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Interviewee: Blanche Hamel, Flora Hamel, and Ed Hamel
Interviewer: Merle Johnston and Nancy Cranston
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Project: Frenchtown Historical Society Oral History Collection

Note: Arthur Donlan is present during the interview and occasionally asks questions or confirms information.

Merle Johnston: This is Blanche Hamel, April 2, 1975. All right. First of all, I’d like to ask you about your parents, and I’d like their names, and where they came from, and when they first came out here.

Blanche Hamel: My father’s name was Ed Hamel, and he came to Frenchtown in 1869. He spent some time here and then he went to Cedar Creek. At that time—the Gold Rush Discovery—which was in 1869 and he spent a year there and did very well in mining, but he returned to Frenchtown in 1870 and he remained in Frenchtown. He was engaged with his former partner, Theodore Bedard. They were in the hotel business, meat market, saloon in those days, and stock business. They bought much land. They purchased the first grist mill. Now I’m not sure if Mr. Donlan will agree with me on this because don’t you say, Art…Don’t you say there was one up in Mill Creek previously?

Arthur Donlan: Yes.

BH: Well, the first one in Frenchtown, anyway. They purchased from Moses Reeves who had built it, and it was located where the Oaks’ residence is. It was built in 1864. It was a very large building, three stories, and it was operated by water from the Mill Creek which was diverted to the Hamel and the Bedard ranches. They also bought the first school building, which was located where the Herb Seibert (?) residence now stands. They made a cheese factory out of it. They had a cheese maker who wasn’t very good at his trade and made several batches of bad cheese. He would put it between the walls for safe keeping. (laughs) Later the building was moved, and the movers found large chunks of cheese which had naturally dried out. The building still stands where Mrs. Bandy lives, and it was a two-story building. In the past...I would say...How many years ago, Art, would you say that Joe lowered the roof in that building?

Unidentified male voices: (Unintelligible) About six.

BH: Oh, he’s been dead for six...It must be 15 years since he lowered that. I’ll tell you why I know because he lowered it not very long after Helen and Lena Scheffer were working at the store for (unintelligible). They lived there in that.

Well, anyway, Edwin Hamel went back to Canada in 1882, and on the eighth of March 1882...’83 he married a widow, Malvina Bergeron Rocheleau. That was my mother. She had two children:
Aurore and Louis. Louis was named after his father. They came back to Frenchtown to his business with Theodore Bedard. They had five children. In 1894, he died of pneumonia. I was only nine months old. Seven children, really, she had. So Mrs. Hamel and Theodore Bedard, they dissolved the partnership. Both took land. He took the south side of the road and gave my mother the land on the north...No, no, it was the opposite...on the south side. He took the north side, and my mother took the south. It was a verbal agreement if anything happened to either one of them that they would divide the land.

AD: Be better (unintelligible) her.

BH: Well, they have it in...Well, the seven children worked: Aurore, Louis, Bertha, Yvonne, Flora, Edmond, and Blanche. In the history, it says a baby is unnamed, that’s me—1894. So Mrs. Hamel and Theodore dissolved partnership, the land...I’ve already said this. My mother, she also bought several ranches after she was alone, and she owned the airport—where the airport now stays. Also where the—

AD: You mean, Missoula Airport?

BH: Yes, the Missoula Airport, and also the Kona ranch—the Miller-Kona ranch—but she sold both of them later. She bought Mr. Bedard's interest in the hotel and operated it until she was married nine years later to Louis Barrette who was a discoverer, with B. Lanther of Cedar Creek near Superior in the fall of 1869. Lanther went to Lozeau, that was a stopping place, and he had just a little too much to drink and told the patrons of this big discovery. The next morning, 100 men ate breakfast at the ranch before leaving for Cedar Creek. The rush was on, and they followed to the new diggings.

Population rose to about 2,000 in a very short time. Frenchtown, in those days, was a stopping and home for miners and lumberjacks in the wintertime. Mr. Barrette spent all of his winters here. Many people had claim there, and it was extended...estimated that in the last 45 years, Cedar Creek yielded between five and six million dollars. The mines and many claims were sold several times, but Louis Barrette with his associates, three of the LaCasse brothers, worked the mines for several years. Then they finally sold it to a Kansas City company, which instead of sluicing...They couldn't sluice any longer because the farm down below objected, and they were going to have lawsuits on account of the color of the water. So they brought a dredge, and they used a dredge and it wasn't successful. They lost bedrock, and so they sold it to another company from Tacoma and they gave it up finally. I guess, most of the easy mining...well, it was just too hard to mine, so just individuals mined it. One of the LaCasse's (unintelligible) used to go there and do some mining in the summertime.

