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Interview with Charlotte Fluharty

Patricia A. Petz

Fort Hays State University

Charlotte Fluharty

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Recommended Citation

Petz, Patricia A. and Fluharty, Charlotte, "Interview with Charlotte Fluharty" (1983). *College of Education One-Room Schoolhouse Oral Histories*. 12.

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An Oral History With
Charlotte Fluharty

Presented
to
Dr. Alan Miller

Partial Fulfillment
for
History of American Education
Education 700

Fort Hays State University
Summer 1982

by
Patricia A. Petz
McCracken, Kansas

This interview is being taken with Charlotte Fluharty on Sunday, July 24, in McCracken, Kansas by Patricia Petz. Charlotte, I would like to thank-you for helping me with my class project and hope this interview will bring back some good school-time memories.

Question: Would you like to start by recalling some of your earlier school days?

Answer: My first school memories was in your local district here and our school at that time and pioneer days was known as the Whitehead school. I was really too young to go to school up here, but I did go for special occasions. Like for Christmas programs and when they gave away sacks of candy of course, those were nice days to go and visit. Then we moved to Barton county. I might not of been too young to go to school, but my father was very protective. I was really not allowed to go to school until we retired from the farm and moved to Long Beach, California. At that time, I was nine years of age and that's when I started to school. I skipped two or three grades, or course, by being that old. Then I moved back. The schools out there of course, were at that time ranked, California ranked first in the nation on its schools. Back in 1925, I moved back to Kansas to Hoisington and I went through high school there.

Question: Charlotte, why did you decide to go into the teaching profession?

Answer: I started in high school as a secretarial course, but it was, this would have been in the late 1920's. It appeared that times were going to get worse financially and the only jobs that appeared to be coming up were in the teaching profession. There were very few secretaries hired. So, in the middle of the sophomore year, I changed courses and went into at that time what was known as normal training. There was, you could get a county certificate. You could get a county certificate, and all that required was that you finish high school, and take the county test. You could only teach within that particular county. A normal training certificate, you could teach any where in the state. A normal training certificate was good for two years. If you wanted it renewed you had to go one summer to college. One summer every two years automatically renewed your normal training certificate and allowed you to teach anywhere in the state. With this normal training certificate which I took then, I mean a normal training course which I took in high school starting in my sophomore year. It primarily taught you the subjects that you would be using in teaching grade school. Like basic arithmetic, physiology, geography, history, so on like that. The same subjects that you would be teaching in grade school. They also trained you how to teach these subjects

to children. And trained you not as a highly educated person, but more or less the child's viewpoint, so that you could handle it with the children. Now this was, you took a few regular subjects like biology and a few things like that, science subjects and so on. It was primarily the subjects that you would be teaching in school. Then when you finished the senior year, of course, you finished just as any other student did. Usually the normal training classes were small, there was only six in our normal training class. Although it was a pretty good sized school, there was only six. Then after you finished the school year, about a few days later you had to take a test. This was a state test. It was all basic subjects and it was quite difficult, and it took two days to take the test. Well, in my particular case, I was a little uneasy because I'm a lot worse on tests. I can handle a regular class but then when it comes to a test, I forget everything. So it was, I was quite slow in taking the test. I was still very worried as to whether I would pass it or not, so I went to Hays and took what at that time was known as a normal training course. It lasted a month. At the end of it you could take a county test and therefore I could have taught in my home county by taking the test. I went ahead and got my school "hired" for the next year, and this way, one way or another, I was coming up with a passed test, I felt. Whether it was the county or state. I understood that the county tests weren't quite as difficult as the state. But by the time I finished that month of normal training at Hays, I had the results back from my tests and I was one of the higher grades, for which I was very shocked. So, I ended up not needing to take the county tests, although I was prepared for it. Now, that's how I got started in teaching. I taught as I said, the reason I changed subjects, was because with the depression apparently coming on, I wanted a job. I wanted a sure job, because by the time you finished a normal training course and had a state certificate and was able to get out, and well very few teachers were unable to teach. In other words, they nearly all had jobs. So, it was the one sure job you might say, for a woman at that time.

Question: What years did you teach, Charlotte?

Answer: I started teaching in the fall of 1930. My first year of school was the first school north east of Hargrave, Kansas. It was a school of 18 students. Five of them were bigger than I was. Those five or at least three or four of the girls looked older than I did. I had long curls and they looked a lot older. They were used to speaking in German at home and I didn't know a word of German. In these eighteen students I had one who had attended school the year before. So I really had eighteen in -- I had all eight grades or really I had what you would call eight grades and a half. Because they weren't too happy if you put that first grader who had worked half a year the year before,

if you would put him back to start the first grade over again, they didn't like that. So, I really had eight and a half grades and eighteen students. Now that was my first year in Rush county near Hargrave.

Question: Can you tell me about what your salary was the year that you started?

Answer: The year I started teaching school, I believe, I worked for \$60.00 a month. Now that month is four weeks, that's not a regular month, it's four weeks of school, five days a week. That's the way your salary was figured on.

Question: When were you paid, at the end of the month or?

Answer: You were paid at the end of each month. Yes, you were paid once a month. That pay check was made out by the school board, the president of the local school board. Each district had their own school board, three members, the president of their school board made out the checks the other two usually signed the check and then you were paid at the end of each month.

Question: Who governed the school in which you taught?

Answer: All schools in which I taught were governed by the local school board. Each district had their own school board, as I say three members. They governed you. However, it was supervised to a certain extent by the county superintendent. He usually came out about twice a year and graded the school and stayed several hours and graded the school and your abilities and so on. The school was more or less controlled by the local school board.

Question: Was there a principal that was over and above you that came to meet with you?

Answer: No, the only schools that I taught in were one room schools, you were the teacher, the principal, everything. Everything, discipline, everything was done by the one person.

Question: Do you know any of the school board members and if they are still living or not?

Answer: The first school I had, there is one school board member that I know is living, yes. Peter Schaffer in La Crosse.

Question: Who is responsible for hiring and firing of the teachers?

