

Oral History 332-01

Interviewee: Ada Powell

Interviewer: Julie Eklund

December 3, 1994

Julie Eklund: I'm interested in your research about the Dalys down in the Bitterroot and anything else you'd like to talk about.

Ada Powell: Okay. Like when it started?

JE: Yeah.

AP: Well, I worked at school under a (?) program for about 14 years. And I watched how they taught Montana history, and I thought there really isn't much about the Bitterroot that they teach, and yet this is all this part of Montana. So I was intrigued by that and when I would get a chance I would read something about [Marcus] Daly. And there really isn't that much. There's a couple books about him, but the more I'd read, the more intrigued I'd become. Along with it, you'd get people saying he's a crook, and he was into (unintelligible) stuff. You know, we were close to the mansion for almost 40 years. Before that, we'd come here to the Bitterroot with my family; my dad's family was here before 1900. And I would keep thinking to myself, there's more to this man than people are telling me.

By accident, I can remember one week that the kids were talking about the mansion. I knew there was high security up there 'cause that's still on premises, so they started telling me stories of how it was the thing, when they were seventh or eighth graders, to sneak in there. And so you could almost tell on them when you wanted to, that one or two of them had been to the mansion. And every once in a while they'd come and tell me, "Oh, we set the alarm off." Because there was an alarm system around that place; I guess it was really touchy. And of course you had dogs out there. But then I started asking my own sons: "Oh, no, we got to the fence and we chickened out because the dogs would bark." (Laughs). Anyway, that was just a little sidelight, kind of remembering.

In '84, the head of the program wasn't funded anymore in the school. So I started spending more time up in Missoula, reading all these papers from Hamilton. I was doing research on my dad's family, which was the Vints (?). They'd come here from Missouri. They'd settled in the Ennis Valley area. So every so often I would find something about Daly and it was maybe only two lines. So I started—I'd either make a copy or write it on a palm (?) card. So I started getting piles of stuff. I thought, "I gotta do something with this." So I tried to organize it and the like so it made sense to me. And along with it, our Historical Society was asked by the preservation office in Helena to do a survey; if we were interested in a survey on the Hamilton Historic District. My mom was president of the Historical Society, so she says to me, "Ada, you can be the chairman."

I didn't really know what to do. But I did find out that they wanted an architect or historian. Well, I did get a few people to help me. We decided we needed an architect rather than a historian, and we'd go through the Hamilton area and pick out the district we wanted. And then some of these people seemed to know more than I did about Daly. They'd say, "This is the new house." And I said, "Boy, I need to find out more about this." Anyway, the outcome of that was that we hired Kurt Marhau (?) out of Livingston. He was an architect, and he came here and talked to us and everything. I was supposed to be in charge of volunteers, and our job was to get the present owners, and then we had to run a chain or tie (?) and do the history, and he would give a description of the building.

In the meantime, the mansion opens. We lose my volunteers. Instead of 20, we've got about five. So the workload really fell on my shoulders and I had over 900 hours in that survey. But I found out the names of the prison owners, and then we found out that we couldn't do the chain or tie (?) at the courthouse. It would take forever, because we did one house, we showed them how to do it, and it took a week because you had to keep going back, from the prison to the back and they would write two or three names on one line in pencil, and some of them they couldn't even read.

But we got around to something else, the first Montana chiro (?) company donated hundreds of letters. But we had to go in that room after the store closed, and he'd sit there and read the owners from 1890 to 1942. Okay, sounds easy. Except the block for Citizen's State Bank, it took us four hours for that block. We'd get over 300 houses and 23 houses out of the district for the national register. I had been working on it about six months before it officially started. It took us about a year to do, and it ended up as just a job for me; seven to eight hours a day, every day.

While I was doing this I was always stuck about Daly, because through the development company is what we said, it's like a state county, and the more I uncovered, the more intrigued I became. And it just was fascinating, how he had the homes built and all that stuff. I've never been a person to do one project and finish it out; I always get another one going. I have all this information about Daly, and I'm in the middle of this architecture (?) book. So I'm organizing all this stuff at night, doing the survey out of town, and the survey's completed in '87. And then my book came out first on the Dalys in 1989. But I really had most of the research done by the time the survey was done.

