

Maureen and Mike

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Mansfield Library, University of Montana

Missoula MT 59812-9936

Email: library.archives@umontana.edu

Telephone: (406) 243-2053

Archives and Special Collections does not hold the audio for this interview. The following text is a summary, likely created by the interviewer, of the interview.

Oral History Number: 047-018

Interviewee: Irma Mulcihy

Interviewer: Lucy Bouchard Mulcihy

Date of Interview: March 15, 1976

Project: Frenchtown Historical Society Oral History Project

Note: The following text is from notes of Lucy Bouchard Mulcihy.

Irma Mulcihy: In bad weather we went to dances in a sleigh. Someone was always throwing someone else out of the sleigh into the snowbank so he would have to run after the sleigh to catch it. In the spring of the year, the gumbo road was almost impossible to walk on. The mud stuck to your feet so much so, we would walk in the weeds by the side of the road, getting full of wood ticks. At school, we would pick them off of ourselves and put them on top of the old wood burner stove. They would pop and stink to high heaven. The teacher had quite a time to make us put them in the stove. Now I feel sorry for those early teachers.

I seem to have misplaced the picture of the Reynolds place. When I first knew them, they lived in a log cabin but later built the log house that is still there. It is a real nice house. Years ago, they had a small log house that straddled the creek. This was their milk house. Cool in the summer. Ray, Mildred, and Johnny went to school at Nine Mile as did the Gustafson boys—Frank, Jim and Ted.

The next picture (14) is one I took off an old picture my folks had of the old Cormier sawmill crew which was on the bench of the Cormier, and later, the Dufresne place. Sister Marcina (Severina Dufresne) identified them for me. Mrs. Barrette (Marie) was her great grandmother. That is the first lady on the left. My mother worked for Mr. Cormier when young. She is the other lady on the left. She had put on a clean apron to have her picture taken. The little girl on the right was Severina Cormier who married George Dufresne later. They had many children of whom one is Sister Marcina (Severina Dufresne). In the center is Grandpa Frederic Cormier who first owned the mill. He got infection after being bit by a pig and died later. His son was also Frederic—the father of the little girl (Severina Cormier Dufresne). The baby in Grandpa's arms is the Fred that we know, brother of Mrs. Dufresne. The 5th man in the back row is Fred Lebert. He drove stage from Huson to Martina carrying the mail—packages and sometimes people. In my time, we had to go close to the Nine Mile School to pick up our mail, which was usually my job which I did on horseback in the summer along with going after the cows and other errands. In the front sitting on the ground are Alec Lebert, Adelard Lanoue (who was husband of Leandra Dufresne later) and Pete Lanoue. (That may be spelled Leneou.) Both of these men later committed suicide. Both very nice men, but I guess that we are not all equipped to meet the rigors of everyday life. My mother married in 1901, so this picture is older than that.

(15) I also included a picture of the Nine Mile House which I suppose you have many of. Both the NP [Northern Pacific Railway] and the Milwaukee run not too far from there (as you know). I have ridden the NP from Missoula through Huson and the Milwaukee to Sudan often. As a

child, I could always get a banana on the NP, which was something I did not get often except at Christmas when the school put on an entertainment when we received a sack full of nuts and oranges. What a treat!! That was Christmas.

(16) My next pictures are of my father and our way of traveling. The horse and buggy we used to go to church once in a while, Ily father liked to go to church, not so much that he was religious, but he loved to visit with the people after mass on the church step and the country store steps. A store owned by the Marion brothers, one named Joe. It took us an hour to go to Frenchtown—ten miles. My idea of church was not very religious either. I enjoyed looking around at all the people, of whom I know most of them, wondering why women had to wear hats, that drove me nuts, while the poor bald-headed men had to take their hat off so the flies would crawl on their head. I also enjoyed two girls that used to dress in the latest style which was something different to the rest of us. They wore pink velvet hobble skirts, etc., which made the old ladies yak, yak, yak, and I thought that they were beautiful. When we got home, we kids would take old sheets and other things, and make ourselves hobble skirts to play in, with wet, red crepe paper for rouge on our cheeks. Then I fell down the stairs in this hobble skirt. That ended our hobble skirts.

