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Interviewee: Myrtle Griswold
Interviewer: Mary Melcher
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Note: When this interview was conducted, the interviewee requested to remain anonymous in the transcript and audio. Archives and Special Collections has chosen to lift this restriction now that the interviewee is deceased.

Mary Melcher: Mrs. Griswold, where did your great grandparents come from?

Myrtle Griswold: They came from England.

MM: What part of England?

MG: Well, I can’t name it right off.

MM: No, well, that’s fine. They came over in what...in what year was that?

MG: They came over, and they came to the United States, in 1848.

MM: And how did they come to the United States?

MG: They came by ship and landed in New Orleans first and then came north and...That’s real annoying that sound [referring to a gurgling sound in the background].

MM: What was your great grandfather like?

MG: Well, at the time he was a miner and worked in the mines in England, and they worked in the mines in Illinois. My grandfather had started in the mines when he was thirteen years old - I think.

MM: Oh, these were your grandparents - I’m sorry, I thought you—

MG: But, my great-grandparents came to the United States with the family.

MM: And these were coal mines?

MG: Yes, and lead mines - I think.

MM: Also? So then it was your grandfather, or your father - was it your grandfather who came west?
MG: Yes. He and his brother came west in a covered wagon, and they came and used—instead of oxen—they came with a team of horses...

MM: Really?

MG: They figured that they had the best horses that ever were. (laughs)

MM: I’ll bet they did. I hope their horses survived that.

MG: Yes, I think.

MM: Where did they come to in Montana?

MG: Well, they started for the mine in Virginia City. As they came over the hill into Gallatin Valley, my grandfather fell in love with the valley and decided to stay here, and he homesteaded. The father’s homestead is now in the city of Bozeman.

MM: Oh, it was? Did he have a 160 acres?

MG: Yes.

MM: Was it for that - that Homestead Act? Did he also mine?

MG: No, he never mined after that; he farmed.

MM: He was married then and...?

MG: He was married and had four children, and they came up the river—Fort Benton—and the men came overland from Fort Benton.

MM: Again in covered wagons?

MG: Yes, I suppose.

MM: I don’t suppose there were too many stagecoaches then?

MG: No, no. He took his own team over after that, when they came off the ship. Grand Marsh, who was the captain of the ship—was the captain of the boat that they came up on—and he was one of the famous captains.

MM: Oh...Did your mother’s family also come over from England?
MG: Yes, as far as I know they did, or they came from Ireland. I had the name of that too, but I don’t know it. I don’t remember.

MM: Were they also miners in Wisconsin?

MG: No, no. I don’t know. They settled in Massachusetts, and my grandfather was a manufacturer—a shoe manufacturer. And so—

MM: Do you know her name - her maiden name?

MG: Yes, Mary Long.

MM: [seems to be repeating the name] you mean?

MG: Yes.

MM: That’s where your mother - Your mother’s maiden name was Mary Long?

MG: Yes, my mother’s name was Mary Elizabeth Long?

MM: Yes, I remember. So your mother was born when they came. Was your mother born when they came to Montana? Was she one of the four children?

MG: My mother?

MM: Yes.

MG: No.

MM: No?

MG: No.

MM: She was born here in the Gallatin Valley?

MG: My mother? No, she was born in Massachusetts.

MM: Oh, she was born in Massachusetts. Your father—I’m sorry, wrong family. Your father was born...?

MG: Yes, he was one of them that came up. He was the oldest in the family. There were nine children in my grandfather’s family, and four of them were born before he came to the Gallatin. He was born in Charlesburg, Wisconsin, my father was. Then were five other children born
afterwards...Bozeman.

MM: He might of even had some memories of that journey, perhaps?

MG: Yes, he said the first thing that he remembered about it was that he fell over a cliff (?), and he woke up and found him sawing on the bed (laughs).

MM: Oh...was he...? (laughs)

MG: I don’t know if that was a joke or not, but he used tell that story (laughs) - And that was on the boat.

MM: That’s funny. So, did he continue on with the homesteading?

MG: Well, he had been farming for a while when he was young man, but he went into the newspaper business with my grandfather. My grandfather was appointed Indian agent at Fort Peck, and he was an Indian agent for several years there. Then he bought the *Avant Courier* in Bozeman, and he was the editor. My father was a businessman. He was Butte miner for a while, and then...of the *Avant Courier*. He never farmed after he was a young man. He said that he got enough of cows anyway. He only didn’t want to milk anymore (laughs).

MM: Did he go to school, then?

MG: He went to a school in Bozeman. It must have been in the grades; I don’t suppose they had much high school, then. I don’t know what grades, but he went to school in Bozeman.

MM: How did he come to meet your mother?

MG: Well he—maybe--took quite a few trips back East. He was married before, and his wife was also from Massachusetts. I don’t know that she was a school teacher or not, but she died in childbirth. He was ready for a wife, and he went back and visited schools and looked for a wife. When he saw my mother he fell in love instantly.

MM: What was she doing?

MG: She was teaching school; she was a school teacher.

MM: So she went to school in Massachusetts?

MG: Yes, she went to school in Massachusetts. She wanted to go to college, and her folks didn’t want her to go to college, so she decided she’d teach school and earn the money to go. But she spent all her money on her school. She did a lot of, oh, outside—I suppose you’d call them extracurricular activities. She put on pageants, historical themes and so forth. Of course,
Massachusetts was quite a historical town. I think they emphasize their history more than some states.

MM: Was this in Boston?

