General Topic of Interview: Life in Rio Blanco County

Date: May 5, 1984
Place: Meeker, Co.

Length (Time): 1½ hours
Speed: 
Side(s): 3

Narrator:
Name: Jennie Spence
Address: P.O. Box 116 Meeker, Co. 81641

Telephone
Birthplace: Carthage, Mo. Oct. 11, 1897
Occupation(s): housewife, farmer's wife, teacher

Interviewer(s)
Name(s): Julie Jones-Eddy

Subjects covered, in approximate order (please spell out names of persons and places)
1. Born in 1897, now 86 years old.

2. Parents came to Meeker from Mo.
   - First came to Colorado Springs to work in lumber.
   - Father traveled to Colo. Sps. in wagons. Met a blizzard on the way.
   - They lived at the foot of Pikes Peak until June, when they came to Meeker to visit friends on Flag Creek, the Howey family.
   - Trip over the mountains took a month. Came over Tennessee Pass. Had to discard the furniture because wagons couldn't carry the weight.
   - They traveled during the week and rested on the weekends.
   - Came over the Newcastle road to the White River. Arrived in Meeker July 4.
   - Mother was afraid of the cowboys.
   - Parked wagons near the park where the holiday picnic was.
   - Her mother made friends with Mrs. George Warren.
   - Went on up to Howey's. They were haying. Father helped with the mules and mother helped in the kitchen.
   - The work was very hard for her mother and she wanted to leave.
   - Went back up the White River with Mike and Tom Stith.
   - Father stopped at the Wilber ranch and got a job teaching at the Coal Creek school.

3. Father taught school.
   - Taught in Powell Park (where they met the Wears).
- Moved to town and lived in the government buildings.
- Didn't talk about money.

4. Started a store.
- Didn't have a bank account. Doesn't know where they kept the money.
- Mother made and sold hats.

5. Aunt Chat came out from Mo. and taught school in Meeker.

6. Mother hated mountains.
- Went back to Carthage to visit.
- Brother got sick and they had to come home.

7. Father took up homestead on Flag Creek.
- Kept homestead until parents went to Calif. in 1923.

8. Jennie wanted to go away to college.
- Didn't go because she got a teaching job after taking test for a certificate.
- Taught 3 years before marriage.
- Went back to teaching during World War II when the school asked her to come back.
- Finally got B.A. in the 1950's.


10. Memories of her mother.
- After the visit to Carthage, she decided that she liked Meeker.
- She was very versatile:
  Made hats, ran store, sewed clothes, had boarders, was Dr. French's nurse, took care of other people's children.
- She always had spending money. Children could buy ice cream.
- She made funeral shrouds and "laid out" people.
- (Description of funeral practices.)

11. Home remedies.
- Coal oil and sugar for croup. A teaspoon. Father had to hold her. It made her vomit and throw up the phlegm.
- Mixed coal oil and lard and rubbed on chest. Covered with a flannel.
- Wore a shammus skin under top shirt on her chest to protect from the cold.
- Wore long underwear and black stockings. "Ruggins for the snow.
- Wore hood and veil across face.
- Took no baths until spring if you had a cold.
- Usually bathed in a tin tub once a week.

12. Mother got called out at night when people were sick.
- She didn't talk about what she did.
- Jennie and her friend Ethel Ball would figure out who was pregnant.

13. Puberty.
- Menstruation frightened her. (7th grade)
- Her friend didn't start until 17 years old.
- Was given a hot toddy for the cramps.

14. Had to stay home when teaching because of cramps.
- Took aspirin when 21 years old and it helped.

15. Didn't discuss menstration among friends.

- No problems.
- Lived away from other women.
- Rode horseback and danced.
- Bad morning sickness.
- No doctor until time for birth.
- Emma Neal and Joe.
- Dr. Sickenburger(?) got drunk.
- Mrs. Lough took care of her after birth.
- Had to have Dr. Montgomery - he had a bad reputation.
- Son's birth was much harder - longer labor - no medication - woman doctor.

18. Women who died in childbirth.
- Mrs. Crockett died. Doctor had to do a cesarean section in her home.
  Jennie's mother helped Dr. French. Woman needed blood and there was none available. She insisted on eating because she was hungary. She vomited and then hemorrhaged. The chloroform made her very sick.
- Mrs. Pruit died. Her husband had to make arrangements for the other children. Mrs. Purdy took them often.

19. Chores at home.
- Very few.
- Mother did everything.
- Sold milk from their cow.
- Mother milked the cow - pinned up her skirt.
- Sold 20 quarts for one dollar.
- Had to practice piano. In the summer - 4 hours a day.