AD: (unintelligible)

BH: Louis Barrette died in December 10, 1914. My mother died in 19...she died on October 30, 18...1918.
Frenchtown before the fire had five saloons and two little hotels. What is left of Frenchtown is where Mrs. Bandy lived. It was the Northern Pacific Railway hotel. The whole thing, you know, the bright green house. Of course, it was a two-story house before the roof was lowered. Also the Otto Smith house and Shourds house—that was on this side of the creek. Those are the only of the original Frenchtown. Of course, there was...the house across from the church where Moore’s, I think the people are, who live there. That was Demers mansion, and that part of it had a domed ceiling. During the time that the sisters had a school here, that was where they lived, and they used that room for a chapel. A portion of that building was moved to where Flaggett’s (?) lives, but later burned. Part of it was demolished. I guess they had about 25 or 30 rooms in that building. It extended from the lane to almost to the creek. Of course, that was on the other side of the creek at the time. It wasn’t considered to be in Frenchtown. (laughs)

Also, the Louis Norman house was left. It never did burn beyond the creek, and the east end of that was used as a post office. Oh I forgot that—

Flora Hamel: (Unintelligible).

BH: Frenchtown had several fires, two believed to be arson. There were two lovely homes where the lots are vacant west of Mrs. Sample’s (?) house. Do you remember Mrs. Reno’s (?) house and Joe Banyon’s (?) father’s house? Those were nice houses.

AD: They were real nice houses, yes. They burned on St. John’s night.

BH: They burned on St. John’s night. What a commotion! A lot of people from Butte had come for the celebration, but not the big celebration like the one year they had a special train from Butte and 2,000 people came from Butte for St. Johns.

Ed Hamel: And Anaconda, Deer Lodge.

BH: Anaconda and Deer Lodge—all up—

AD: In the St. John’s Society, there were a lot of members in Butte and Anaconda, and they came.

MJ: Were they here and then moved there?

BH: No, no. They had a French organization, the St. John’s Society. They’d had the convention in one year—

FH: (Unintelligible)
BH: What?

FH: (Unintelligible)

BH: Yes, in French. (speaks French)

AD: Well, I've got one too. (laughs)

BH: You know where it is?

FH: Well, they ran a special train from Butte for the celebration. There was about 2,000 people here.

MJ: Was this just the one time?

FH: From Butte—

BH: Yes, so just the one time.

MJ: Do you happen to know when this was?

FH: Just one time. They had people from Anaconda and Deer Lodge and Missoula.

MJ: Do you know what year—

BH: What's that?

MJ: What year?

BH: I'd have to think.

FH: They got here around 12 o'clock.

BH: What year was that, do you remember?

FH: No, I don't.

BH: We could probably—

BH: It was when they opened the big hall here, you know.

AD: Yes, I remember the big hall.
FH: (Unintelligible) and you know, there were horses, buggies, (unintelligible).

BH: Baseball games, you know, between the teams from the two big cities—Frenchtown and Butte. (laughs)

MJ: Butte played Frenchtown?

BH: Oh yes.

MJ: Who won this, incidentally?

BH: Well- (Unintelligible chatter)

AD: We had a ringer—

FH: It was all decorated—

BH: We had Father Legree. He was—

AD: Six feet two or three.

BH: Or four. He was a real pitcher and catcher. (laughs)

Now, about those two houses. One of those housed the post office at one time, and it was...One of those houses was a great-grandmother of his...Art’s son’s wife—your daughter-in-law.

FH: (Unintelligible)

BH: Yes, my grandmother, sure. She was your grandmother.

FH: There was a post office where Dobies (?) lived.

BH: Yes, there was a fellow by the name of Hypolyte Laissierre was the postmaster. Will you write it down? (laughs) H-y-p-o-l-y-t-e L-a-i-s-s-i-e-r-r-e.