MG: Yes, she lived near Boston, Massachusetts. I was born in Braintree, Massachusetts. So, he married...anyway, she consented to marry him. Her folks were very sure that she was going to be killed by the Indians when she came out to Montana—

MM: Yes.

MG: —but she wasn’t.

MM: (laughs) No, not at all. What year or years was this?

MG: She was married in 1888 and came out to Montana. Then she had a different kind of a life. My mother’s folks never left Massachusetts.

MM: Oh, they never visited out here.

MG: They never visited. Well let’s see, Uncle Richard did come through once. He came to Yellowstone Park. I think he went on to San Francisco to a meeting, but they, none of the rest of them came to visit.

MM: Was it a teacher’s college that she went to in Boston or near Boston?

MG: No, she didn’t go to any college. She wanted to go to college and—

MM: Oh, I see. So she just taught outside school.

MG: Yes, taught out of high school and was going to save her money and go to college. Then she got married and, of course (laughs), that ended it.

MM: She didn’t teach after she was married and when they came back out here?

MG: No. Except for her family; she taught us.

MM: Oh, she did?

MG: Yes.

MM: For your elementary years?
MG: Yes. All through my elementary years.

MM: That’s interesting. You went to the school in the home then.

MG: Yes, we lived in...My father in 1896 and ‘97, why he got interested in the cyanide process of reclaiming gold and started mining. He was always interested in mining from then on, and he...we lived at different places in Montana—mining camps. They weren’t really camps, but mining sites. There weren’t any camps there. We were the sometimes the only family there, and the men that he had working for him, which weren’t very many. P. C. Waite (?) was one of them. There were no schools available and so my mother taught me.

MM: Her teaching experience—

MG: She was the best teacher I ever had.

MM: That’s wonderful.

MG: I had to learn everything with her.

MM: You say you had one sister?

MG: I had two sisters.

MM: Or two sisters. And no brothers?

MG: No.

MM: So there just three girls in these various camps (laughs)?

MG: Yes.

MM: Did you ever feel that your mother would worry about those eight years—your life in those places?

MG: No, I don’t think so at all.

MM: She enjoyed that it sounds like. I bet it was very beautiful.

MG: Well, it wasn’t home. We were at Red Bluff and Silver Star and Malta and then we were in Helena for a while. I did go to school there for a year. One year we were back in Massachusetts. When the railroads came through here, they advertised a lot, and they paid for their advertising in transportation. So (laughs), we got a lot of transportation. We went back home to Massachusetts seven times by the time I was ten years old. We’d gone pretty near every year.
MM: That’s good, that way you could visit your relatives.

MG: Yes, we went back there and visited them. That’s how I happened to be born in Braintree. I really should have been born in Montana. But my father’s first wife had died in childbirth, and he thought that maybe our mother would get better care or something back in Massachusetts. So we went back there for my birth. So, I was born in Braintree, Massachusetts. Both my sisters were born in Bozeman.

MM: Did you have doctor’s care? Did your mother have doctor’s care here in Bozeman?

MG: Oh, yes. She found out that it didn’t make any difference whether you were in Massachusetts or Montana (laughs).

MM: It was still childbirth and... (laughs)?

MG: Yes. Everything was okay. My grandmother, of course, had five children born in the early days in Montana, and (laughs) she evidently didn’t have any trouble?

MM: Really (laughs)?

MG: I don’t know whether there was a doctor there or not. I never heard, but—

MM: Maybe sometimes, maybe sometimes not. Did you eventually come to settle in the Gallatin Valley then—your father and mother and family?

MG: Well, of course we lived in the Gallatin the first two years, and then we were around at different camps. No, my father’s family and those of us never lived in the Gallatin after we left in—that is for any length of time. After 1897, we lived in Helena, and then we lived up at Pinupcott (?) for a number of years. I went to school. I graduated in the eighth grade at Laurel Butte (?), which was a mining camp. I think it’s a dead mining camp now. It died down in the memory of me—my memory (laughs)—because I taught school there. There weren’t very many when I went to school. There weren’t a lot of pupils—about 25 pupils. When I taught—I don’t remember—I think I had about a dozen.

MM: Did you teach right out of high school?

MG: Yes, I took an examination. I taught school. I taught three months school near Winston, and then a teacher resigned at Laurel Butte (?) and I finished that term out. I decided that I didn’t want to teach, so I went to college. So I did something else besides teach. I didn’t want to teach; I wasn’t like my mother. But, my sister, younger than I was, she continued to teach out of high school. I think she taught for ten years, and then she got married. But she liked teaching. She was a good teacher. But I didn’t like teaching.
MM: Not as much as something...Where did you...You did go to college?

MG: Yes. I mentioned...I went to college in Bozeman. I stayed two years with grandmother and my aunt. Then my grandmother died in December of my sophomore year, and then I was one of the early occupants in the dormitory.

MM: In the early dormitory?

MG: Yes. When, I started the college there wasn’t any dormitory and—

MM: Is that dormitory still there?

MG: Yes, it’s Hamilton Hall, but I don’t know what’s used for now—whether it’s offices. I think in—

MM: And some classes. There are some classes in there, I believe. That was the dorm?

MG: Yes. While I was there, they had the first Dean of Women. They didn’t call her Dean of Women—Mrs. Harrick (?)—but that’s what she became. She taught speech and English and she had been in drama and organized a dramatic society, and we put on plays. We gave them down in the old Bozeman Theater.

MM: That’s not there anymore?

MG: Yeah, they tore it down, which I think was a terrible shame.

MM: I agree. I never got see it, because I moved here after, about two or three years after it was torn down. I don’t know why they did that. It was the opera house originally and then...?

MG: Yes, opera house.

