

Maureen and Mike

Mansfield Library

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

Archives and Special Collections

Mansfield Library, University of Montana

Missoula MT 59812-9936

Email: library.archives@umontana.edu

Telephone: (406) 243-2053

This transcript represents the nearly verbatim record of an unrehearsed interview. Please bear in mind that you are reading the spoken word rather than the written word.

Oral History Number: 120-001a
Interviewee: Frank Rummel and Nina Rummel
Interviewer: May Vallance
Date of Interview: circa 1978
Project: Bitterroot Historical Society Oral History Project

Note: The first part of the interview with Frank Rummel is difficult to hear and could only be partially transcribed.

May Vallance: How are you, Frank Rummel?

Frank Rummel: Pretty good.

MV: Okay. Will you tell us a little bit what you know about schools around Mill Creek?

FR: I'll tell you the first school was down on the school section on that gulch [unintelligible]. It was three quarters of a mile west of Woodside and a quarter of a mile north the school section was where the schoolhouse was. It was in that little gulch, and [unintelligible] for the school. That building was a log building—

Nina Rummel: Wait a minute until she's ready.

FR: —the first time I...but now this is here so the top school [unintelligible]. As far as I know

Said he drove a cart down there, and he had a [unintelligible] and a cart to feed his horse. That's about the size of that. Of course, there was...The county trustees and the [unintelligible] went to school down on the school section. As far as I know. Now, this is hearsay.

MV: What about the furnishings in this school? You said something about the desks. What'd they use for desks?

FR: They sat on the...I don't know. I wasn't there.

MV: I know, but—

NR: You said they made the seats out of slabs or—

FR: They split the...made the seats out of—

NR: Slabs.

FR: Well, I think they was made of [unintelligible], some [unintelligible] for seats.

MV: I see. About what time was this? The early 1918...1890s?

FR: It must have been '91 or '92 [1892].

MV: How long did they have school there?

FR: I don't know. When we had the school in '94, why, I think, as far as I know, that closed.

MV: Yes. And where was that school in '94?

FR: That was west of Clyde's (?) house. That was on the [unintelligible] Sanders place. Sanders owned that land, and the schoolhouse was right in that corner. In fact, when he come back from Illinois, there was [unintelligible] and such that the schoolhouse had been. Let the chips when they built it. They did a fine building. Made out of rough lumber, I suppose. But you see, I was too young for anything like that to remember.

MV: Has anyone ever told you about who went to school in that school?

FR: Well, [unintelligible] and Bessie Dunbar (?) was the two I know of. Now, I suppose some of the [unintelligible]. But I talked to Homer, and he said that went to school and Bessie said that went to school because later on when they had the schoolhouses on Dutch Hill, the lady that was teaching wanted to go to Darby, I think, where she was going to teach in Darby. So you see, it was about 19—

NR: Eighteen.

FR: 189...

NR: 1893 or 1894.

FR: '93. '92 and '93 it was there.

MV: Who was the teacher at that time?

FR: Mrs.—

NR: [unintelligible].

FR: [unintelligible] from Darby. Now, I don't know. I know that her name was [unintelligible]. She was only there for two years. Then, of course, [unintelligible] the deed was made in '96, and they moved the schoolhouse up there. That's the end of the schoolhouse where Clyde was. That's right at the north end of the Rummel Lane.

MV: Did they just have one-room school at first?

FR: Certainly must have, because even on the school on Dutch Hill only had one room to start with.

MV: Well, that's what I say. You say they moved the one that was south of Mill Creek, they moved it north of Mill Creek on the [unintelligible]—

FR: No, they built it—

MV: They built a new one.

FR: They built a new one, yeah. One sorry building.

MV: Yes, and only one room?

FR: Just one room.

MV: Do you remember who were the trustees of the—

FR: Well, I don't remember who was trustees, but I know that for several years, John Hoff (?) was the clerk of the school. Was for years, and [unintelligible] was a trustee one time and [unintelligible] and Vic Schultz (?) and [unintelligible]...and I don't know. Others, but I was too young to pay much attention.