EH: And Felix Buocomechel was a postmaster over here.

MJ: You wouldn’t happen to know, how you spelled it or anything?

BH: Oh yes. Felix...B-u-o-c-o-m-e-c-h-e-l. Also there were three small—well, they were not as large as the two main ones—houses where the Sample (?) house is today. One extended almost to the creek, and it was on a high rock foundation. Another one...One had six rooms, and the other one had five rooms. And in the six-room house, it was built...My uncle was a doctor, and
he came from Massachusetts and he stayed here for several years. He lived in that house. He was my mother’s brother. My mother owned those houses. Five...there was three houses, one had five rooms, one six, and one three.

EH: You remember those, Art?

AD: I do.

BH: (Unintelligible) Of course, you know, many people couldn’t afford to buy a house, and they wanted to rent one. Well, I think that’s about it.

Merle Johnston: Okay. I have some questions I’d like to ask. Go ahead, Art.

AD: Your mother didn’t come out here until she married a Hamel.

BH: No.

AD: She married a Rocheleau back...Rocheleau was killed here, or was he killed back there?

BH: Oh no, Rocheleau died. She was only married to him three, four years and had two children.

AD: And he got thrown from a horse or something?

BH: Oh, that was his son!

AD: Oh, that’s his son? That was Louis.

BH: Louis, yes.

AD: Okay.

BH: That was my mother’s boy, son by her first husband, by Rocheleau.

FH: Louis and your mother, our mother—

BH: See, she had Aurore and Louis. She was a widow, and when my father was a younger man, he went back...that was his hometown in Marysville, just out of Montreal. He went there for a visit, and he went to a cornhusking bee party—in those days, they used to have them. The one that was lucky, that got the red ear of corn, would get to kiss the girl that he wanted too that was in the party. So he got the red ear, and he went to my mother and went to kiss her and she slapped him. He said “Okay, young gal.” He says, “I’ll be back for you sometime,” and sure enough, he did.
FH: I’ll come and get you.

MJ: When your step-father and mother first came here, where was the house located?

BH: My father and mother came here together.

MJ: Yes, when they came here together. Where did they first live?

BH: They lived in the living quarters of this hotel here.

EH: He still owned all of that. My father owned all of that.

BH: My father still owned all of that, see? [looks at photos] They lived in this place first.

MJ: Ms. Hamel is referring to a picture of the hotel. I guess we can label it number one.

BH: Yes, I think...let’s see I don’t think there’s...1886.

MJ: Now, were you born in this—

BH: Yes, we were all born in that...one of those buildings, the hotel. Either that one of the other.

MJ: Now, may I ask what years?

BH: Flora, what—

MJ: What year were you born?

BH: You were born in 1888.

FH: 1888.

MJ: And you—

BH: She’s 86.

FH: I’m 86!

EH: I was born in 1890.

BH: I was born in 1893.

MJ: And all five children were born here?
BH: All the Hamel children were born here. She came with the two Rocheleau children. Her husband had died, and she’d been a widow nine years.

FH: (Unintelligible) My father and mother and my sister—

BH: Flora. (unintelligible).

MJ: That’s okay. That’s okay. Fine. Go ahead and talk. We want you to talk.

What did you father do? You said he—

BH: He was a blacksmith.

MJ: He was a blacksmith.

BH: Yes, that was his trade.

MJ: Now, where was his shop? Do you know offhand?

BH: I think he just had it around maybe in the barn or in near the hotel.

MJ: You suppose it would be this building next door?

BH: Oh probably was, yes, when he first started, yes. Because it says in the history that he was a blacksmith by trade.

MJ: Now, what do you remember of the family as you’d, let’s say, you sit around the table like for dinner. Could you tell us what conversation would be like, and would your mother have a hard time getting all the kids together?

BH: Yes, pretty much. We had much family communication. Of course, we were living in...We had all our meals in the hotel. We always had a cook.

MJ: This was Chinese?

BH: Right. Well, if it wasn’t...We had two others that were Chinese, but see, many of them came for gold during times of the gold rush and then go back to China. So we didn’t have any family...Well, we had a family table, but it wasn’t in, like...not in our own living quarters.

MJ: Well, did the people, the guests eat with you too?