Answer: The local school board of each district did the hiring and

they did the firing. But it was seldom ever done. You contracted for the year. It would have to be something terrible for them to turn you off. You had a contract for a year, while a year in those days was eight months. In country school, eight months was the year, usually starting in September ending in April. As I said, they didn't fire you. It would have to be awful bad. They didn't fire you, they just didn't hire you back the next year.

Question: Dr. Miller had given us a little sheet that had the rules of 1872 teachers, and on the list was how the school board expected the teachers to conduct themselves in the community. Were you given any set rules on what you were expected to do?

Answer: I was never given any set rules, but you knew what you were expected to do and not do, I'll tell you. You were never given any set rules. Yet into the 1930's, that's when I was teaching, you didn't smoke, you didn't exactly swear. However, one school taught me how to swear. I didn't swear until I started teaching school. They expected your morals to be far above reproach. It seemed to me like they didn't exactly expect you to act human. In your normal activities, the only way you had any fun, or I ever had any fun was in summer time when I got away; either on vacation or when I went to college, or on the weekends, or when I got clear away. Or I usually taught far enough out in the country that they didn't know exactly what I was doing in town. So, the only time I ever smoked was when I could do it and the kids didn't know it. Then in some districts they expected you to attend church and things like that. Usually the church of their choice if they could. That's one reason that I would not have gotten back my last school, I don't think; because I did not attend the United Brethern Church in McCracken. I went home every week end to Hoisington and worked in a church there and I didn't feel that I should work in both places. I didn't see how it was possible. Yes, you were not necessarily given a set of rules, not by 1930, but they didn't have to put them down in print, you knew they were there!

Question: Let's talk about the schools that you taught in. Could you tell me what their names were and what there locations were?

Answer: I can't tell you the exact names of most of them, except what they were known by in the local district. Of course that wasn't always the original name, they were usually named for someone in the district who had influence or something like that. I mean they were known by the names of the local people who had influence. Just like the first year, was known by some as the Benbowe school. Though I know that that was not the name of it. That one out by Hargrave. Benbowe's lived on a quarter of a mile away, but it was known by his

name. That first year, my wages were \$60.00 a month. Well, I could also go on and say that during the next few years, this was depression time. The wage partly depended upon the wealth of the local district. It partly depended on the financial situation like the depression. As time went on, most of these schools had to pay less and less and less because of the depression. Now I don't know that it really came out of their pockets that much, but I believe that as times got rougher on these farmers, they just felt like they were being pinched and that sure as the world sounds like too much money to be handing out to a school teacher. So, this local school board controlling the wage, just as times got rougher on him, why then he started lowering the wages on the school. Now, the second year, I got back into my own county, Barton county. I taught a school that was on the highway that led toward Russell. It was about ten miles north of Hoisington. It was known as the Oaks District. The first year I taught school there, I got \$80.00 a month. I went back the second year and taught and got \$85.00. That raise in wages was mainly due to the fact that it was my second year. That district was fairly well off as farmers go. Then the fourth year, I taught what we refer to as, out behind Olmitz. Out behind Olmitz, meant south of Olmitz. This was southeast of Olmitz about a mile and a half. The school was pretty close to Olmitz to be a country school because they had a Catholic school in Olmitz that took nearly all these kids. The only ones that went to this school out here, a mile and a half out of town, was parents who were one way or another, just didn't want to send their kids in town. They were more or less belligerent will say against the town, against the church and so forth. For this reason, it was a rough school to teach. This same attitude held good among their kids. They were belligerent to the town and the church, so they were belligerent to the school. It was a difficult school. I meant the discipline problem was. The first year there, I earned \$70.00 a month and the second year I got \$75.00. Now the fourth school I taught at was near about three miles further south out of Olmitz from the other school. It was a nice modern brick building. It had a furnace in the basement and a very nice school. I earned \$65.00 a month there. I could have stayed on and probably should have, but my father had always wanted me to come back to my own home school in Rush county and teach one year there. Finally, I gave in and came back to McCracken and taught at our own home school where I was born at but really didn't attend except for special functions. It is about seven miles north of McCracken and it was known as the Whitehead school. This would have been the winter of '36 and '37, and the depression was at its fullest in these counties around here at that time. The wages I was able to get was only \$45.00 a month. I only paid \$20.00 a month for board and room, so it wasn't too bad in the end, I guess. If you did have to stay in the country in

in peoples homes, they seldom charged more than about \$20.00 or \$25.00 at the limit, a month for room and board. So that wasn't so bad, you did earn a little bit, but you could see that by \$45.00 a month, the depression was really on. Many schools paid less than that, so then I wouldn't consider that particular school and \$45.00 a month was a terrible poor wage for the mid 1930's.

Question: Who did you stay with when you taught at the Whitehead school?

Answer: When I worked at the Whitehead school, I lived at my brother's house. That was about a mile South of the school.

Question: How did you get there every day?

Answer: I walked. Most of the kids walked. Now that close, ordinarily - no, I had a car and I went to Hoisington every weekend but I did not bother to take the car when it was only three-quarters of a mile or so to go to work.

Question: Do you know when our local country school, the Whitehead was built?

Answer: I would say approximately 1880, give or take a year.

Question: Do you know who started the movement to build this school?

Answer: I believe, of course in all of these country schools, in pioneer days, was started by local pioneers who lived nearby, because they needed a school built for their kids. This particular school, the Whitehead school, I would say, was influenced by two of its neighbors, Mr. Jake Yawger and Mr. Whitehead. I can't remember his name at the moment.

Question: Do you know if the land was purchased or if it was given to the school?

Answer: In most cases, I believe that the land was given by the government. The government gave these school districts so much land. The school district, then sold this land to homesteaders, and that money was used to help start the school. As a rule, if that particular government land was situated anywhere near where it should be, it was where then they built the school on that land and then sold the balance of the quarter or whatever it happened to be.

Question: Do you know how the people really decided on this location?

Answer: I believe in this particular case out here, it was partially centrally located for the district. You see, it was about a mile from the county line so they couldn't go any farther that way, and about two or three miles south was as far as that district went so they couldn't go much further, well say more than a half a mile further west because there was another county line. About two miles further east was all the further the district went, so it was more or less centrally located. In this case, I believe it happened to be where the government land was. It really shouldn't have been so close to these county lines.