MV: When did you start school over there at that [unintelligible] school?

FR: Now, hold on, you're going to ask my age! I started school in about '19...1898. Because we went to Illinois in '99 [1889?]. Then come back in '91 [1891].

MV: Then you went on...Do you recall when they built on another room on that school?

FR: Yes, I remember, but I don't know the date. My father was trustee in the [unintelligible] building. You know that building, that room, cost 350 dollars, and [unintelligible]...Oh, he used to sell some kind of produce around here. They built the school. Three hundred and fifty dollars for that building. Added that to the building before, and then after that, why, they had that for several years and then George Well (?) was the first teacher at the time and Molly Remington (?) was the teacher of the first grade—the first four grades. Molly Remington was the teacher of the first four grades.

MV: You remember any of the children that went to the school?

FR: Well, a lot of them! [laughs] You don't want me to give 100 names, do you?

MV: Well, there weren't 100 children that went.

FR: Well, now, by the time...There was pretty near 100.

MV: By the time there was three rooms?

FR: The time there was three rooms. I never went after the two rooms. The third room was built on after the three women trustees. That was Mrs. Malone and Mrs. Lockwood and Mrs....Who was the third one? [pauses]

MV: Do remember of any incidents or any special kids that went? Special teachers? Anything that happened?

FR: Well, I know I went to school with Minnie Bailey (?), and [unintelligible]...Now, listen. Mrs. Remington taught, I think, two years. Then come [unintelligible]. He was out, and then we had...let's see, we had Minnie Bailey, and Mrs. [unintelligible] taught the little children. I think she taught for three terms. Then after Minnie Bailey, there was...then I think there was a Miss...from Stevensville. But I didn't go but one year. Then the next year, Nora Smith (?) taught, and that's when I went out of school.

MV: I see. Did they have any programs? Did they have any Christmas—

FR: Oh, yes. They had programs. They had Christmas programs, and they used to have literary debate there. Henry Porter (?) was the president of it, and Charlie McCrea (?) at one time. Then the [unintelligible] used to come down and sing...what was that song they had about...Oh, I forget the name. Anyway, they used to [unintelligible] come down from up there.

MV: Now, what Grey (?) girls were those?

FR: The [unintelligible] Grey sisters.

MV: I see.

FR: I don't know as anything important...You know, we got along. We didn't fight. I'll tell you [unintelligible] bunch of kids in that school. We never had any fighting except once in a while. You heard about [unintelligible]?

MV: Yes.

FR: Well, once in a while, he'd get me, and I'd get in a fight with him one time. [unintelligible] his hand like that, and this big [unintelligible] hit him with a...just went down and hit him in the [unintelligible]. He says, "Did that hurt?"

I says, "No."

He says, "Hit it again."

I says, "No." He come down as hard as he could with that ruler, and I had [unintelligible] across my hands for several days. But I wouldn't holler, but [unintelligible] hollered. We got a-fighting, you know, something to do with the [unintelligible]. You know how kids do. But there wasn't very much fighting going on. The Turnage (?) folks just across the schoolhouse...You heard of them?

MV: Yes.

FR: [unintelligible] and Mrs. Turnage. I remember one thing. When school was out, Mr. Turnage always had a box of apples, and us kids after school—when the day school was out—would march along and he would give each one an apple. Now, that was kind of nice because them apples was considered a [unintelligible]. The old fellow would sit there and read the paper, you know, and these reading glasses [unintelligible]. [unintelligible sentence]. Pretty soon he'd get around again and let it shine on his paper.