BH: Well, they wouldn’t eat with us, but at other tables. You see, we had a table for the family,
then one for the...They had, in the dining room, they had three or four tables—long tables, you know, for something special.

EH: People would come, and they’d eat here.

BH: Well, it was a boarding...Really, an old-fashioned boarding house.

AD: So most of the meals would be served family style?

BH: Yes. They had all (unintelligible).

AD: And then everything was served by the plate?

BH: Everything was put out on platters, and help yourself as much as you want. The Chinese cook that we had didn't believe in sleeping in a bed. He slept on a...Flora, what did Tie Lee sleep on? In the basement?

FH: Who?

BH: Tie Lee, the cook?

FH: Oh, he used to sleep on a big table, and he a piece of wood for his pillow. He'd just cover himself with a sheet, no other covers.

MJ: Is Tie Lee—

BH: That was the name of the cook.

FH: You know, some of the natives would get kind of drunk and high and they’d go down and stare at him. (laughs)

MJ: We have a train going through.

[Break in audio]

MJ: Okay, the train’s gone now. We can go back to where we were.

I have a question. What’s the Chinese fellow’s name, Teal?

BH, EH, FH (same time): Tie Lee.

MJ: Tie Lee. Is he buried here?
EH: No.

BH: No, no.

MJ: Do you know what ever happened to him?

BH: No, no I don’t know.

FH: What was?

BH: Tie Lee, where Tie Lee died. He went back to China, didn’t he?

FH: Yes. When, you know, we couldn’t have any more Chinese to…the union was against it. So he went to St. Ignatius and worked for the Beckman’s (?) brothers. He cooked there. It was moonshine time, and of course, he was selling it for and he got caught and was sent to the pen.

BH: I didn’t remember about that, but I do now. We felt terrible about that.

FH: He was a nice—

BH: They were brothers, they were old timers in St. Ignatius. They had a store there.

FH: (Unintelligible) That picture there comes from China.

BH: From him...or from China. There that one above the clock. That’s etched on glass.

FH: He sent to—

BH: —China. We had four of those (unintelligible).

FH: I had a shawl when I was born that he had sent from China for me, and it just...there’s not a hole or nothing in it.

BH: You can talk a little louder, Flora, and tell them about when you were born, what they wanted to do.

FH: Yes, when I was born, he told my mother, he says, “Just a minute.” He said, “I'll put her between two pillows,” and he ways, “she’ll be gone in just a minute.” Because there was three girls, you see, and in China, the third girl they always kill. (laughs)

MJ: Fascinating. What did you do when you were little for entertainment? Did you have to work for your mother?
BH: No, very little, we didn’t…No, no. We didn’t do much.

EH: We were spoiled.

MJ: You were spoiled?

BH: Yes.

MJ: That’s beautiful [refers to Flora’s shawl].

FH: Look at the (unintelligible), how it just—

BH: Now that’s 86 years old, believe it or not.

MJ: Now, this is the one that she’s talking about that he sent—

BH: Yes, that he sent from China.

MJ: Flora brought out a shawl that was sent by Tie Lee from China.

EH: He sent to China for her.

MJ: Oh, he sent to China for her? Oh, okay.

BH: Well, we played like just ordinary children in those days. We just played hopscotch, and played ball, and we played just anything that was amusing. Of course, we had horses, and we rode horses.

MJ: Did each of you have your own horse?

BH: We had as many horses as we wanted in those days. It wasn't much of a problem.

EH: Hamel and Bedard had a lot of stock in horses and sheep.

BH: Yes, and they wintered some of their sheep...summer grazed their sheep near Fort Benton at Dupree Creek (?). They'd drive them there.

EH: From here.

BH: From here.

EH: To Fort Benton. They’d take shortcuts. They didn’t follow the highways.
MJ: Now about what time was this? What year did they do this?

BH: Well, they were in business until my father died in ’94. I was nine months old. And it was before that, it was in the ‘80s when...Let's see, the first one of the Hamel’s was born...Bertha was born in ’84, and Yvonne was born in ’86, and you were born in ’88, and he in ’90—two years apart—and I in ’92, or ’93. (Unintelligible)

EH: I would say about 1885. If you could tell me when we had a big snowstorm, they practically lost all their sheep one winter.