Question: Was it a part of a public system of schools?

Answer: Well, I don't know exactly what you mean by a public system of schools but it was controlled by the county to a certain extent. We had a county superintendent and he went out about two to four times a year to each of the schools in his county. He spent several hours and graded, I meant he had a piece of paper with all these things on that he graded. He graded the school, he graded the teachers, he graded the school house, and all of these things and answered questions on this thing. That kind of graded the school and it also graded the teacher, so that it could be used by the school boards, which it seldom was, or by the county or state, which it seldom was. I think, he more or less made these trips because it was necessary. That way it was controlled by the county. But rural schools in early day Kansas was primarily controlled by each school's district board. There was usually three on the board, a President of the board and two others. They were usually local people who were interested in education or had a great deal of influence in the district. They pretty well controlled everything.

Question: You know the check-list that the superintendent was doing on the teacher or school sounds similar to like what our evaluations that our principals give us today. Were you allowed to ever see these evaluations after he gave them?

Answer: I never saw one. It was there on his clipboard, but I never saw one.

Comment: We can see ours if we request permission.

Reply: I think I probably could have if I would have requested permission, yes, but I don't recall of ever seeing one.

Question: Do you know where the funds came from? More or less just from the school's land that was given by the government in order for these

schools to be constructed. Is that correct?

Answer: Primarily, was given by the government. Yes the government, when they handed out the land for homesteading they handed out school land and they handed out railroad land. The railroads got so much out of every section. In other words, to sell, to encourage the railroad to come out. The railroad sold it and used the money to help build the railroad. Well by the same token, the government gave school land. The school district then could sell this land and use that money to help construct the school. I don't think what little bit they could get for that school land would have done much more than start the school.

Question: What materials were used to build this? Was it a wooden school or a stone school?

Answer: Your local school here, the Whitehead school, was a wooden structure. Except for the foundation, it was wood. Most of the school houses in Rush County and Barton county were wooden.

Question: What type of heating, lighting and toilets were used?

Answer: Well, the only lighting you had was a lamp, if you stayed there at night. Or if there was a program, there were lamps, usually a bigger type of lamp, better quality that would give off much more light.

Question: Like a kerosene lamp?

Answer: Similar. I forget what you call them, but they give off a lot of light. It could hang from ceilings and things. (Some of them could). The heating in every school that I was in except for the one that had a furnace, and it was a brick school, but that was a newer school. In fact it was a number one grading. It had the same grading as a city school. The teacher had to have the same qualifications as a city school. With this normal training certificate that I had, and as much college as I had, and you had to have at least two years of experience (I think it was), with that I could have taught a city school that was a number one grading. That was very rare for a county school to have that high of grading. But of all of these other schools that I've taught in or associated with had a coal stove. Just a stove in the school, in which you built your own fire, carried in your own coal and wood. And kept it up that way.

The water came from wells outside. Pumped your own water in other words, carried it in.

The toilets were outdoor toilets.

Comment: Got kind of chilly in the winter time.

Reply: What, the toilet or the school?

Comment: Probably both, huh?

Reply: The school was very cold in the morning, I can tell you, before you was able to get that fire started.

Question: Could you describe the interior of the building? What was it like?

Answer: As a rule its just a big one-room. Some of them had hallways to put (in fact, I believe most of them did have a hallway) to hang up their coats and things like that. Usually windows on two sides, a big old door with a porch on the front. Now that would be the description of most of the schools that I had any connection with.

Question: Was there any outdoor playground equipment for the children or did they more or less play baseball or what were some of their favorite games that they liked to play?

Answer: Most of the schools by 1930 had some outdoor equipment. Sort of like a merry-go-round, teeter-totters, and swings. I believe in earlier days, even in our local schools here, the kids more or less made their own games. Even by 1930, the kids pretty well made their own games. Very few of them ever played baseball.

Question: Who was in charge of the upkeep of the building? Was that the teachers responsibility?

Answer: The teacher kept the school clean, in most cases. The teacher had to keep the school clean, do all the cleaning. However, in the fall before the school started as a rule, members of the district came and cleaned the school. Now in charge of the upkeep of the school if anything went wrong, and needed something done you notified a member of that school board, and they either did that job or had somebody else do it. The only time that all the parents would cooperate, we'll say, would be to get the school clean in the Fall, before school started.

Question: Was the school for all the children - or for only the land-owners and taxpayers?

Answer: My people came out here in this Whitehead district in 1880, and at that time all these schools in this part of the state, was attended by all the children. There was no distinction. If you lived in the

district, or even boarded in the district, temporarily, you still attended the local school and it didn't cost you anything. As long as you lived in the district. Therefore, there was no distinction, you didn't have to pay for it. You bought your own school books and all those kind of things but as far as the school and the teacher - sitting there waiting on you, - Yes, anyone living in the district could attend.

Question: What was the greatest distance traveled by any student and what was his or her mode of transportation?

Answer: I think the greatest distance I ever had any children travel would be two and a half to three miles - the very greatest distance. In that case, they were usually brought by their parents. But some children did ride horseback, not many.

By the 1930's, most of these parents, if they had very far to come, brought their children in a vehicle of some kind. Or, in many cases, if there was an older boy or something, they'd drive a pick-up and bring the rest of their family. Two and a half to three miles was about the farthest they came.

Question: What was the usual age a child began school?

Answer: They usually began at six years of age.

Question: Would that be like Kindergarten or would that be first grade in which they would start?

Answer: That would be first grade. They didn't have Kindergarten in country schools. If a teacher was foolish enough to do it, she did it on her own, some did once in a while. But she would do it on her own. It may have been appreciated, but it wasn't necessary, because the ruling said, first grade, six years old. By the time school started they had to be six years old. Just about by August or September, they might possibly let you through if you were a month or two before September and let them go ahead. No, first grade usually was six years of age.

Question: What was the ages of the rest of the children?

Answer: All ages, depending upon the size of the school, and how many grades. There could be anything from eight grades on down to about three or four, depending upon the size of the school.