One thing about Mrs. Turnage. They had a kitchen so and the door was right in front of them. She'd take a long pull and open the door, and she had a back on it and poke a stick in there so that when it burnt off, she'd poke it back in again. Now, that was pretty nice. But she was a wonderful woman. Mrs. Turnage, one of the finest women you ever saw. The kids were good too. There was Elmer...I went to school with Elmer Turnage and Cassie and Clara. Kate was older and [unintelligible]. Now they were [unintelligible] so I don't know about [unintelligible].

Anyway, Joe and Neddy were half-brothers. Mrs. Turnage's half-sister...oh, [unintelligible] married the first one, and then she died and had two children, Neddy and Joe. Then she died then she married Annie [unintelligible]. That was Mrs. Turnage. She married him and the rest of the family. There was Bill and Ed and Elmer and then Katie and Clara and Cassie.

MV: They lived across from the schoolhouse?

FR: Right just across from the schoolhouse.

MV: Do you remember, did you have box socials?

FR: Oh, they had box socials! Lot of them. Literary...used to have literary and debate. Mrs. Hall (?) used to have something in the paper [unintelligible] something about Old Man Smith, stuff like that. That was [unintelligible]. He lived on Dutch Hill. You never knew [unintelligible].

MV: I knew of them.

FR: [laughs] Anyway, Mrs. Hall was quite...writing the paper. Mrs. Hall was pretty sharp about writing [unintelligible] in the paper. Now say, old Chris (?) is another. The one that we got in the school over there, now, there was...I think they give the names of trustees...the son of one of them. [unintelligible] and Ben Severs (?) and Chris Wolf (?) and Lockwood—Ernie Lockwood (?)—and...I don't remember the others. Then the last time...the last year when we had school [unintelligible] the three women was the trustees. The [unintelligible] men...they didn't think was running it right, so they turned it over to women, and you know when they were turning it over, you know what happens then?

MV: Yes. Do you recall any of the poems you used to learn?

FR: [laughs] I forgot those poems.

MV: You have. Well, I thank you ever so much. This has really been very interesting, and we appreciate—

FR: Is there anything more you want to...Now we're going in about—

[Break in audio]

MV: Nina, I'd like to hear your story about the Dutch Hill School. You and Frank really, probably are among the oldest living people that went to this school. I'd like to have you tell us all that you can about it.

NR: I was born in 1896, and I started to school in 1902, my first year, I started on Dutch Hill. I was born in Hamilton, and my folks moved up on a place west of Woodside when I was two years old. Earl (?) was six years old that year and stayed in town and went to school with my grandmother. That's the reason I can remember it so well. We all went to school on Dutch Hill.

MV: Now, who was Earl?

NR: Earl was my brother. It was only Edith and I at that time. Edith was a sister of mine. Both older than I. When we first started school, we did have horse that we would drive sometimes. We only had one team on the place when we were going to school so when working days come we had to walk, which is about a little over three miles. Sometimes the snow got clear up to our knees, and believe me, it wasn't very funny when you walk on the crust of the snow and then we'd break through sometimes and crawl through that snow. It made quite a trip to get there. But we always got there.

We used to stop at Mr. Wolf's place. He lived right around the creek where we crossed into the main highway. He used to hitch up his team and take everybody that come from our direction in his family and take us over to school on his sled when the snow got deep, which was quite a

relief for us. Anna Keeling went to school, and [unintelligible], and Hazel [unintelligible], and Myrtle Smith (?). They were all about my age. Of course, they was older ones growing too, but they were all about my age. My first year in school was when the second school was built on, and Ruth Emerton (?) was my teacher. Then I stayed in that room until the third grade through the third grade with Mrs. Wall. Ms. Wall her name was. Then they built on the other room, and I went in there on the fourth grade, which Mrs. Sherman taught us at that time. She was a widow woman, had a couple of children and her mother lived with her. Then from there on, of course, we went on into the big room.

