because Dad came down here and had to get naturalization papers.

EDNA: The old man had to get his naturalization papers, so the kids were all naturalized by him.

GENEVIEVE: Oh, that was the way it ---

EDNA: Some of them might have been born up there too. ...

GENEVIEVE: Canada.

EDNA: I wish they wouldn't make that dessert for me; it's just too sweet.

PAULINE: Well, is there anything else that you can think of that we ought to talk about? What I'd like to do maybe is to come up here again another day, and talk to you again.

EDNA: Uh huh.

GENEVIEVE: Maybe something would come up from some other area, or someplace that you might ---

PAULINE: Well this is true, and then --- I know this is always

--- after you're through and go home, then you can think of certain things that you didn't think about before. So ---

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