The law said by 1930, they had to be sixteen years old or finish the eighth grade, one or the other, and start school at six years of age. So, most of them you see, would be through the eighth grade

by the time they were fourteen or fifteen. Then when they finished the seventh grade, they took a state test. That state test was two subjects. If they passed those two subjects along with the teachers grade they passed. Those subjects counted for about a third to a half of their years grading. When they finished the eighth grade, they had to pass a state test. If they could not pass that state test in the eighth grade, they failed. So the teacher had to have these country school kids prepared to take this state test. Or, their grades had to be plenty high enough to over shadow. I believe that state test counted for about a third of their year. If they could not pass that state test, no matter what the teacher thought, they flunked. They had to take the eighth grade over again. So, that's why your country schools in those days was so high graded. These kids came out really knowing something. If they weren't prepared, if the teacher had not prepared them, she didn't know what this test was going to say. She didn't even give this test to her own kids. It was given by someone else, some other teacher in the county. They usually went to one location, usually the county seat, or some other bigger town to take the test. In fact, that first year that I taught near Olmitz, the test was given in Hoisington. It took a full day to take this test and if that child wasn't prepared for that eighth grade test - I had no way of knowing what they were going to ask. They had to be very well prepared on all subjects because the eighth grade included all subjects. If they couldn't pass that state test, they failed.

Question: Did you ever have any children that did not pass?

Answer: Never.

Comment: Sounds like a pretty good teacher.

Reply: I don't know. Never in seven years. I didn't even have a seventh grader that flunked any of their tests.

Question: Did most of the children that started, say in the first grade go ahead and complete the eighth grade? Or were there many students that weren't able to finish because they needed to help their family with their income or something like this?

Answer: Well, they either finished the eighth grade or sixteen years of age irregardless by state law. The only way in the world they could have possibly gotten out of that law, I mean around it, would be to go to some higher up some where, county superintendent, and do some tall talking to get out of it, because that was the law. The student might miss quite a little bit of school, but he better make it up the rest of the time.

Question: When you taught at the Whitehead school, how many children were attending?

Answer: I had about ten.

Question: What was their age range?

Answer: About seven years of age to about fifteen.

Question: So you would have had first grade to eighth grade within that?

Answer: In that, I think I had possibly five grades that year.

Question: What was the length of the school year and the school day?

Answer: The school day started at 9:00 in the morning. You had a recess about 10:00 or 10:30 in the morning, 15 minute recess, and they let off again at 12:00 and the noon lunch period lasted until about 1:00. We started again at 1:00 and then again at 2:30 another 15 minute recess. The school ended at 4:00 in the afternoon and that was the rule in most of the schools. We said, five days a week, of course, Monday through Friday. Each month was four weeks. You were let off for some holidays, not many. Usually at Christmas time, vacation started a day or two before Christmas, as a rule, and ended a day or two after New Years, as a rule, because your vacation usually lasted around 10 days to two weeks at Christmas time.

Question: Charlotte, were the majority of the original students of a particular religion or nationality? If so, what were their customs.

Answer: Some districts, like the Whitehead school, were more or less Protestant, American-born whose ancestors probably came from Indiana or Pennsylvania. They were White and no customs because they were not immigrants or anything like that, because they were second or third generation children. There were some districts, like my first school, near Hargrave, where almost the entire school, all but for one family, was originated in Liebenthal. So naturally, they were German-Russian Catholics. It didn't make any difference in the school, as far as customs is concerned, except when a Catholic holiday came along it didn't matter what the school board said, they took the holiday. The rest of them could come, the teacher came and any of the rest that wanted to come, but they took their Catholic holidays. Most of the country schools were that way. If the majority of the children were Catholic and they had a Catholic holiday, they went ahead and took it. Those were of course, in that school, were German-Russian

Catholics. They didn't do any particular thing in the district itself except to talk German or something to confuse a teacher like me who didn't know a word of it. Among themselves and so on, to say what they wanted to say, so she wouldn't know what it was. Otherwise, most of their custom activities took place at weddings or over the week-ends and things like that, over at Liebenthal. When I taught near Olmitz, I had the same problem, because those were German and Bohemian. Olmitz was at that time about half German and the other half Bohemian. They were also Catholics. They pretty well carried on their customs but not much, primarily their dances and things like that, but it was all done in Olmitz. Nothing along that line, they didn't expect any sort of customs to be carried on in the school. The rest of the schools that I was in was just ordinary mixture.

We still didn't have any foreigners except second and third generation children. At that time, we didn't have any connection with them. We also had no colored people in any of these districts. In fact, there's probably very few colored people living in the country, out in the country, in Barton county, Rush county, or Ellis county even yet.

Question: Were the schoolhouses used for any special community social activities besides for the education of the young?

Answer: In early pioneer days, in most of these districts, and certainly these in Rush county, the schoolhouse was THE activity center. Everything was carried on there. They not only had school programs, and they had spelling bees, arithmetic contests. They didn't have musical contests or anything like it. Very few of the country schools even did much on music. In fact, most of them didn't even have a piano or anything along that line. In the early days, it was used for all kinds of community gatherings and often it was used for church or for Sunday school. In fact, our own local school out here, for many years was used at least twice a month to carry on church and Sunday school and all other activities that they wanted to put on. Then the school itself, put on, in most of these country schools, at least in Rush county, had programs in which we had box suppers, cake walks, and things along that line to raise a little bit of money to buy something for the school. Some schools had programs and went to other schools and put the programs on together. Kind of like a consolidation. I know we did that in Barton county. A school that was better equipped for this, the neighboring schools would come on and put on a real program, operettic types of programs. So the district was used for many things and freely so, nobody objected.

Question: You mentioned box suppers, could you give me a description of the box suppers?

Answer: Well, you had an auctioneer of course to auction off the boxes. The boxes were brought in by women, usually single women. The school teacher must of course bring a box. The box had plenty of food in it, enough for two at least. The box was decorated, sort of gift wrapped or decorated real pretty. It was auctioned off. Then, whoever bid and got it, of course, it was always men who bid. Whoever got the box got to eat with whoever owned the box. And of course, if you didn't like the person, necessarily, whose box you bought - Well, that was just tough. It wasn't very good etiquette not to eat with that person anyway. And it was very likely, that a real fancy box, the more elaborate the box - wasn't always the prettiest girl by no means.