Even I spent all that time on Daly, it was about the tail end of the survey, I realized just how far-reaching this man might be. So I started writing to the nearer (?) cities and any way I could, anybody that would give me a hint, say something about Daly, I was right beside those. Because I didn't have any means to travel, and that's one way that I uncovered so much of this stuff.

By the time I had done the book, or at least the bibliography, I had uncovered more than 100 books about Daly. Some had a chapter; some would have only one or two paragraphs. But whatever, I would read all of that stuff. And I didn't have anybody tell me, but what I did, if I read something that I hadn't read before, I tried very hard to find it in at least two different locations rather than just take one person's word for it. Along with it, I realized that all the leading newspapers of the day, it'll say something about him. So I started getting copies of

them. I feel like I had touched all the bases that I could, until I thought, I've got to interview people right here. So I started interviewing and I got like, warrior's granddaughter, like cowboys and stuff. People that had worked for Margaret Daly too. And I felt like I had really covered all of those bases.

Of course, the only person that was still alive at that time that knew Marcus Daly was Jeanette Johnson, she's still alive. She remembered him. She was born in 1886, same year as my dad, and I was intrigued. But I went to interview her and she was setting down for it. She told me to sit down by her. She kind of patted me on the arm, and said, "You don't remember Marcus Daly, do you?" I said that I didn't. She remembered setting on the steps of Daly Funeral Home, which was built by Marcus Daly's family but he never lived there for whatever reason. She remembers setting there on the steps as he went in to see them, to see the folks. And I said, "Well, I've been told that he liked kids." And she said, "Well, I guess so, he patted me on the head." (Laughs). I just said, "My god..."

Anyway, the job really began, putting that book together. I had a lot of material. My problem was, after I start putting the Daly book together, I was still finding information. So finally it just came to a day, and I said, "I've got to stop." Because I've got to run the children (?). It's never ending.

After that, I decided to do the horses, because I had so much material on the horses. But once again, I come across lots of problems. People couldn't remember; people were negative; or things like that. I couldn't find people to interview for the horses, so I had to move on to more of the newspapers. All in all, like I said, I still know information, because I have found out more about Ireland and that kind of stuff, so I'm keeping that (?) out. But it's getting harder to find information now, but it is still out there. If you can get people to talk or tell them, "Oh gosh, I've got that picture. I've got that newspaper." It's finding the right way to approach some people. And then it's knowing where to go to hunt it. I found that out. But some of the universities, I know that that information, they don't have enough people to search for it. But if you catch that one person that has interests in what you like, to try to help you.

It still intrigues me. After my first book came out, I had some negative statements made to me. Not too many, but some people said, "What did you want to write that for?" K. Ross Toole did one. And I said, "No, I'd barely seen this," but he exhibited some of the newspapers. (unintelligible).

"You don't wanna know about that crook. You don't wanna know this, you don't wanna know that."

So when I attempted to talk to these people and say, "Okay, why do you feel that way?"

"Well, my father said that, my grandfather said that."

I said, "Is there any proof of that?"

"Well, no, no."

Well, then I would tell them what I had found and they said, "Well, well..." And that went on for a lot of people, and some people, I changed their minds—of course you can't change everybody's mind but I had people about a year after I'd written who had come to me and say they wouldn't buy the book, but they had found out that he wasn't (unintelligible), and I keep telling people, you got to read for the time (?), because during that time he wasn't any different than Boeing (?) or these other guys. He talked about the Ilydan (?) all over the Bitterroot.

You know where the charcoal kilns are, over by Gilmore, Idaho? There's a Gilmore town there, it's a ghost town of four men. And these charcoal kilns over there, they aren't used anymore. They're out of use. They burned charcoal, and some of it's used in the smoking factories in the 1800s. They said they'd had enough to go around. You can't say nothing about that, but when Daly come to fix it, they want out (?). Of course Daly was working as a railroad (?).

Another thing I think about: People would tell me when they found out I was writing a book, "You gotta have an ending. You gotta have an ending to this stuff."