MM: Oh, how fine...

MG: They used to bring plays in and civic club lectures and everything were all in the Opera House.

MM: This was around the turn of the century—the 1900s?

MG: Yes, the 1900s. I graduated in 1913.

MM: What were you studying?
MG: Well, I took the History of Literature course, which is—they don’t give it anymore. It really should’ve been a Bachelor of Arts course, but of course, they could only give Bachelor of Science courses because it was a scientific college. I majored in English.

MM: Did University of Montana [in Missoula, Montana] have...the University of Montana then had the English. Was there a reason that you didn’t choose to go over to Missoula?

MG: I stayed at length—maybe it was a matter of expense—but I stayed with my grandmother for two years, and then I stayed dormitory. The year that I was a junior they put in typing and shorthand for the first time—a college course. I took them, and so then that helped me earn. I did some typing, and did shorthand. I did work for the English professor. It helped out. When I was in the dormitory, I was the only—my senior year I was the only senior in the dormitory so I kind of had some special privileges. I kind of helped Mrs. Harrick (?).

MM: The Dean of Women?

MG: The Dean of Women. She was the head of the—housemother—I mean, she was what you call a housemother. She was a wonderful woman.

MM: Were there very many women in the university at that time? Or what was college then?

MG: Yes, when I graduated there were 13 boys and seven girls in our class—

MM: Just about.

MG: —and most of them were home ec [home economics] students—

MM: —So, an English degree was somewhat an anomaly.

MG: —and there was one girl who took mathematics—physics—and I took History of Literature. The rest of them must have been home ec.

MM: Did all three of you go to college—all three of your sisters?

MG: No, no. Dorothy taught school—went from a high school and continued to teach around different country schools. She finished up teaching last at Clancy, which had...They had two teachers; she had the primary. Priscilla went to college, but didn’t graduate. She went, --I forget—for one or two or three years.

MM: I was wondering if your mother’s influence had carried you all forward to finishing college, or going to college...(laughs) Then, after you graduated what happened?
MG: Well, through Dean Harrick (?) I got this position as Assistant to the Dean of Women at Oregon Agricultural College. Dean Cray (?) was an M.D., and the housekeeper was a nurse. So they were well provided—had a lot of help for the students. I kind of had the supervision of the dormitory, more or less, and other things and so forth. Like I said—I quit then, and so then the next year I didn’t have anything. That was year my mother was busy with the campaign, and I kind of stayed home and helped out at home.

MM: Oh, while she was out...?

MG: Yes. Then I got a call from President Atkinson (?). He wasn’t president then—he was the head of the Agronomy Department—asking me to come over and be a secretary in the Agronomy Department. So, I went the next day (laughs) and I stayed there until I was married.

MM: Was there a reason that you didn’t... Let me go back. You mentioned your mother’s activity in the campaign in 1914. She was working with the Woman’s Christian Temperance [Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU)]—

MG: Yes, she was the head of the union, and they really put on a campaign. But it wasn’t aggressive. It was kind of a winning campaign to win the people rather than force them to...

MM: Well she had been working with this for many years, hadn’t she?

MG: Yes, she had been. She didn’t figure that it would turn things upside down. She didn’t have any idea of getting anything for herself out of it, which is rather different than Jeanette Rankin. Jeanette Rankin I think was sort of self-seeking. She wanted a job—wanted a position -- She wanted a little glory (laughs).

MM: Can you describe, perhaps, your first memories of your mother’s involvement and then maybe what else...about how she began to work with this.

MG: Well, I don’t know. I suppose it was a gradual thing. I remember her going to meetings different places—state meetings. I went to a couple of thing when I was older. I went to one in a...That was after we had...I guess in 1917? No, it wasn’t that late. I don’t remember when I went. But I was interested too. We had oratorical contests where they...You took part in it under of the auspices WCTU—medal contests they’d call them. I was in several of them.

MM: These were debates or speeches or...?

MG: They were speeches.

MM: Speeches?

MG: Yes. Sometimes we learned the speeches, and sometimes they were original. I don’t
remember, but I know that they were...I know my sister Priscilla was in some too. Both boys and girls were in them.

MM: These were at the conventions, or they were separate?

MG: They were separate. They were held in the different towns, where the WCTU would...In those years, the WCTU was really quite a force in the state.

MM: That’s what I gathered.

MG: They had speakers come from outside the state. They had some workers—I know Mrs. Hanna (?) was there—lots of great workers that they had during the last of the campaign. Her daughter was quite a lot of help too. Then they had Sue Bragstad (?) of—I think she was from Roundup. She was a beautiful singer, and she went around. One of things, she helped singing—the statements of Prohibition—because she went with the speakers.

MM: Do you remember the first area that your mother came in contact with any of these groups? Was it...?

MG: No, she joined in Bozeman.

MM: In Bozeman?

MG: Yes.

MM: I read that there was a chapter in Bozeman.

MG: Yes, yes. It was very active in Bozeman, and then there was one in Livingston. I think the first a convention that I remember her going to was in Livingston, and they drove over there with horses (laughs).

MM: That was probably the way to get to Livingston in those days (laughs). Let’s see...your father was here in Gallatin Valley at that time?

MG: Yes, he would’ve been in the newspaper business. He was the manager of the Avant Courier.

MM: Oh, that was when he was working at that. Did your mother begin working with the Woman’s Voice—or then it was called The Voice—publication right away?

MG: No, I don’t remember what year they had The Voice, but it was not right at first, because they just...They used to send their accounts into the Union Signal, just, you know, a note from Montana. Then they got their own thing organized—The Voice. My father was very much
interested in the cause of Prohibition too, and he backed my mother up in everything.