Then the cake walk was of course, a circle with numbers on the circle, you bought chances, usually about at least ten to twelve spots on the circle. Had somebody on each of these spots or squares. The cake was numbered and then somebody played an instrument or something like that. Whenever the music stopped, whoever was on the lucky number got the cake. Of course, that made your cakes, as a rule, sell for about a dollar. At ten cents a chance, during the depression, that was pretty good. Even if your box sold for two or three dollars during the depression.

Question: O.K. You said that the box suppers were generally made by the single women.

Answer: As a rule, they were made by single women. Sometimes married women would put in a box. If it was a district in which they didn't have many single women, a married woman would fix up a box. Nobody thought anything about it if some other guy bought the box. Sometimes at these box suppers, there was always a program put on and it was not at all uncommon for people from other districts to come in and attend this social. Back then, especially during the pioneer days, and even up through the 1930's there wasn't a great deal that you could go to. There wasn't a lot of entertainment. So, if any country school put on a program and if you were near enough to get to it, as a rule, you went. And as a rule, it was a very entertaining evening too. The program might not amount to a great deal, but there was usually enough other things going on. Sometimes they would have a contest in which two girls names were put up. We'll say it cost ten cents a vote, or maybe only a penny a vote. Whoever got the most votes, won the contest. Didn't have to give anything as a prize. The fact that she won was prize enough.

Question: Can you tell me more about your spelling bees. How were these conducted?

Answer: The Spelling bees, as a rule, were not just in the local school. In other words, you would have spelling bees maybe just in your local school sometimes, but as a rule, in early days, other schools went together. Usually it was two schools. They were schools who liked to compete. They would meet in one or the other of these schools; have a social, maybe a little program, and then they would have this spelling bee or this mathematics contest. It was usually between the two schools. They would have a few on each side to eliminate and it was between the two schools. The local school here, the Whitehead school, I know, quite often met with a school further away that was taught by Barnard. Later known for his works, which were contributed to the library in LaCrosse, called the Barnard Library. He started a small college in central Rush county. He was a very educated man. Kind of very eccentric in many ways, but a very educated man. Loaded with books, he had a library, that's why he finally gave his books to the LaCrosse Library. He liked to compete with other schools and if he couldn't get a really hot enough competition, sometimes he gave something as a prize. However, on one particular time, which was before my time - I had one aunt who was very good in mathematics and another who was very good in spelling. I don't recall if this was a spelling or a mathematics contest, but he had a student who was extremely good. So, he competed with our school and decided that he would give as a prize his pocket watch. He thought his student was good enough to win it. Well, my aunt won it. Well, his excuse for her not getting it was the fact that she was a women and he didn't think that the pocket watch was an appropriate prize. But of course, it was primarily because it wasn't one of his students that didn't win the contest. That was your spelling bees. Ordinarily it was done between two schools.

Comment: So, she ended up with winning no prize, then?

Reply: No prize, but she did win the contest.

Question: Was there any organization similar to our present PTA?

Answer: No, in most cases, no. When they had these programs, the parents got together then, and could talk things over and could talk things over with a teacher. As a rule, they didn't bother to talk things over with the teacher, unless they saw the teacher somewhere else and wanted to talk. When that country school teacher took over that school it was more or less hers for that year. She had a contract that said so. As a rule, the only time the parents ever interferred was through the grapevine. You know, more or less like it is now, griping or something, and maybe griped to the school board. The school board would then come

and talk to the teacher. Otherwise, there was very little interference except through a round about way like that, and not from individual parents, very seldom. As I said they nearly always went to the school board, and the school board was the intermediary between them and the teacher.

Question: Now a days, about like the ninth week or so, we have parent-teacher conferences, but you guys really didn't have any type of a conference?

Answer: Well, by 1930 at least, and I don't know how many years before that, once a year in the Fall, there was a State Teachers Meeting. It was held at various locations in the state, Hays usually held one, Wichita, places like that. It was a state teachers meeting. You got off a couple of days of school. Usually held so that you had plenty of time, on the week-end or something and you were paid for those days to go to the State Teacher's meeting. It was kind of like a convention. Country school teachers went to the convention and were paid for their time. I don't recall that any of my expenses were paid, but at least they paid for you going to it, just a regular part of your wage. In that way, it would be a conference. As a rule, these were quite interesting. You voted for the State officers, or rather you voted for them all in bulk. If you didn't like part of them, well, that was tough. You either accepted them all or nothing. That's where they got their state board for the following year. At these teacher's conventions, quite often you had a speaker or some other programs, quite interesting. I remember one particular time at Hays in which our speaker for the evening at the Auditorium was Richard Haliburton. Richard Haliburton, at that time, was probably the most world famous travel author. He only wrote about three books or so. It wasn't because he couldn't write, it was because he finally ended up dead. He did all kinds of unusual things and lived through them to tell them. He was a wealthy man's son who had nothing to do but travel the world. Then come home and write about his travels. At this particular meeting that night, the college students were allowed to be there. We thought it was going to be very dull. We took one look at him and all of us sighed, for we thought it was going to be a very dull speech. He was reviewing his book "Seven League Boots" that's one of his most famous. It was new on the market. He autographed them and I think I have one that he's autographed. He was not a very impressive looking person, just slightly slight built, sort of light complected a handsome boy. He reviewed that book, and the way he talked - Well, he took the characters. If he was referring to the elephant that went over the pass in Medieval times. You know, Hannibal crossing the Alps. Well, for one thing they rented an elephant in Paris, I believe it was. They took it over the Alps like

Hannibal did and the elephant was having a heck of a time. So were they really. He took each part and he played the part of the elephant too. The elephant was very provoked, very upset, with them being so insistent that he do all of these things that the elephant thought they were stupid. He took all of these parts and changed his voice and you could see - you could actually see all of this happening. He talked for about two hours, and the crowd, college students and all were on the edge of their seats. When he quit, they were disappointed. They could have listened to him for another hour or two. They were disappointed that his speech wasn't twice that long. So you see, those were the kind of things that were at our convention. Usually something just as fascinating as that, as part of our program.