"Okay, tell me. Don't just tell me that he was a crook," I said, "give me something substantial."

They couldn't—couldn't find it in the papers. I found out where there was one lawsuit filed against Daly for the lumber, or the timber. It was settled after he died. But it wasn't against the stock barn and Daly. The Dalys won. I don't know whether they won or if it was legal, I don't know, because I've never gotten the court papers and stuff. There's another way a person could go. But I know it was after Daly died.

There was a lot of talk, of course, in politics about Daly. I said I didn't think Daly was doing anything in politics. But when you read the old Hawk (?) newspapers of Daly's day when he died, he could not have been even close to what some people say, or they would not have put it in print. So there again, people come back to me and say, "Well, look at the newspapers." I said, "You're thinking of the newspapers today, but you've got to remember the newspapers of his time and those people the same as if they were making a dress or shoe or whatever to pride upon (?)." They was not gonna publish a bunch of garbage.

"They made mistakes, but not a lot," I said, "if they did, there was a retraction the next day and they didn't blame somebody else."

They said, "We made a mistake," and they accepted the blame.

I said there was too many of those top papers, the *London Times*, the Seattle paper, Utah...all over the world that said the king (?) is gone: "We will miss him. the things that he has done for Montana...for the people... can never be duplicated." It goes on and on and on.

Now they couldn't have all done that. You can't convince me of it. These newspapers, I've seen some originals; I read (?) from London (?): "Our state is in mourning. the world is in mourning... we have lost him." You know, big words. Of course, that was their style of writing in those days. But still, you have to consider what they felt at that time. They talked about him when a miner's family, a miner—the family would lose the head of the house, how he would continue to help the family. He helped out the people. He kept the wages up, he tried to keep

the conditions right. I think that some of the newspapers say that towards his last years, that he was becoming arrogant. That could be, if they're telling the truth, they're telling it as it is, they're not trying to cover it up. But I don't know. I don't know what they were writing about Daly; if he had a (?). We have to consider that we wouldn't have the Hamilton and the Bitterroots that we have now without him. You know, that kind of stuff.

And then again, since I've done the books, I've come across an article that said a lot of these articles that was in the newspaper. Daly called them in, he didn't know a thing about them. And then you hear people say he bought his own newspaper, he did. It still didn't (?). Daly had the Democrat ticket. He tried to buy *The Western News*, but Bromin (?) wouldn't sell it to him. Some of the old papers have good things about him, sometimes they'd said... when they would say things about Daly, they would say—have a whole thing up in Missoula for two or three hours today. Okay? (Laughs). Told you the circumstances, I don't know. They found it, so I guess they could hold it up.

But then I guess there is some things that a person has to consider: Daly would have not been rich had it not been for Tempest and horses and (?). Tempest, it appears, was not really big as his friend, but he had to go along with his bargains. Okay, when Daly made his money he could go over there. Now I think Daly was a smart man. Some say he wasn't educated. I think he was more educated than you'd think. But Daly had enough money to go ahead and develop things that had already been started. So you can't always give Daly credit for what people say all that Daly. Granted, he claimed all this expansion back here, but George Lord was there before Daly come. He owned land up there, he was born there, the Daly-Lord farm. He already had irrigation ditches that he expanded on. He had the money to do it.

You can find a number of answers just like that. So, was it Daly's money, his intelligence, or was it somebody else that had already started? There's that question. I lie awake at nights sometimes thinking about things like that—trying to understand a man that has been dead for almost 95 years. And trying to do it by using traces: driving out there, looking around, how he had this planned. This stock barn and stuff was planned after his first place in Kentucky. I got all that information about him. I found one little article that you could probably have heard from all over the world: Daly's plan, they claimed, had been to sell off a part of the stock barn but to keep all the water rights controlled as Daly had wanted. Had he done that—that's why I said I don't know if he'd have liked it; I don't know if he'd have been fair. He was gonna sell off some of his land, bring Irish people in here to till the land up, but he was gonna control this water and it would be handed down to his children. You know, guarantee that they would always have money for whatever they needed.