MJ: 1886. 1886. It was around Fort Benton?

BH: Yes.

MJ: Yes, it was 1886. You were very close. You’re a better historian than I am. (laughs)

ED: I was just guessing.

MJ: Very good. I’m really interested in this...in the hotel. Do you know how much they likely charged for rooms and things?

AD: Look on the back of this. It says—

[Unintelligible discussion]

BH: Do you remember, Flora, about how much they charged for a room? Not a dollar.

FH: Oh no.

BH: I think it was 50 cents a night.

[Unintelligible discussion]

EH: It was 50 cents, not a dollar.

BH: Fifty cents, yes, for a night’s lodging, and the meals were 25 cents up, I know. You don't remember your dad saying anything? You see, his dad [Donlan’s father] was around our place a lot, because my mother had my sister Aurore, and then his mother was Josephine Tickler and she lived with us for a while. She was...Where did she come from? Canada.

AD: (unintelligible)

BH: (unintelligible)
MJ: I noticed you mentioned several times about orphans. Where did your mother pick up these orphans? Did they just come in—

BH: That was my grandmother.

MJ: Your grandmother.

BH: Yes, but my mother picked up a lot of orphans, too.

MJ: Did they just come into the town, and you’d just have to adopt?

BH: Well, one—

[End of Side One]
[Side Two]

BH: Here, and they used to...my sister, Mrs. Lozeau (?)—Aurore—would bring some of her friends. Maybe they’d be two or three cars for the weekend. We had a big house. We thought nothing of it. (unintelligible)

FH: The upstairs, the size of this room. This room and the kitchen. That was a dance hall.

Nancy Cranston: (unintelligible)

BH: Yes, instead of a rumpus room for the basement, like they do nowadays, why, we had a dance hall.

FH: We used to have parties up there and dance.

MJ: I was fixing the tape. Where was this house originally?

BH: It was right across the road here—old U.S. [highway] 10. See, when U.S. 10 came, they went right through the back part of the kitchen, and so we had to move the house.

FH: We had party...the young people were upstairs, and the older people downstairs. In February and Yvonne was married in May, and everybody thought there was going to be an announcement at the party, but it wasn’t.

BH: That was Mrs. Scheffer, Tom Scheffer’s mother. [refers to picture?]

FH: This is a picture of my father.

EH: (unintelligible)

BH: Is this thing on?

MJ: Yes, it’s on, go ahead.

BH: Well, that’s my father, yes.

FH: He always wore a chain with a...with his watch, you know—

BH: —a locket kind of.

FH: A locket—his charm. He always wore that. We have a picture upstairs of that.

BH: A big, you know, one of those big old-fashioned pictures. We have one of my grandfather. He
died when he was 82, and he has four of the grandchildren sitting on his lap.

MJ: He's buried here in Frenchtown?

BH: Yes.

MJ: How old was he when he passed away?

BH: How old was Father when he passed away? He wasn’t—

FH: Fifty-two.

BH: Fifty-two, fifty-three.

FH: End of March.

BH: He’d gone up in the hills on horseback and it was very warm, and he got off the horse and laid under a tree and kind of damp, and he caught pneumonia and died.

FH: There’s a picture of my mother in there too.

BH: (unintelligible) There’s my mother. She was a peppy one, I tell you!

FH: That one is very old.

EH: You don’t remember Mother, do you?

[Unintelligible discussion]

EH: Your father ran the mill up there?

AD: Yes, that’s where he got started.

EH: His father [refers to Donlan] started the mill.

MJ: Now, did she speak English?

BH: Oh, yes. She learned after she came here. She spoke English, but not real good—a little broken.

NC: Flora was just telling me she painted these pictures when she was in school in Canada. You say you all went to school in Canada?
FH: Yes, I painted those.

BH: Now, this is a more recent picture of my mother. That’s Louis Rocheleau (unintelligible). She went back to Canada and took him with her when my grandmother...to meet him. He lived with us practically until he was...His father died when he was killed. He was thrown off a horse in Superior. He was going after the meat market business, and he was thrown off a horse—his father. He was killed in September, and he wasn’t born until January.

That’s (unintelligible).

MJ: You said you all went to school in Canada. How old were you when you left went back?

BH: I didn't go to school in Canada.