Question: Did you belong to like the NEA association or was there associations like that available?

Answer: That was the State Association, yes. I forget what it was called but it was a State Association. If you went to this convention, you automatically belonged to it and you were voting for their next officers. Somebody set up this group so that you had to vote for all of them at once even if you didn't want some of them, and sometimes we didn't. We didn't want the secretary, for one thing because he was political, and he was filling his own pocket with political votes. We couldn't get him out because we had to vote on all of them or none. So, we got a chance to vote for those officers, but we might as well not have, because they set them up. In other words, the group that was in this year set up the group that was going to be in next year, and there wasn't much you could do about it.

Question: In talking about the Whitehead school, were there any physical changes to the school during the years of its use?

Answer: I don't think there was a great deal except just refurnishment. Maybe better desks, a few better desks put in through the years, better blackboards put in through the years, and a paint job now and then, and that's about all. There was no particular thing added to it as far as I know, except just improve on what we already had.

Question: Can you name some of the rules that the school had for the children?

Answer: Well, the school didn't have much rules for the children except "do what the teacher said." Then caution rules for safety and fire drills. You were supposed to have those particular things, fire drills - that was part of what was in the county superintendent's report.

Question: Did you have those drills once a month or what was the requirements?

Answer: I don't believe so. I think, two to four times a year probably covered it. I don't recall having them that often.

Question: Let's look at the school day now. How did you start out your morning or your day?

Answer: Well, of course, after they were usually playing on the playground or already inside or in their seats, otherwise you had a hand bell. You rang your hand bell. The kids lined up and marched in and soon as they were in and seated you had them rise and give the flag salute. Definitely the flag salute every morning. Same in early days and depending on the district there would be a short prayer after the flag salute, depending on the district. As a rule, by 1930, there was very little praying done in a school, but the flag salute must be. Then sometimes there would be sort of a greeting or a little thing said that depended on the teacher, and that's just about it. Oh, sometimes you could, depending on the teacher also whether or not you called the role. Small schools, the teacher didn't deem it necessary. Which it wasn't. Those are the things that could have started school.

Question: Could you tell me about the subjects that you taught and in what order did you teach them?

Answer: You taught all the basic subjects. The first grade naturally would not have as many subjects as the eighth grade, because the eighth grade had about half a dozen subjects. Depending on the size of the school now, when I had all eight grades, you alternated in such a way, as a rule, younger kids had some of the first things. They would have maybe a reading and you usually brought that student to a bench up front or that first grader to a bench up front and had a short class. Lasted from ten to fifteen minutes, most of these classes. Then they would go back and set down and supposed to be studying and then there would be another class come up. Maybe another reading class from some other grade and it went on this way all day until you cover all subjects in all grades. As I said it would be from five to fifteen minutes that session or that recitation in which you asked questions of them and kind of showed them what to do and how to do it for that class and maybe introduce the following days class, and they were supposed to be studying the rest of the time that they weren't up there themselves. As a rule, they were listening into the other class. So, as a rule, we'll say a second grader knew what the questions were for the third grade before he ever got there. In this way they were well versed on all these other things and it was very rounded learning

learning procedure, because two thirds of the time they were listening. As soon as they got their own, why then they started listening and that is good and as I said, as a rule, they knew almost what the next grade was going to be before they ever got there. Of course, in my case, I'm a big talker and some teachers, of course, were not this way. In fact, probably most teachers weren't, but I'm a big talker and I've been traveled widely and they loved to get me started on some subject. All that was needed was the right question to get me started. Well, they were in for about ten to thirty minutes of story. Of course, they loved that because to make up for that we'd have to knock off a few classes. I'm afraid they worked me. Nearly every school I was in worked me that way, after they got wise to me.

Comment: I think now a days, kids still try to do that.

Reply: Probably.

Question: If they were in the eighth grade what would be their basic subjects they would have throughout the day?

Answer: Reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography. In seventh grade, we had physiology. We didn't have it in eighth grade. We had social studies by then. Social studies were introduced in Kansas in about 1930, somewhere in there. We had it in California schools years before that. Then we had writing and history and some science by then. Didn't use to have but I'd say there was science coming in, yes, by the 1930's. That was mainly given under the social studies, because social studies pretty well covered all these world things.

Question: How and where did you get your school supplies? Were these furnished by your school board ahead of time, or did you order these yourself, or how did you get them?

Answer: A few school supplies were already at the school. If you needed something, as a rule, you could let the board know you needed them. You go ahead and buy them, the teacher would, and they would reimburse you. However, very few supplies were furnished by the school. The parents furnished what the children needed.

Everything the child needed. The teacher furnished everything she needed. So, there was very few supplies the school furnished, and what they furnished, as a rule, the teacher went ahead and bought then and the school board reimbursed her with a check.

Question: Did you have any teacher manuals at that time or were these all things you made up on your own?

Answer: There was some manuals started, yes, about the 1930's.

About the middle of the 1930's, there was some manual's to a certain extent started, yes. Most of those manual's came in when social studies were introduced. In other words, there seemed to be a turn over where Kansas teaching is concerned, where there methods are concerned. It came in about the same time social studies did. There was some manual's, yes, but as a rule, the teacher took up a book and started in.

Question: Did the majority of the children bring their own books or were the books available?

Answer: No, they brought their own. The parents paid for all of their own.

Question: What other types of school supplies were the children expected to bring?

Answer: In early days, of course, you brought slate and the thing to erase the slate with and a slate pencil. The other supplies by 1930, of course, would be a tablet of the right kind and tablets and pencils, pen and ink and the right kind of paper to use them with. Some, very few notebooks or anything like that.

Question: Can you tell me about the types of texts? Did you use the McGuffey Reader or some other types of Readers?