MM: Now, what was his name and what was her name?

MG: Her name was Mary...

MM: Mary Long?

MG: Mary Long and he was Matthew Green Wallace (?).

MM: Do you remember her going with the WCTU to Helena for any of the legislative—?

MG: Yes, yes. After she became legislative chairman, she used to go to Helena. Well, some of the years when...the year that I was a sophomore in high school we moved into Helena from Pinupcott (?), so that we could all go to school—so that I could go to high school—so she was in Helena at that time. But, I remember going up to the legislature different times—

MM: Really?

MG: —and listening to the debates and so forth. It was really something.

MM: This was during the time she...She must have come to know Mrs. Eleanor Hascoe (?).

MG: Yes, well I think it was before that...in the early days before. I don’t think that Eleanor Hascoe (?) was living then, by the time that I was in high school I’m pretty sure she wasn’t. Mrs. Halloway (?) was still living—the head of the Historical Society—and she was also interested with Mother and all. But I don’t think Mrs. Hascoe (?) was living then. I’m not sure, but I don’t remember about her.

MM: You keep referring it as the Prohibition struggle, and what I’ve just got through reading about it in terms of the suffrage—the women’s suffrage movement—and I realized that in the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union they came together and I—

MG: Yes, that’s it. Their big aim was prohibition of the liquor traffic and...

[End of Tape 1, Side A]
MM: Well, it eventually did...they didn’t do...’24 and ’25 Prohibition...?

MG: Yes, they had Prohibition. But I mean, it was too much political maneuvering in it, so it wasn’t really effective. So they repealed it.

MM: Do you know how your mother came to feel so strongly about the prohibition issue? Was it experiences her life?

MG: No, she hadn’t had any. I think her father had some experiences, and he didn’t...But as a young man he had joined the Independent Order of Good Templars, which was a temperance organization. I don’t know how interested in it, you know, his family were particularly, but he was quite interested in that and so he was in...But no, there wasn’t any...I don’t think that there was any... They used to have you sign a pledge when you were young, if you wanted too. I know when mother was a young woman back in Massachusetts she had signed a pledge not to drink any.

MM: She did? Through a church or just as a—?

MG: Well, I think it was through a church that she did that. I know that they had—the WCTU had youngsters sign pledges—and we all signed the pledges.

MM: Yes? Did you belong to a church here in Montana?

MG: Yes, I belonged to a Presbyterian church.

MM: And your family also?

MG: No, my father...My grandfather was a Methodist lay preacher, and he had the first religious service in the Gallatin Valley. He preaches out at Tennel (?). He preached out of town, and he preached a long time. He organized the Methodist church. Well, it’s a long story about how I happened to be in the Presbyterian church. When I was in high school—when I was in town—the spring that I was a freshman I had taken the rest at home and then in the spring in the last month I went into Helena and stayed with a family. One of the girls in my class asked me to go to Sunday school with her in the church and it happened to be the Presbyterian church so...(laughs).

MM: But you didn’t really have a family history of going to church?

MG: No.

MM: I was just was wondering if the Prohibition issue was related a religion?
MG: Well, my grandfather’s family all went to church, but a lot of them... In those days, why the Methodists couldn’t dance. They weren’t supposed to dance and they weren’t supposed to do this and that. My grandfather was very broad-minded, and the girls wanted to dance. Of course there were square dances then and (laughs) at the Episcopal church so they that they could dance. So he said, well, he’d rather that they joined a church (laughs), so they went to the Episcopal—most most of his family and went to the Episcopal church. It happened. So how that’s how you get divided.

MM: And so then...

MG: But they were all interested in one church or another.

MM: Yes. Then your father... Did he say he was an Episcopalian?

MG: No. I don’t know. He went... I don’t know. Mother belonged to a Congregational church in Massachusetts and, of course, they didn’t have a Congregational church in Montana, at least not in Bozeman. I know we went to their Congregational church in Helena when I was in... the couple of years that we lived there when I was the grades we went to Congregational church. It just happened more where you happened to be.

MM: Yeah, I realize especially when you must have been out in the mining there wouldn’t have been any sort of...

MG: Well, there wasn’t any sort. We had Sunday school lots of times at home. Mr. Waite (?) was a father’s assistant, and Mrs. Waite (?) had Sunday school for us.

MM: You had school at home at home and Sunday school at home, that must’ve made home very intimate. Did you read the Bible quite often in your family?

MG: Yes, I think so. Because I remember—you know because I was kind of familiar with it.

MM: Did you hear a lot of books, also?

MG: Yes, we read. My father was a very good reader. He could just read for a long, long time and his voice would never get tired. He was a beautiful reader. Even when we were up at Pinupscott (?), he used to get books from the Helena library, and he would read them while were doing handwork. So I always had read a lot.

MM: Did your mother also read aloud?

MG: Well, not too much. I suppose once in history... of course she could read aloud.
MM: Well, she also a speaker wasn’t she?

MG: Yes.

MM: She gave a lot speeches especially with the women that she happened to...And did you hear her speeches very often?

MG: Yes, I used to...She was a good speaker. My grandfather said...no my father...My father said that his father, who had only gone to school until he was 13, but he said that his father and my mother had the best use of the English language of anybody that he knew.

MM: (laughs) That sounds invaluable, and a very fond memory. I would like to talk a little more about the suffrage and prohibition movements. I’m not exactly where to begin with it, but, perhaps, you could describe some more what you remembered experiencing with your mother when you went...Are there any events that especially stick out of your memory concerning those years especially since it was a period of I think of 34 years or a very long time?