MJ: Oh, you didn’t go?

BH: I’m the only one that didn’t.

EH: I was about 13.

MJ: You were 13? How long were you...did you stay there?

EH: I was there three years.

BH: All of the others were there for three years. Flora, Yvonne, and Bertha.

MJ: Is there any particular reason why they sent you?

BH: Well, my grandmother wanted to get acquainted with her, and my mother wanted us to go there to learn French...I’ll show her the (unintelligible)...and to...She wanted us to get a little culture. So we were at a boarding school there.

MJ: Since you were probably the baby of the family, you didn’t get to go.

BH: Yes, I went to...after I went to the eighth grade her, I went to Sacred Heart Academy in Missoula, and I graduated there. I specialized in music. I specialized in music, and after that I taught music for several years.

MJ: You did?

BH: Yes. I was an organist here at Frenchtown for...and director of the choir for, oh, about between 40 and 50 years. We had a very fine choir, lots of the young boys and girls here, and the mortician—one of the morticians was Lucy Brothers (?) in Missoula—said we had the best
choir in this town except for St. Francis. At that time, they had the oldest and marvelous choir of any town in this area. We had sometimes four or five boys.

This is an uncle [refers to photo]. He became a priest later (unintelligible). Mrs. Dussault [refers to photo]. We have a priest that (unintelligible). That was the...They wore a costume, you know, to school. Ed...the school...He went to the same school, as they did.

I don’t know who that is. This was my sister’s, my oldest sister...her boyfriend. Here she is.

This is an uncle, and this Mrs. Dussault. Her son is a priest at Gonzaga University, head of the public relations. He is vice president there, has been for...How long Art? You know he went to school? Art?

AD: Oh he—

BH: Well, he became...he was ordained in 1940...1940.

AD: Yes, been there ever since.

BH: Head of public relations (unintelligible). He was here last week. He stopped because he was snowbound in Fargo, North Dakota—drifts for two days. He never spent—

EH: He was really snowbound. He said they couldn’t get out.

MJ: Let’s go back to your...Do you remember your first days in school here in Frenchtown? Not very well?

BH: Oh, not hardly much...Not very much.

Do you remember your first day of school? [speaking to Flora]

EH: What did you do to (unintelligible)?

FH: I remember I was the teacher's pet.

MJ: You were?

FH: Yes, I was very well treated.

BH: All I remember that we had a teacher that wouldn’t let any of his pupils out until they heard a pin drop, and you know, that’s pretty hard for sixty people who couldn’t—

FH: And you all had to stand.
BH: You had to stand and so...until one time one fellow ran out and they ran after him. (unintelligible) for a while, but—

EH: We all ran out—

FH: One fellow ran out, and the teacher started to run after him, and of course all the other kids... (laughs)

MJ: [refers to picture] Now this is the school where the shop is.

BH, EH, FH: [at once] Yes.

BH: At first it had just one, big, long room and then they put in an addition.

FH: An the kids didn’t like the teachers, so they would play jokes on them.

AD: (unintelligible)

EH: LaVasseur (?).

BH: LaVasseur (?).

AD: LaVasseur (?).

FH: Oh, he was okay, and the kids liked him. It was that—

BH: Duffy?

FH: Duffy. Teacher by the name of Duffy, and his wife took his job for a while, and was much better.

BH: See, wives took...You can't tell me that a wife is better than a man.

FH: [talks at the same time] He’d go down the school there, and get some willows, you know, and then he’d—

BH: He’d use them. But when I was in school, there was a teacher that used to use a round thing like that [indicates with fingers] on the back of the boys. Girls too.

FH: Well, he had some big boys.

BH: Yes. Well, they were full grown men. Now that one there—
MJ: I noticed the picture—

BH: —he landed in the pen. He was (unintelligible) really.

EH: He was a Marion.

BH: You can tell by looking at him.

NC: Marion? Was he related to the Joe Marions?

EH: Yes.

NC: He was? Their son?

BH: He was a son of Joe Marion.

NC: I see.

EH: Joe Marion.

NC: And he’s the one that went in jail...went to jail?

BH: Would you people like a cup of coffee?

EH: How did you know? How did you know he went to jail?

BH: Cup of coffee?

NC: Flora just said he went to jail.