Answer: No, the McCuffey Readers, Wess-Arithmetic, and Rays-History, were common in pioneer days. In fact, I have some of all three. I have a complete set of McGuffey's. New ones. We did not use them. I don't think that McGuffey Readers and those were used much in this century. They've been out a long time. I mean out of circulation. Out of being used. I don't think much of that was used after the turn of the century. Before that, they were awfully good, cause I know. I've looked them over and I have even used my McGuffey Readers to teach from. They are excellent. They only go from primer through book six and sixth grade McGuffey Reader would be about the quality of what you'd learn up here in senior in high school. By the time you finished the primer through the sixth grade McGuffey Reader, you not only knew how to read, but you also had a vast knowledge of other things. Because of the stories in the McGuffey Readers. They were difficult. Like I said, they just about equalled high school, that six did. So, in early days, if they went to school six years, they had a good education and you can learn an awful lot from the McGuffey Reader because of the stories that are in them. I mentioned physiology and Kansas History, was the other. You asked what was in the other seventh and eighth grades, Kansas history and world history. This Kansas history book is marvelous

or it was back then. I don't know if you have Kansas history books now or not, but that Kansas history book was excellent to learn your own state.

Comment: Yea, I would like to see that sometime.

Reply: They were great.

Question: So, if you did not use the McGuffey Readers and the other texts that you were quoting what texts did you use?

Answer: Rays-Arithmetic, Wess-History.

Question: You did use those?

Answer: No, no. I said those were in early days, pioneer days.

Question: O.K. So, what texts did you use?

Answer: I don't know the names of them. The state chose the books. They were not books of any historical value. However, I did notice that during my last year of teaching there was a new book that went on the market for sixth graders. A history book was changed. It was O.K. when I started it, but pretty soon I began to wonder who in the world wrote that history book when they got into the Civil War. The thing was filled with history of the Civil War that I'd never heard of. It was totally the opposite from what I'd ever been taught. I couldn't understand. I thought that by the time that I had read away into it, that we northerners must have been a bunch of criminals to have ever had picked on the South. So, finally in disgust, I happened to think and I looked at the front of the book to see who the author was and it was written by a Professor at Louisiana University, for sixth grade history in Kansas. That's why I was getting a viewpoint of the Civil War that I'd never heard of. So, in disgust, I threw the thing down regardless of it being the book that we was to teach by. I threw the thing down, picked up the old one, and taught about the Civil War the old way. After all, this is Kansas.

Question: Did your school or any of the schools have a library? And how big was it?

Answer: All schools had some library, yes. Or by then we had. We were allowed so many new books each year for our library. In other words, a certain amount of money was allotted for the school to add to their library. You had a list of things to go through and that depended on which grade of child you primarily would be having in that school. Just look over your library and see what things they already had available and go from the lists that we were given and

choose from that. Then we chose our own addition to the library, yes. Several books each year were added that way. It was allowed by the state and I don't recall who paid for it. I don't think our local school board had to write a check for it. I don't hardly think so. If they had they would of done more complaining and I don't recall them ever complaining about it. I think it was just allotted by the state.

Question: So, did you have quite a few books for your first graders as well as for your more advanced students?

Answer: Yes, depending on the grade of the children and what they didn't have in the library. Also, depended on the wishes of the teacher of course, what she was particularly interested in to add to the library, because you were allowed to add several books.

Question: I'm sure the children were alot like they are today and every once in a while they get into a little bit of trouble. What did you do when the discipline problems arose?

Answer: Well, a lot depended on the district of the school and the teacher. It depended upon what the teacher could get by with. I heard of some districts in which the teacher disciplined with a rubber hose. I'd say that was the most serious discipline and I know of a few teachers who used them. Even as late as 1930. Before that it was not quite as uncommon. However, I couldn't see that. So, as a rule, I either disciplined by not allowing them to do certain things that they wanted to do, or make them stay in and not have a recess or not let them have their full lunch hour, because they brought their lunches anyway. The problem there was that it punished the teacher as much as it punished the kid. I sometimes had them stand in the corner. The teacher had to really discipline. You could not get by with them, day after day, with not some kind of discipline. It was the teacher's full one-room school. She had to handle it. As a rule, as I say, I either did not allow them to do what they might want to do, or if the whole class room was honery - why the last thirty minutes, if we were going to have a story hour or something, why they didn't get that. Or, as I said, I had them stand in a corner.

I did have parents once in a long while, who did prefer their own discipline. All they needed to do was to be told. But as a rule, that was a parent who was too severe from the old school, like certain German parents. I preferred not to even go to the parent at all. Not to tell the parent at all. I might use it as a threat, but didn't do it. The classrooms were very well organized. I never saw a country school in which they got out of their seats without permission. Talking across the room without permission, if they did they were disciplined

right then and it didn't go on. I think the country schools were very nice. In other words, I have very little to say against the actions of the country school kids.

Question: What was your system of evaluation that you used for these children?

Answer: A,B,C,D, and F. As a rule, the final tests you gave them counted about a third. The rest of the school year would be the other two-thirds. Maybe about half of that two-thirds would be class recitation the other half of the two-thirds might be tests through the year. The final test, as I said, would be a third. You just started from that and about the only real thing you could get a real accurate estimate on was mathematics or spelling. Everything else the teacher more or less had to use her own judgment and decide whether or not that child deserved an A or deserved a B and so on.

Question: Did you have report cards? And if so, how often did you send these home?

Answer: Once a month. Yes, once a month. Every subject was on the same card. You graded your A,B,C, for each month for each of those subjects. At the end of the year, you averaged those together and that's how you got your final grade out here. Unless you had a final test. I graded the test, and then as I say, that took a third of your final grade.

Question: How was the attendance throughout this eight month period?

Answer: Very good. Only with severe sickness. In early day Kansas, of course, in the Fall or Spring, you had a great deal of difficulty because these farm kids were needed on the farms. In later years, they didn't pay much attention to that, the kids very well attended. Their parents or their fathers let the kid go ahead and go to school. They didn't take them out of school unless they absolutely had to.

Question: Charlotte, were there any type of special classes or unique educational services offered to these children in the one-room classes?

Answer: No, none that I ever had anything to do with or any of the schools that I knew of. There was no special services offered to any children who were retarded or anything along that line. However, a teacher could take it on to herself to help that child, give them extra help which I did many times. Give them extra help. When she would have any spare time or even on her own time give them special help if they needed it. Or, if the teacher didn't have the time or the patience,

she just flunked the kid and he would have to take the grade over again. There was nothing special ever set up.