See, the risk is that, there was a (?) condition coming, but Daly didn't live long enough to complete some of his dreams. Irrigation seemed to be one of his top priorities; real (?), you can't grow things without water of course. The big ditch—now, Daly's not credited to that, yet I've come across articles before 1900 where he had meetings here, and talking to people about how they needed more water than the Republican ditch. You know, the few ditches that he had. So he had something in mind. He might have already had a ditch that was supposed to come out at Bee (?). He knew that without water, we wouldn't survive around here.

That's why I said, it's too far reaching for just me.

JE: (Laughs).

AP: It's beyond me, what he really had in mind. Was he gonna retire like some people said, and come over here and live? Or is it why, with his horses and with his friends and all their kids—was that his intentions—or was he gonna keep on working? You know, he did himself one. The copper mining and stuff, the Standard Oil—and that was quite a bit of controversy in New York state. Hard to settle down, because what they say about that. They like it when Daly—a lot of things that happened, did you see him coming? But when you look at the crate (?) company, it was all gathered (?). He was no longer in control of that company. So what was he responsible for? Like, he lost horses. He was responsible for the rape of the land. (unintelligible). Can you hold him un-Christian, entirely responsible, for things like that?

These are questions that have come up that I never found an answer for. When I started getting into more papers, personal papers and stuff that he'd written, I found out that he—it was either right before he died or right afterwards, that Margaret Daly had all this stuff on, had it shipped over there and burned it. So then I thought, "Oh my gosh—he's really trying to cover up something," I started reading about some other millionaires at that time. And that was a standard practice. When I started pointing this out to people it started really changing their minds. They had heard those rumors, "He's covering up. He's covering up."

I said, "Yeah, but everybody is."

I said they didn't want their personal stuff out—Margaret Daly's family burned her letters. A lot of memories, good stuff, a lot of good stuff was burned. There's a lot about utilities (?) that was destroyed (unintelligible). Every time we start to find out one way, we come to a dead end. There's just something we need to know about.

There is, of course, some letters that I have there, personal letters that Daly wrote or his secretary wrote and he signed them. Now, everybody says Daly was a crook. He'd stake a line or two, he would stake a line, then he'd take the timber away from them. Yet I have a copy of a letter in here that says how the company lost money because when they started stealing logs, they were doing it in their favor against every other citizen involved. It wasn't all Daly's fault. One thing I'd come on (unintelligible) he'd set down on the boardwalk and chew tobacco with them and smoke a cigarette or two. He'd do it just to prove to them. Now I have seen that in quite a few books, where they say [William] Clark—where did this man.. what did he do? I don't know, they'd talked about some of the gardens, you know, but that was undetected. I really don't even know who did.

Another thing that I kept hearing was when Daly and Clark got into the feud—everybody has a theory on that. He lost two hundred shares. Well, I read that, one of my theories is that Daly practically worshipped Haugen (?). I don't know why unless Haugen was the one that said (unintelligible). He just really liked the man. I don't know. He was supposed to go over to see him. Clark and Daly were to go over to see him. Clark was supposed to come down, I don't know what time. Clark was supposed to have made the statement, "I'm not gonna wait for 'em

dirty (unintelligible)." Stuff like that, 'cause you see, Haugen was part Turk (?). And it was quite a bet on mark that Clark made. I think that shows a part of the feud, I really do, because of the way it was worded and stuff. I read this and it took me different articles.

JE: (mutters)

AP: Now I think that's what started the feud. They say it's because of the water, there was water right there in Anaconda. That might have added to it. Then there's the other story that Daly went...where was it? Daly went to Deer Lodge to cash a check. He was in Clark's bank but he didn't cash it. You can hear all kinds of stories. But I still believe where it's at. It was the same way as when Daly came to the United States undercover (?). I've uncovered quite a few. Some seem unbelievable. And then the other ones that had work to do, would do the work, I've covered all kinds of things that he was supposed to have done. I don't know what he did for sure. So, I didn't say, "He did this, he did that." I just said, "I have uncovered these stories. Take your pick."

JE: (Laughs).