AD: You just said that he went to the pen.

FH: This is a picture of Mrs. Marion—the first Mrs. Marion. He has a very nice history in the history book that we have.

NC: This is Mrs. Joe Marion? You said that was a first. Was there two?

FH: That’s the first Mrs. Marion.

MJ: Oh, there were two?

AD: Yes.
FH: And they had six children (unintelligible). Then she died, and then he married Mrs. Tremont (?)...Mrs. Warren.

This is my sister.

EH: We’re talking about Joe Marion. The fellow that run the store.

BH: What, Joe Mario?

EH: And he run for governor.

FH: Yes.

MJ: Do you know what...I’m interested in the time. What year was this he ran?

EH: Oh, I couldn’t tell you, but it’s in the history.

MJ: It’s in this book?

EH: That one there. We have it here.

MJ: You said you went to school when you were 13.

EH: I think I went to school (unintelligible). I came back in—

[unintelligible conversation]

NC: Is this your mother’s?

FH: Oh yes. It was all bought at Lee’s (?) in Butte. The jewelry.

NC: What was this? A coffeepot?

MJ: When you went to Canada to school, how did you travel? Did you go by train?

EH: Yes, we went by a train. We came back by train. I went to...I don't remember...I think my sister, Mrs. Dussault, took me.

Did I go with...Did I go to Montreal with Mother?

BH: I don’t remember. Flora might.
[asks Flora] Did Ed go to Montreal with Mother?

FH: No.

BH: How do you know?

EH: I think I went with somebody else.

FH: He went with Aurore.

BH: You went with Aurore. You know that French letter that you had that (unintelligible).

EH: Yes, yes. I knew it. I went with Aurore. And then I came back from...They put me on the train in Montreal, and there was—

BH: Mr. Loiselle.

EH: —Mr. Loiselle.

BH: (unintelligible) that dairy farm, the Loiselle ranch. There was a schoolhouse there. (unintelligible).

MJ: No, no I want to continue that later on about the school. You dropped off at the right time.

EH: He had to go...he wanted to go to Chicago. He had to buy something from Mullamerry Ward [sic, refers to Montgomery Ward’s]. (laughs)

BH: He spoke a little broken English.

MJ: When you were little, did you have a hard time learning English and French? I mean, what was spoken in the household, mostly?

Blanche: French, mostly. I was about the only pupil that could speak English when I started school—in the surrounding area. I don’t mean...not in our family, but I mean the other children around Frenchtown. They all spoke French, and had no...But of course, with us, we were raised in the hotel, and there were English-speaking people coming and going, you see, and we learned English gradually by...because the environment was different.

FH: At school, they had a special class for my sister and myself—

BH: back in Montreal.

FH: —back in Montreal to teach us English.
EH: We both learned French and English.

FH: We had French in the morning. We learned French in the morning and the afternoon was English. We had a special teacher for about four or five.

MJ: How did the teacher here...If so many students spoke French, how did he handle the teaching thing?

BH: Well, it was quite a problem in the early days.

FH: Well, it was all English at the school here.

BH: Yes, but how did they cope with that? The teachers with...As we were about the only ones that knew a little English when we went to school.

FH: That would hard. They had to learn—that’s all. (laughs)

BH: Where there’s a will there’s a way.

EH: (laughs) Hit them with a stick.

FH: (laughs) Yes.

MJ: How long did it take you to travel...Do you remember how long it took you to travel from here to Montreal by train?

EH: Oh, it took about a week. If I remember correctly.

MJ: Do you know what year this was? See the railroad came here in [18]70 so...Did you get on the train here, or did you get on in Missoula?

EH: No, we had a train here. We had buggies and horses to go to town.

MJ: Oh, you got on the train in Missoula then—

EH: As far as I know. Let’s see. We had some good buggy...that is, surrey horses for traveling. We drive to Missoula in two hours, two hours and a quarter. You better check with them [refers to Blanche and Flora]. We would drive that...you think that’s pretty fast?

AD: That’s pretty good.

EH: That’s pretty good. I’m going to have them—
AD: You see, if they are going to take the stub train (?) going through here. Then you took the stub train into Missoula, but then you’d have to stay in a hotel and you’d catch the through train. So they would drive in and catch the through train.