Question: What type of graduation exercises were performed?

Answer: Usually just before school was out, in most schools, there was a full day given to the families. They came with lunches and sometimes there would be a program put on for them. Instead of having this party, we'll say, in the evening, like our regular school programs might be, it was usually held in the day time. They would just have a regular picnic, outside activities, anything that the kids or parents decided to put on, races, or just anything along that line. A regular big meal, the parents brought food, put it together, and had a real feast. It was just a day of pleasure. As a rule, there was no other graduation activities except that everybody knew who was graduating. It was more or less of a family-school get together on the last day of school.

Question: Did the superintendent come out and present diplomas?

Answer: No, in fact, as a rule, these children got their grade cards and diplomas the last day of school and if they didn't it was sent to them in the mail. But nothing special was put on by the county. One reason, would be that there would be too many schools closing on the same day. They closed right around the eighteenth or nineteenth or twentieth of April, somewhere around there.

Question: What types of occupations did the students eventually take up?

Answer: Most of the children, the boys took up farming and the girls got married. There wasn't much of anything else. Some went on to high school. A lot of these country schools back then didn't bother going on to high school, depending the type of district it was. The ones up around Hargrave didn't bother about going on to high school, if they had to go in to La Crosse or somewhere. Most of them didn't bother going to high school. The ones out here at the Whitehead school and some of those down around real close to Hoisington would go on to high school. Beyond going to high school they didn't do much. Most of the boys went in to the service, because the war was coming on. At that time, most country school kids, the biggest majority of course went on to high school or whatever they decided to do from there. In most of these districts further out like around Hargrave and Liebenthal most of those became farmers or wives.

Question: If I may, may I ask you why you quit teaching?

Answer: I quit teaching because I got hurt. I got so seriously hurt,

that I lost my health. I was riding a horse with one of the students, toward the end of the year. The horse got frightened and it threw the girl one direction and it threw me the other and did a lot of stomping. She got from under and got out of the way. I turned over and protected my face but I got the hoofs of the horse on my back. It ruined my health for years. In fact, I'm still suffering for it yet today. I was not able to teach, I had a school for that Fall. I had the highest rated school in Barton county, the one I referred to earlier. But, I couldn't teach it. I had to give it up just before school started. They lost their rating (the school did) and never got it back, because they couldn't get a teacher at the last minute like that. By then my health was in such bad shape that I was (if I wasn't bedfast) at least I was in a chair. I wasn't able to walk and hold a job of any kind. And with a normal training certificate, I think, I mentioned before, you have to go back to college one summer every two years to be able to hold that certificate because it was renewable every two years. And one summer's college was required to do this. By the time, I got my health back at all or so that I could work at all, my certificate had run out and then the laws started changing in Kansas, where it required more college education. Financially, I wasn't able to go on to college back then because I had two children to raise on my own. After that, then you took whatever job you could get. I had a job during the depression by being a school teacher, but as time proved, it would have been much better if I would have gone on with a business course and I would have had a job where I could have set down and kept working through all these years, instead of clerking and things like that.

Question: In summing up this interview, what do you feel was your greatest accomplishments or fondest memories of being a teacher?

Answer: Well, I think my greatest accomplishment was my influence on some of the kids. Some of them became my best friends in later years. They came into my home when they needed help or needed a sanctuary and came to my house to stay with me awhile or just for a few words. So, I believe my greatest accomplishment was my influence on some of the children. And a life-time influence on some of these children in helping them with some of their decisions when they needed help or something like that. This has gone on for years afterwards.

My greatest pleasure in teaching to look back on the things that was, things were so different from anything that I've ever done since. It was such a new experience to me before that, because that was the first time I was away from home. I was very held down and it was more freedom. I look back on the funny things that happened

and a lot of funny incidents happened. Maybe that's my pleasure, looking back on the things that never could happen again. Or nothing anywheres near like them in the rural one-room country school house. It is certainly not like anything in the modern times. I think most teachers whoever taught in them and a lot of students who ever went to them, have a great deal of pleasure looking back on that old one-room school house. So, I say just something to look back on that's different and my influence on the children.

Comment: Well I have really, really, enjoyed this interview and hope that it has brought back some dear memories. Is there anything else that you would like to add to our interview?

Answer: Well, nothing except when we were talking about things as late as 1930, it reminds me that my father taught school back around the turn of the century. It was a great deal different from what my years were because they had their spelling bees, they had all of their school get-togethers. They had a lot more interesting get togethers than we ever had, even in the 1930's. His school term wasn't near as long as a rule. Each period only lasted about three months. They kind of set their times for schooling depending on farm kids, what they had to do, and the weather which was too severe through the middle of the winter. So, lots of these schools had only a three month period, wait a while and then have another three month period. He taught, what he called two terms. Those two terms, I believe, were divided into three month periods. Back then, it wasn't unusual for the school board to get this money off their hands to pay the teacher for the full year. In his case, one of these years, in fact, it was his first year, I believe, that he taught school. It was up here in Ellis county just a few miles northeast of where you live in Ellis county. They paid him the full years wages. Well, he went to Hays and deposited it in a bank at Hays. A few days later the bank went broke. So, he taught that first full years school with no wages. Now you see, things like that don't happen now. That's about all I had to add. I just wanted to make it clear that my experiences in the 1930's was considerable different than what it was thirty to forty years before that. They taught with the McGuffey's Readers and things like that and they had much more activities in the schools than they do now. They competed in the schools in those days. He looked back on it and he was always talking about what he did in his school at that time. I have the old bell that he used and its all worn out. In fact, the whole side is worn out. He sure must have used it awful hard. He sort of done that in two years. Those are brass bells. When he was teaching in 1896 - 1897, it was considerably different than what it was in 1930 when I taught.

I guess that's it. And thank-you for asking me to do this, I enjoyed it.

Comment: Well, good, and thank-you again for allowing me to ask you all these questions, Charlotte.

Reply: Thank-you. That's fine. I enjoyed it.