MG: Well, I don’t know. Of course, she wasn’t speaking all that time, it was only...it was concentrated in different sections. Between conventions, until they were really in the campaign, why she didn’t have so much to do in between the conventions. But they would have their convention and they’d plan their strategy, and they worked locally of course. After she got into the campaign, why there was—especially that last year, why she was quite busy all the time. She evidently planned it, and probably did more than I realized. But...

MM: I read that she was interested especially in this—what I call—grass-root politics, of going door to door talking to everyone in the area about their views. It sounds that she talked to a lot of people.

MG: But, I don’t know. I don’t remember that she did that much.

MM: She didn’t go out on door to door speaking...?

MG: No, not that I know of. No, I don’t remember that at all if she did that. She was always interested in the—what I say the good of the young people. She campaigned not only for women’s suffrage, but also for an anti-cigarette law, where they couldn’t buy or sell cigarettes under a certain age. The age of consent law, I know she got that raised one year, and she worked on that in the legislature. I don’t remember. But, she got...she had this printed [sounds as if she’s picking something up], Montana Laws Relating to Temperance and Public Morals. She was always interested in the poor, and so she kind of got that, a revised penal code forbidding minors to consort in saloons and penalties for selling cigarettes to minors. Oh yes, another thing that she was interested in was gambling—gambling lottery things. There was a person that worked with her on the lottery business and the gambling, Mr. Ford (?) who was the governor of Montana, when he was an attorney—he was either a United States attorney or
Attorney General, I don’t know which—he was very cooperative on the lottery and gambling.

MM: It sounds like most of...many of these eventually came to be laws—

MG: Yes—

MM: —because we have these—

MG: —these were the laws.

MM: —and they didn’t exist when you were growing up.

MG: Not then.

MM: But you don’t think she worried...Well she must’ve worried somewhat about you three girls.

MG: Well, she wanted to make things good for us, I guess.

MM: And good for everyone else, too?

MG: Yes.

MM: I still wonder...She must have seen some bad things around here to come from that...the young people going to saloons.

MG: My father, he was against...He wrote things against saloons and so forth for Avant [Avant Courier]. Drinking club and how they took advantage of it. Of course the miners...a lot of the miners then drank an awful lot in mining camps, and they were kind of rough sometimes. But, we never lived in any really big mining camps. When we lived at Pinupscott (?) we were just over the hill from Laurel Butte, which was in the mining camp. A lot of the miners were foreigners and they (laughs) had a lot of drinking. He told about how bad it was for their homes and everything you know.

MM: Yes, their home lives suffered from...That would’ve been what—I did also read in the thesis here that your and mother and the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union were with the foreign people quite a lot, a lot.

MG: Yes.

MM: While the Montana Equal Suffrage Association didn’t work so much with foreigners.

MG: Yes, I think so too. I know in Helena, the WCTU had quite a few members who were
members of the Salvation Army. Of course they did...the Salvation Army a lot of work among the poorer people and the people that drank in the homes—the men who drank and so forth—the Salvation Army did. They were very active in Helena at the time—the Salvation Army was. I remember some of those Salvation Army women—dear little women—and their bonnets (laughs).

MM: Did they have tambourines and such things, like they do now (laughs)? You mentioned that you taught in Laurel Butte (?). Was it still somewhat of a rough mining camp?

MG: There weren’t so much in...it was thinning out then, and it wasn’t so much. But I had several foreign students.

MM: Where were they from?

MG: Well, they were from Russia and from Germany—quite a lot from Germany—and I suppose from Poland...and the Hellish—that’s Polish I guess. I don’t remember that name.

MM: Oh, you had to teach them English then, or how did they learn the English language?

MG: Well, I think they knew English pretty well. But, of course, when it came to grammar in English and that kind...and it was hard for them I think.

MM: Did you notice that those children had home problems due to drinking? In any way did they...

MG: Well, some of them did, and some of them, their parents were not educated. I had a couple of children in school, who had already gone to school with me too whose father couldn’t write—read or write. He couldn’t write his name. I always felt that it was so simple that a man wouldn’t learn to write his name. He had sign his name for his checks with a cross—just an “X.” His children had a hard time in school because they didn’t have any...didn’t get anything at home. I don’t know what about his wife. I don’t think she knew much more than he did. But one of the boys, he had a terrible time; He just didn’t seem to learn, and the girl couldn’t seem to learn worth the dickens. But the boy, he got an “A” in writing all the time; He was a good penmen.

MM: Good! That’s - rather than an “F”—just an “F.” Did the WCTU work with the education of the poor and foreigners—especially with the foreign immigrants, especially the adults?

MG: I don’t know that. They did incidentally, I think. But, they didn’t make any particular training. Nothing like a school or like they have adult classes now and so forth. I don’t think they did that.

Myrtle Griswold Interview, OH 049-018 and 019, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
MM: Yes. I was wondering where that began, if it began that...

MG: No, I don’t think so.

MM: Did your mother believe though that women very much needed education?

MG: Yes, I think so, because she was strong for education.

MM: She taught you in the home...you went on to...Do you think she did much with education of women for the vote, so that when women would come to vote, then they would be educated voters?

MG: Oh yes, I think...They emphasized all through their talks and so forth.

MM: Did she continue working at that after 1914 with the Prohibition effort?

MG: Yes, she worked for Prohibition and I don’t remember after that. Well, she continued to work, but not so much...Of course, she wasn’t the president anymore, and that made a lot of difference because she was president during that suffrage campaign, and so she directed everything. Of course, she wasn’t president after that. After so many years, she turned the direction over to somebody else, but she was always interested up to the last. Why she was interested—

MM: Did she live to see the Prohibition?