MJ: Thank you.

EH: Say, I just told them…I just told him we used to drive into Missoula, two hours, two hours and a quarter.

[unintelligible discussion]

EH: So, you see, I verified myself.

MJ: Two hours and a half.

FH: And then when they’d…if they’d come in…if they’d come with the horses a little too fast, they’d give the horses a pint of whiskey. To warm them up and then walk them around.

NC: Oh heavens! Did this work?

FH: Oh, we had a fellow, and he was a horseman, and that’s what he’d do. Remember Joe Leveque (?)?

AD: Sure, Joe Leveque.

FH: Do you remember Joe Leveque? That’s a joke.

[discussion about food]

MJ: You remember why they separated the pews in the church? Do you know why they did that? We’ve heard several things.

AD: No, I can’t—

EH: Why they separated them?

AD: Yes, and (unintelligible) the pillars. There’s a board in there…a little separation. You can’t walk straight through them pews, you know, from one aisle to another.

BH: That was 19—

EH: No.
AD: Do you know what I mean?

EH: No.

BH: (unintelligible)

AD: In the pew, right by the (unintelligible) set a crosspiece.

EH: Yes.

AD: They want to know why that’s in there.

EH: I can’t answer that. Can I ask them [refers to Blanche and Flora]?

Why is it that they have...I don’t think that anybody can answer that. Why they had a crosspiece by the...Blanche?

BH: What?

EH: Why there’s a crosspiece there in the middle of the pew?

AD: Why’s there that crosspiece? These people want to know, and I’ll tell you why they want to know, but why that crosspiece is in the pew?

BH: Well, don't you think it's to brace more, just as much as anything? To brace the pew? Or to segregate the...you know you had to pay so much a year for your pew years ago? Well, they sold each pew, and if you had a big family, you took a big one, and if you liked to be in the front, you paid more, and if you...in the back. But the churches don't all have that...not in Missoula. St. Francis, that's an old church.

AD: Well, the story that's going around amongst these people that the Quebecers sat in the center, and the New Brunswickers had to sit on the outside.

(laughter from the Hamels)

MJ: Had you heard that before?

BH, EH: [at the same time] No, no.

AD: Then they had another story going around about the church that these people are all worked up about. That at one time the priest, one of the priests, had some Indians up in the balcony, and the natives were shooting at them.
MJ: Do you remember anything about that?

EH: No.

BH: I know there were pigeons in the belfry, but—

AD: Indians, not pigeons.

BH: Oh, Indians. Oh!

You ever hear of that? That one priest had Indians in the belfry, you know, and the people were shooting at them. Never heard that. What’s the other one? Oh, about the division in the pews in the church. You tell her.

AD: You know, the division in the pews in the church. You know that little board that’s there. You know you can’t walk through them. You know.

FH: Yes.

AD: They want to know why that’s there, and there’s a story going around that the Quebecers sat in the center and the New Brunswickers had to sit on the outside.

BH: The New Brunswickers.

EH: From New Brunswick

FH: You know a lot of people when they moved from New Brunswick—

AD: I know, I know.

BH: I never heard they designated from the church. That’s a new one on me.

AD: (unintelligible)

FH: I don’t remember about that.

MJ: Be interesting to find out what that’s for (unintelligible).

AD: (unintelligible)

BH: I think that was why. They put that partition for small pews and big pews and, maybe to strengthen the...in case they had a fight or something. (laughs)
AD: In those days, yes, they used to have...you rent a pew. Instead of having a collection plate, you would rent a pew and that carried collection for the year.

FH: And your name was on the pew. Some of them had the first pew, and...Mrs. Remont had the first pew on one side, and we had a first pew on the other side. Bedards had the first pew on the—

BH: On the aisle.

FH: —on the aisle.

AD: On the other side.

BH: Yes.

FH: Yes, on this side.

BH: Mrs. Plourde, she’s 101 years old now—

FH: And they always had the same pew.

BH: About the middle there. Mrs. Plourde that is 101 years old now—she celebrated her 100th birthday last year—she sat in the right-hand aisle pew. Well, they lived up for years and years and years.

[Telephone rings; End of interview]

Note: Art Donlan leaves, and the tape ends. The remainder of the interview appears to be unrecorded.