20. Play.
- Dolls.
- Skipped rope.
- High School - not much to do - played a lot of basketball.
- Dances - parents came also.
- Had one or two dates per year.

21. Met husband in the 7th grade.
- Got married in secret.
- Parents didn't approve.

22. Joe came into town and they decided to get married. Got the County Clerk out of bed and got minister to marry them in church.
- Her friend Ethel had washed her hair and couldn't go to the wedding.
- Kept marriage a secret from April to end of May.
- Couldn't teach as a married woman and wanted to finish the year.
- Secret marriages were popular - didn't live together.
- She didn't see Joe again until the end of May.
- Married teachers weren't allowed because they might get pregnant.

23. Mother could work at home - sell milk and work in store. They lived in the back of the store. She couldn't "work out".

24. Story of bald eagle. It ate the chickens. Mother killed eagle.
25. Story of summer on homestead. Company was coming and mother killed the pet duck for dinner.

26. Punishment as a child.

27. Not much to do except ride horses.
   - Rode to Harvine – 25 miles from Meeker when she was 10 years old.
   - Nothing to fear – men were never drunk around women.

   - Father didn't think she could do it.
   - Husband helped – he made breakfast, and taught her to cook.
   - Coal oil lights.
   - Carried water.
   - Milked cows.
   - Made butter.
   - Made soap.

29. Typical day. Summer.
   - Haying – several men for meals.
   - Breakfast – Biscuits, bacon, eggs, deer meat.
   - Milk.
   - Dinner – meat, potatoes, dessert – husband had to have dessert twice a day.
   - Do dishes.
   - Garden.
   - Supper.
   - She didn't work outside.
   - Wash on Monday – washboard.
   - Later had a crank washing machine.
   - Ironed everything.
   - Didn't go out much. It was 10 miles to the mail.
   - Didn't see a woman during first pregnancy. Saw only cowboys.

30. Had drop-in cowboys for meals.
   - Never refused or charged for meals.
   - Friends would come to eat and dance unexpectedly.
   - No radio, only victrola.

31. 1918 flu – Roundup.
   - Flu was bad in Meeker so she couldn't go to town to stay with her family during the fall roundup.
   - Roundup was from Sept. to late Nov.
   - Became pregnant on Roundup.
   - Was one of two women with 15 men.
   - Temperature was 30 degrees below at times.
   - Description of beds in the tent.
   - Rode horses to town to vote.

32. Moved to Axial Basin near Iles Ranch. (Fern Iles was Joe's sister).
   - Bought place at Axial Basin.
   - Couldn't make enough money ranching. Joe dragged the roads to make money.
     (Drag with rocks was pulled with horses).
   - Jennie drove the first car in Meeker.
   - Sold cream and milk.
   - Joe bought the stage line and drove the mail to Axial – Used a truck in the summer and a sleigh in the winter.
35. Joe hauled oil to oil wells for drilling.
   - Lived near Wilson Creek in a cabin.
   - Moved to Iles oil field.

36. Leased a ranch and raised cattle. Then moved to the Pott ranch and lived 25 years.

37. Began teaching again after children were grown.
   - School asked her to come back.

38. Long dresses to short.
   - Wedding trousseau dresses were long.
   - Iles family went to California and brought back new short dresses - above the knees.

39. Social activities.
   - Eastern Star - were the social elite.
   - Manners had to be good to get in.
   - Many people got black balled - hurt many feelings.
   - Her mother joined the reading group in Meeker. They read Shakespeare and started the library.

40. Hobbies.
   - Tatted.
   - Crocheted, knitted.
   - China painting.
   - Oil painting.

41. Women's Club is now losing membership. Younger women are not joining.

42. Explanation of Indian painting.
   - Scene is 1902.
   - She was living in the back of the store.
   - Indians were arrested for hunting deer.
   - Had them camped in the park.
   - She and her brother watched them.
   - Let them go after about a week.
   - Moulton boy gave a toy to one of the Indian boys. They met as adults.

43. Most influential people.
   - Girl friend's mother, Mrs. Ball.
   - Aunt Chat.

44. Things most satisfied about.
   - Her college degree - father would have liked that.
   - Wonderful childhood.
   - Whole life.

45. No major disappointments.
   - Didn't need lots of money then.
   - Regrets cutting her long hair. Husband cut it in a bob on a dare.

46. Saddest time.
   - Mother and sister-in-law died the same day.