MG: Oh, yes.

MM: But it wasn’t as immediate as it might have been?

MG: Well, it wasn’t so many years. What year was it? 19...1920?

MM: I thought it was 1920, yes, and so it was six years more. Sometimes I think it’s a long time. It seems like the suffrage issue went on for a long time especially after reading this legislation after legislation that met with nothing. So, were you back in Montana in 1914? Did you tell me that?

MG: Yes. I was living in Helena then. I came back in...1914. I was in Oregon and then I came back to Montana and we were in Helena. My youngest sister was in high school then—in the years in Helena. That was a good place to campaign from (laughs).

MM: Yes, at the heart (laughs). Did you listen to some of those legislative sessions?
MG: Oh yes, I went up to them, many of times.

[Editor’s Note: At this point, a third voice interrupts: “I think the thing that impressed that me most was the smoke.”]

MG: Oh my heart, those legislators smoked! You could hardly see sometimes because of smoke. (laughs).

MM: That’s part of the Prohibition issue, no doubt.

MG: Smoking. My father used to say that: “No gentleman would smoke in the presence of a lady.” Of course now they have the health problems with smoking that they didn’t have then. You know, trying to ban cigarette smoking in—

MM: —Public.

MG: —in public.

MM: Because other people around it have experienced health problems.

MG: But they didn’t consider other people then. We’d sit in the gallery (laughs)...

MM: Do you remember who you heard? Did you hear women speak at those sessions at all?

MG: Yes. I heard Mrs. Hannan (?). Let’s see, who else? Who were some of the others? I don’t think that my mother ever spoke before the whole legislature as a whole. She did all of her work quietly with members and groups and committee meeting and so forth.

MM: So that was a form of lobbying?

MG: Yes, I suppose that’s what you’d call lobbying now. I don’t think that she or any of her speakers I don’t think addressed the legislature as a whole. They weren’t very keen about having anybody address them, I don’t think, then. But I think that Jeanette Rankin did when she—

MM: I think that she did.

MG: I think she addressed them, because—

MM: More than likely.

MG: Huh?
MM: I say more than likely if she had a chance, I think she'd say something.

MG: Yes, she did and I know that...I said she was quite different from the WCTU and MC.

[Editor’s Note: The same third voice interrupts again: “You know, she would’ve gone for a hat. She used have these...you see these. You see these pictures you always see her with a big hat on.”]

MG: I know she spoke to us at the college at a women’s congregation, and she had these beautiful hats on. She always dressed up fancy, and she had a corsage. I think that she was all prepared to speak to that legislature, and I think that she addressed the legislature as a whole. But I don’t think that my mother ever did, and I don’t think that any of her speakers did. The speaking that they did was out in the different communities, and they went to small communities as well as big communities.

MM: So that’s important - the rural and the—

MG: But, I don’t think that she ever spoke to the legislature as a whole. She was very...well, you can almost say she was kind of modest. She didn’t ever put herself forward or make a big display. She did it very quietly and modestly.

MM: Did you vote then the next time that you had the opportunity?

MG: Yes, I voted.

MM: And your mother also, of course?

MG: Yes.

MM: Okay. (laughs)

MG: We were in Bozeman then, and we went together to vote. I remember that.

MM: I was wondering if that might have happened. It’s something that I’ve asked quite a few women in Montana—if they voted right away—and many of them didn’t. At first they were almost completely unaware of the entire campaign, and then when it came to be, they were still unaware of it somehow. Or it wasn’t important. They were raising families and didn’t—I guess—didn’t even really know any of the issues and didn’t have a desire to delve into the politics of...How did you feel about women in politics? You mentioned a little about Jeanette Rankin’s ambition and...

MG: I’m not very keen about women in politics.
MM: Really? You didn’t want to be in politics?

MG: No, I didn’t want to. My mother didn’t either.

MM: Your mother didn’t either?

MG: No. She would just work behind the scenes, and do what she could do for public morals and things like that. No, I haven’t voted for very many women, but I did vote for Mrs. Hingman (?) for State Treasurer because I knew she was capable and she was a widow.

MM: So that was important - That she didn’t have a family or...?

MG: Well, that’s it, she hadn’t a family. I think they all could have been left alone for the time she ran for State Treasurer, but she didn’t. I knew she was capable. She was Treasurer for I think for...I don’t whether she was four years or two years.

MM: Do you wonder about women’s capabilities in political office?

MG: Well, somewhat. It’s the unusual woman that can do it I think. I would hate to see us governed by women. My son taught on the Navajo reservation for four years, and he had a very good friend there—an Indian woman—and she said that among the Navajo it was the woman that governed and everything. The man didn’t do anything. The woman governed everything. All the man did was hunt and...now on reservations, why of course they couldn’t hunt so they just lie around.

MM: Oh, they don’t have anything to do?

MG: Huh?

MM and MG: [talking at the same] They don’t have anything to do.

MG: So she didn’t think too much of that.

MM: You would be worried that that would happen if women got more involved in politics?

MG: Well, I think so...I don’t think that...I still think that the man is the head of the home (laughs). I think that a man and his wife can work together to do a lot of things, but I still think that he should be the head of things.

MM: Do you see a complementary thing happening at all if there are woman and men voting? It just seems to me to be the issue that was going with your mother’s work that the women’s vote would complement the men’s vote.
MG: Yes, they didn’t think...He didn’t think they’d ever change things very much. He thought they’d probably...A lot of time they’d vote the same way, so they’d be together. But he thought that it was just a matter of justice. A woman was just as capable and had just as many brains as a man and. So he was in favor of women’s suffrage.