AP: Because in K. Ross Toole's thesis, he was fortunate enough, to my knowledge, to have even heard. She said, "I'm aware that my father worked in New York." She didn't know what he did. So, see, she didn't know. People say, "Okay, he didn't talk. Didn't want to stand up to them." But that's not so, because when you consider the true time—authors didn't think that children needed to know—it was all quiet, the children were in the background. Because my own dad, he was that way. I started asking about the family, but he wouldn't let me. He wouldn't let me. And I can almost see it. You know.

End Tape 1, Side A.

Tape 1, Side B.

JE: Let's do that.

AP: Yeah, but some people are gonna think of it different. When I first started doing this research here, Henry Grant has really been a big help to me.

JE: Hmm-mm.

AP: Okay. I could uncover three tracks, and Henry had said to me that there was four. But it doesn't talk about four tracks. So anyway, this one track almost touched Kurt's (?) land, the open track. The covered track was out across the road and it went east and west; this went north and south. And there was one out at... well, it kind of crossed you know where the red barn sits, behind the carriage house.

I had a habit of getting a lot of material and just glancing over it. I was going through some stuff here and I was really reading it. And they were talking about this track, and they were talking about the fairs that they used to have at the mansion and they had 'em there in '10, '11, and '12—1910, '11 and '12. And it just hit me: I thought, "I could just swear not too long ago before that part of this covered track had blown down, that they tore the rest of it down so somebody didn't get hurt." It was already gone. What track were they talking about? They were talking about Riverside entry. They were talking about so many miles from Riverside, and I thought, no, something's wrong.

So my mom and I drove out there, and we see the distance. We just park out there, the side of the road, and then read what's in that field. It was one of our really good times: "This is where the covered track was!" It had to be. It couldn't have been anyplace else cause they're talking about the barns, the fair, the covered track, because they'd cleaned it up inside and it was like, all cleaned up. It just, it all fit in.

So then I've been talking to these other people, black women (?), just the last few months—it was a wonderland down through there. Why did they go down there? They went down there to the state farms. That was the breeding department down there. Once that one question was answered, it all fell into place, just like one big jigsaw puzzle. I know where the barns were, and after that now, that makes sense.

When you ask how far-reaching Daly is, it's all over the world. I have discovered the farm that he had in Germany, and he leased it. I wrote a lot of letters and the stories I've determined, he leased it. He never owned it, it was never on any paper, any lease paper, that's probably buried someplace there. When he brought all the top-made stallions to his mares, he took the minister (?) down, and then he would bring the mare back here so the colt was born here instead of in the United States.

But I kept thinking, only England, there has to be another place. There has to be another. A year ago at the mansion, these people were there from England. They just casually said, "How can we help you?" I said, "Can you find out anything about Albertville?" Explained to them it was 20 miles out of London and stuff. I got a couple letters that time. They said they couldn't find much, that there was a place in France also called Albertville. I got my son working on that, because see, I think Daly had more than one place.

But when you ask how far-reaching, I don't know, because there were multiple people beating about this term. I had a big book about ghost towns of the Northwest, and Daly owned mines at.. it's in Canada, I can't think of the name right now.. but in this book, here is a paragraph about so long, and it talks—Hedley, British Columbia, is where it's at. Hedley, British Columbia. Why does that sound familiar? Well, Helms Crawford showed her father was Crawford with—Bailey's superintendent here for years, and before that he was in charge of mining. He was like his secretary. And I run back and I got this tape, to see if it told me on the tape, and she's talking about Hedley, British Columbia. And the mines there, here it talks about that. And it says the mine was sold for thirty thousand dollars. I kept going through that book and going through that book and finally found out that Daly bought the mine for thirty thousand

dollars. I don't know for sure what Hedley, British Columbia is, but they got it covered in their books.

Then he owned mines in South America.

JE: What kind of mines?

AP: Copper. I believe it was copper, they might have been some silver. But Daly was really into copper. I have tried to sort out some of Daly's contracts. I don't know, maybe somebody could someday.

Daly was involved in the beginning of the valley, out of Great Falls, the coal. The un-coverage of the coal. When you uncover one thing, you can go right to another. I interviewed a lady up there not too long ago, but her father had worked in the coal mines out of Red Lodge and that was an interesting talk with her. Daly stayed in the background for a lot of stuff, so you might be looking at a Daly company, you might be looking at something that Daly has developed, and not realize it until you really dig through the small print.