When I was in the third grade, arithmetic was so easy for me that they used to take me and put me in the separate other room—the higher room—with [unintelligible] Lockwood and Elmer Talbert (?) and myself. They would put us all in the other room to go to school with the fourth grade, or take up arithmetic with the fourth grade. Of course, then, when we got into fourth grade, we didn't have anything to do in arithmetic either, but we still stayed in that room. [laughs]

Anyway, we always had a good time at school. We used to play all kinds of games. So of the games we played with the boys, and they'd get pretty rough once in a while. We'd play "pop the whip" and "merry-go-round" and all of those kinds of games. Then we all [unintelligible] together when we had our baseball games. One time, a bunch of us girls [unintelligible] they're playing, and the boys were playing baseball up above us. [unintelligible] hit a ball and knocked her clear down and hit me right in the head. [laughs] Pretty near knocked me out. I just passed out a time or two. [laughs]

Then we went through the eighth grade there on Dutch Hill and all graduated with [unintelligible] Ruth and Alberta Pierce (?) went to school with us. Clara Bowler (?), Clara Schultz, it was. [unintelligible] were in school when I was there. I think Tracy was a while too. And the Lockwood children. The Talbert children. Greenfields (?), all those. There's hundreds of them. If you get to counting them up, a lot of them there.

MV: How'd it happen that they decided to have all women on their school board?

NR: Well, I don't know. I think they'd used all the men up. [laughs] I know one time, my father and Mr. Lockwood and Faye Bowles' (?) father were all on the school board together. I think probably it was a couple of years after that [unintelligible], she was around then, it was Mrs. Lockwood and my mother and Mrs. Sears were all on the board. That was the last year.

But the school had never had any water. They always carried their water until the year the women got in there, and then they drilled a well. Had her dug or drilled. I don't know which they did. Then they put in a new furnace in the school, and got things fixed up a little bit. But it wasn't too long after that that they consolidated. I don't remember just the year that was put in, but...Anyway, it's kind of helped all the ones that are going there later on then. I wasn't in school at that time.

MV: Do you remember any community gatherings that they had at the school?

NR: OH, yes. We used to have lots of community gatherings. We used to have Sunday school every Sunday there at the schoolhouse. And we'd have a preacher once in a while when we could get one, coming in from Corvallis or Hamilton or somewhere. Then we'd have our Christmas program, and have a regular Christmas [unintelligible] and program and have Santa Claus and hang their stockings on the trees. We had a regular Christmas program. Then they used to have box socials.

MV: I remember Mrs. Browning (?), the doctor's wife, helped out with the Sunday school.

NR: Yes, she was up there a long time.

MV: Do you remember any incidences when they had the box socials? Can you describe what a box social was?

NR: Well, it was where all the women were to take a... fix up a basket and take there, and then auction them off. The boys would buy them. Sometimes they would catch a man that wanted a particular box, and they run the box up on him. I remember when John Young (?) was there, and he was kind of sparking Tracy Hoff (?). They knew he was wanting hers, and they just run it up. I think he paid about 14 or 15 dollars, which was a lot of money those days, for that basket. [laughs] But it was [unintelligible].

They had nice programs whenever they had the box social. They had nice program.

MV: What was the program?

NR: Well, different ones would speak or different music. I think I played a piece one time. Thought I would say the name of it, but I can't right now. [unintelligible], I played that. Just a musical instrument thing on the piano. Different ones had pieces, and different ones speak pieces. Sometimes we would have a dialogue or something. It was always very interesting. Had big crowds too. The old folks came just the same as the kids did. I remember one time Cy Smith bought Mrs. Lowe's (?) basket. Then he traded it off to somebody [laughs], and she chased him all over the building because he sold her basket.

MV: You don't recall any of the poems you learned in school?

NR: Well, no, can't say that I do, May.

MV: Well, this has been very fine of you. I appreciate it ever so much. This, I think, is going to be very valuable, of great historical significance, and I thank you ever so much.

The interview with Frank and Nina Rummel, students at the Fairplay School, District number 11. Originally called the Sears School on Dutch Hill.

[End of Interview]