MM: Now that’s your father?

MG: My father was in favor women’s suffrage.

MM: I know, I meant he supported your mother very much—?

MG: Yes.

MM: —which was no doubt one of the reasons that she could keep on the way she did.

MG: Well, that’s it. But he thought it was just a matter of justice. Now, they’re going almost to the other extreme. They want the women to run everything (laughs).

MM: Some woman want to run everything, it’s been said. It may have been said before though, too (laughs).

MG: Yes, probably.

MM: I want to come back to your own life. When did you meet your husband and get married?

MG: I met my husband in church.

MM: In church? In Helena?

MG: In Bozeman.

MM: In Bozeman.

MG: I was working in Bozeman at the college then, and we were married. He was an Assistant County Agent until he went into the service. After he came out of the service, why we went to farming, and we farmed for seven years on the Flathead Indian Reservation which was rather interesting. Of course that was kind of—

MM: Was that a homestead or—?

MG: Well, it was a reclamation project. They had just put the ditches in and a lot of them didn’t work. Some of this government stuff even then wasn’t so good. Then we came back to the Gallatin, and we farmed here ever since.
MM: Was it near the Flathead Lake that your farm was?

MG: Yes, it was at Moiese (?), and you know where that is? We were at Moiese (?), and then he farmed there. Two of the children were born there, and Willis was born in Gallatin.

MM: You had three children?

MG: Yes.

MM: Is that the number of children you wanted? Did you plan that?

MG: Yes we did kind of plan it. We had the two and then after retirement we wanted another, so we had the third. Elizabeth and Steven, the two older ones, graduated from college. Elizabeth graduated here, and Steven went two years up here and then he went to Park College. It’s a Presbyterian college in Parkville, Missouri. He went for two years, and then he went to...drafted and went into the service. When he came back, he decided he wanted to do something different, and he went up to Bozeman some more and...

[End of Tape 1, Side B]
MG: [Referring to her daughter Elizabeth] took a home ec course, and she always loved to cook. She loved to cook, above everything else she loved to cook, and she wanted to...Eventually, she thought then that she’d like to have a tearoom of her own, but it never worked out. She went to Concord, California—my sister’s—and was a cook and dietician or something at the hospital in Concord for a while. Got interested with this doctor, and he was going to make some kind of a helper or something out of her. Then that didn’t work out so then she just switched completely and went to working for the Navy. Of course the War was on then, and she went—

Mary Melcher: Which war?

MM: —the U.S. Navy and of course Chicago. I think that was clerical work. Anyway, she—

MM: That was Word War II?

MG: Yes.

MM: Yes, okay, all the wars.

MG: Then she went from that. After she married she quit working. Then she became a PCA.

MM: Oh, is that a public accountant?

MG: Public Accountant—PAC—and so, she’s been doing that ever since now. Quite different from what she started out to do (laughs).

MM: It sounds like she had some ambitions though to go on.

MG: Yes, she’s still the most wonderful...She can cook anything and do it so easily—large quantities and so forth.

MM: Well, she could probably still come to a point of opening...I think there’s always time to open a tea room, you know. What do you think, Mrs. Gables (?) could finance it (laughs)?

MG: Well, I don’t think she cares so much about it anymore (laughs), but that was her idea before.

MM: I see.

MG: Steven has been teaching ever since he got married. He’s teaching in California now. He’s at athletics...He teaches athletics—coaches. Of course he has to teach other subjects too sometimes. You know, he has English and so forth. Teaching now days is some job.
MM: Yes, it is.

MG: He doesn’t have too much trouble with discipline though. He’s always been pretty good with discipline, but he figures...This year has been kind of a hard one; They just don’t want to learn. Course, he has a lot of Mexicans there in central California near Bakersfield. You know where that is?

MM: I think I’ve heard of it.

MG: Well, he teaches at Delano, which is the source of all the labor trouble (unintelligible) trouble and everything...

MM: That’s a difficult area.

MG: He’s married and he has two children. Four children that were born to him and then he adopted an Indian boy and then a little Indian girl.

MM: Good.

MG: There’s no difference. They’re just like their own. You couldn’t dare tell the difference, except from their looks.

MM: Well, not everything is in the looks.

MG: Well, what you see. You can tell, of course, they look Indian.

MM: Yes.
May I ask you about how...I hope don’t consider this too personal, but I’d like to go back to the size of your family—how you came to choose to have just three children. In that time...when I think...was it the ‘30s primarily, 1930s...?

MG: Well 19...Elizabeth was born in 1920, Steven in 1922—

MM: Oh, it was the ‘20s—

MG: —and then Roy was born in ‘29—

MM: It seems to me. —

MG: —and that was during the Depression.

MM: Yes, that was a little farther. It just seems to me that family sizes around that time were
quite large. There were a lot of children. Maybe, partially, because their being Catholic, but also just the trend was to have a lot of children then. Could you tell me how you and your husband came to consider that?

MG: Well, I don’t know. We just had one...We didn’t want just want one child.

MM: Yes.

MG: We wanted two. Then afterwards, well we planned it that we’d like another one. That was sure good when we did, because he’s my standby (laughs).

MM: Could’ve been the reason why...I think that’s one reason some people have many children because they have six or seven...

MG: Yes, I know.

MM: ...there’s more of a support from the children. I have one more question that we’d like to ask with this project, because it’s a woman’s issue—very strongly. If you don’t want to answer, tell me you don’t.