There's a ghost town out of Three Forks called Congress City. I have heard about this ghost town. I had written millions of letters. I wrote to the [Montana] Ghost Town Preservation Society out in Bozeman last November and they didn't know anything about Congress City. So I thought, John Toole, at least—that's when he was still alive. So I wrote to him, I said, could he help me. What he said, he'd talk to Aaron (?) who'd written this book about him. And finally the logging (?). He does. He said, I can't write much more after that, I found a few papers that survived. I couldn't find him. Was gonna call him in a few days and I wrote him another letter, said (unintelligible). His grandfather's papers were burned, too. So see, it was—anyway...

As much as he could remember, Daly called, told John Toole, and there was one other man to go over there with their yardsticks and take measures with whatever could be measured of the town. (unintelligible). So then I wrote back to the [Montana] Ghost Town [Preservation] Society. I said, "He blew you guys right out of the woods." But I got a lot of information about that, the coal mine and stuff. He would send—he would have to have sent, I guess you'd call him a land baron. That's what I call him. Out at Hamilton, he'd come here and water all the way. And he had Morgan (?) every (unintelligible). Every once in a while you'd see one of these names, someone who'd went north to check out some. So everyone was in on it.

At one time he was gonna build a railroad over Skalkaho. Gonna build a railroad, a mining district which is up in West Fork. He died of it. He did a mine up there, these two lines. I think he probably did it on that mine up that creek. And I don't know why they backed out on that, I have no clue. What the hell—it was the biggest part. Right on the ballot. There's a lot going on.

Is there anything else that you can think of?

JE: I thought it was kind of interesting, Daly's association with [William Randolph] Hearst, tell us something about that.

AP: Those men were involved with—well, they said, making the desert green. See, Tellis (?) was prisoner, either he was in prison or he founded the Wells Fargo Company. Something interesting that I found here was about the horses, about Daly. Hearst had racehorses, too. But he wasn't that successful. But Haugen, he had a match out in California prisoners. The department and everything. Oh, that was the other thing that I was telling you about.

When Daly did these things, did he do them on his own or because others didn't. He seemed to follow the pattern of the horses that he had on the place in Kentucky. Part of it still stands. (unintelligible). We also have this big horse out in California, had a little more acreage but didn't stop them. (unintelligible). But see, he kind of paralooped (?) them.

JE: I think so.

AP: He had three of them, at least. (unintelligible). I said here, and right up on the hill. That's where Johnny Cash lived. People tried to tell me the town was buried. I have not been able to find—I have a whole story of him..he died in 1915. Can't find about ten (unintelligible).

There's so many unanswered questions from him that drive me nuts. When his horses were shipped out to New York, what kind of records are there? Where are those records? I have had a number of people trying to find records for him. That Senator Gray (unintelligible). Why, of all the horses, does he request the pack horse, not (unintelligible)? You know the story of Senator Gray?

JE: No, I don't.

AP: Long after Daly died, some of the workers up there took care of Senator Gray, and they got the idea of racing it on the Fourth of July. They got him ready. And I guess that horse took everything. Margaret Daly heard about it, and then almost cried. And she made them promise they would never race that horse again. If Daly had not won with that horse, so wanted it to spend its remaining years at the stock farm. She said, "I will see those wishes kept alive." Senator Gray, he was not one of the important horses he wants them to race. Henry tells me that some people (unintelligible). I don't know who Senator Gray was. Was he a Senator that Daly liked during that time? I haven't gone through the Congressional records.

A lot of these people, they're descendants of the people that Daly brought here to start his (unintelligible), because he brought a lot of people. I don't know, I think the man did more good than (unintelligible).

JE: Well, thank you. That was really interesting.

AP: I could talk forever.

JE: You did enough. That was great. Thanks a lot.

AP: You're welcome. I'm glad to get somebody else..if they wanna call me, I'd be glad to discuss anything, hear other people's viewpoints.

End SIDE B