MG: (laughs)

MM: Did you and your husband use a form of birth control?

MG: No.

MM: No?

MG: We used self-control.

MM: Self-control.

MG: Yes (laughs).

MM: Or timed...

MG: Yes.

MM: What we call...Were you familiar with rhythm...?

MG: No, I don’t think I was.

MM: Do you remember any kind of education of women with respect to birth control in those
years?

MG: I don’t remember that there was very much.

MM: I was wondering—that’s one of the questions—I was wondering if in some way with all of the women’s issues surrounding—

MG: I don’t think that was ever mentioned. I don’t thing that ever came up. I don’t think that there was any...That’s a later issue.

MM: You don’t remember your mother ever making reference to it?

MG: No. Now there were three in my mother’s family too, you see.

MM: Yes.

MG: This was kind of the same way, the two older ones. My sister and I were closer together than Steven and Elizabeth and then Priscilla came on about six year later. So it just happened that way I guess.

MM: You did have that heritage—

MG: Yes.

MM: —of not coming from a large family.

MG: Of course, now there were nine children in my grandfather’s family, and none of his children...Three was the most that any of his children had.

MM: Oh, so right away they became smaller families?

MG: Huh?

MM: Right away, the families became smaller in size. I think that is somewhat unusual for that time. As I look or read about families, especially out here where there’s so much space and if you were farming, in a way, if you have a lot of children, they can work.

MG: I know. In the Holland settlement out here, they usually have a lot of children—quite a lot of children—but they don’t have so many now.

MM: Oh, the Holland.

MG: The Holland.
MM: The Amsterdam and the Churchill.

MG: The Amsterdam and the Churchill, and they have a lot of children. I figured they needed...They wanted the boys to work on the farm and so forth. They’re just quite honest about it (laughs).

MM: You didn’t feel the need for having children to help in that way?

MG: No.

MM: It certainly probably made it easier on you or...You know, that you wouldn’t have to raise quite so many children. Did you view it that way ever, That it wouldn’t be as difficult to take care of...?

MG: No, I don’t think so.

MM: You didn’t think about it that way? That’s the way women think now, “It doesn’t wear me out as much if I only have three instead of nine.”

MG: I don’t know how my grandmother got by, but it didn’t bother her any. Course they weren’t too close together; they were about two years apart in each case.

MM: Rather than right...one after the other—

MG: Yes. I think that it would be hard if you had them close together.

MM: Well, that’s partly the planning too. Maybe that helped and that...?

MG: I don’t know whether my grandmother and grandfather planned it—that they’d be two years apart—but I know that if you go through the list of the births. I have a genealogy, and they’re all about two years apart.

MM: Did you work with your husband when you farmed?

MG: Oh, yes.

MM: Did you work out in the fields?

MG: No, I didn’t work in the fields, but...I don’t think I did...but I churned—made butter—did a lot of that. Household things that women don’t have to do now (laughs).
MM: Did you raise animals?

MG: Yes, we had cows. I started in to try to learn to milk, but I wasn’t very good at milking. My husband said if he wanted somebody to milk, he’d get a hired man in otherwise.

MM: Did you raise chickens?

MG: Yes, I raised chickens.

MM: That was—

MG: Yes, and I did a lot of that. We raised a lot of chickens, and I raised turkeys.

MM: Turkeys?

MG: Turkeys.

MM: Any geese?

MG: No, I didn’t have any geese. Just raised turkeys and chickens. We had an old sow. She was a mixture of old kinds of breeds, she was all kinds of colors too, and she had an awful lot of pigs. She had more than she could raise so we had to raise one of them by hand. I raised it—I called her Saresell—fed her with a teaspoon (laughs) so she could eat.

MM: Did you make most of the clothing in your family? And you—

MG: Yes.

MM: —you pretty much had a lot of work to do on the other part.

MG: Yes, yes. I did a lot of things. I sold...

MM: Were you back here in this valley during the Depression?

MG: Yes, I was back here. I came back here in ’26.

MM: So you were farming in this valley? Were you in this house?

MG: No, we lived on the Jackrabbit for seven years. You know where the Jackrabbit is? Well, you come over the overpass from Belgrade, why you’re on the Jackrabbit.
MM: Oh, Jackrabbit Lane.

MG: Yes.

MM: Yes, yes of course...

MG: So, we lived there. Rented for a while, and then we bought this place.

MM: I was wondering if you built this place—

MG: No.

MM: —because it looks—

MG: No, I don’t know who built it. His logs didn’t plaster, and the plaster is real thick. It used to be awful lot rougher, and then we smoothed it over some. We were told that the owner stood in the middle of the room and just threw the plaster at the walls (laughs).

MM: —it looks like this is one of the original houses in this valley.

MG: Well, it was the original home on this hill here. He homesteaded this I think. I don’t remember what they called it, but you planted so many trees. There all kinds of cottonwood trees down there—two lanes of cottonwood trees, cottonwood trees all around—that kind of a homestead.

MM: It is beautiful.

MG: We had to get rid of a lot of the... They’re really fast growing, but they’re kind of a nuisance thing. They propagate through the lawn, and when they get old why they’re liable to fall over. They don’t have too good of roots, and they’re liable to fall over. So, we got rid of lot of those kind of trees, and we planted those pine trees. We planted those, I planted those. They were about that big when I got them.

MM: Four inches? How beautiful. Did you have a garden through the years?

MG: Yes, that was another thing we did. We had our own garden.

MM: That’s interesting. I ask that question because I find that a lot of people didn’t have gardens, and I just wonder how they...?