(17) One year I went to the academy in Frenchtown, and all the children had to sing mass on Sundays. The sound was awful. We could have served as a fire alarm much better.

(18) The Picture of my father, Loretta (my cousin), and I was taken in Huson when we bought our first car, a 4-90 Chevy. That really was something special for us. The Huson store was where we would go to buy our staples. You could go 20 miles an hour!! Once in a while, before we had a car, we would take the horses and buggy to Missoula. That took all day by getting up at the “crack-of-dawn.” We would—that is my father—would shop all day and tend to business and come back the next day. So, the car was welcomed.

(19) I don't know if the last picture will be of any use to you as it does not take part in Frenchtown. It is of Governor Joe Dixon and the opening of the Flathead Reservation for white settlers When I had this copied off of mine, the developers cut off some of the writing on this one which said, “Me and Joe opened the Flathead Reservation.”

Remember when you and I took French under Virginia Dixon in Missoula. How she got that job I don't know as her French was worse than mine and that was bad. Of course, I can't even speak decent English, but that was a very easy subject for me and you too. On the Nine Mile, there were a few French Canadians and myself who spoke French at home. It was a rule by my father to never speak French in front of people who did not understand it. My father's French was very poor. It was mixed with some English. The only good French I knew was letters from my schoolteacher aunt in Canada. Now, my French pronouncing is good by my French itself is only about 6th grade or less. My English is not much better. Our schools on the Nine Mile were not the best. Anyone with a high school education could teach. No one would pay to get anyone better, so quarrels were not uncommon with the people taking sides. I don't believe that there

were very many teachers who would like to come up there to teach. The few good ones were rare.

Before the automobile and radio, our life was simple. We had telephones for communication so everyone knew everyone's business by "listening in" when the phone rang—so many rings for each person. Yeah, the people were gossipy, but not all of them and not any more than we are now. Most were kind of friendly and ready to give a hand to anyone that needed one—from helping to build a barn to helping with the sick and feeding neighbor who came by at mealtime. I think that your mother never set the table for less than 14 people. She was all heart.

We were not rich. I think by today's standards we would be considered poor, but I never knew it and I doubt that anyone else knew it. We were not worn thin by tension. We were mostly free and mostly self-sufficient.

The doctors seldom come up into our country. There was little sickness that was not treated by home remedies—some good, some not so good. The Watkins man was one who came to the Nine Mile once or twice a year. My father used his liniment for the horses, cows, pigs, chickens, and for the two of us. We had the flu once a year, then my [father] would get his old tin cup with hot water, sugar, whiskey, and liniment in it. It tasted awful—either "kill or cure." But the flu did not last long. Then there was mustard plasters, goose grease, bear grease, turpentine, oil of cloves for sore tooth, snuff to help you breath better, and the water from boiled tamarack boughs to clean wounds and other things.

A sewing machine man came up there once. He must have lost his way? He did sell my father a sewing machine which I still have today though I cannot sew, only to patch. My father did sell two horses in Missoula to buy me a piano, and I never learned to play that either. The horses ran away, and my father had to buy them back. He then sold them to people on the Nine Mile where they remained. I did not blame the horses. Nine Mile was a beautiful valley. You could look any direct on and see the beautiful mountains, with Squaw Peak towering over all. As children, that was one mountain which we all wanted to climb, and so we did.

The wild life in that country was plentiful but bothered no one. Once a coyote followed me about one mile in hopes that I might drop some of the liver I was carrying in a small pail to the neighbors through the woods. His nose was good. He gave up when some of the rocks I threw at him came too close to his nose. One very seldom saw a bear. The men went hunting and fishing for food only—not for fun. Skunks made rare raids of the chicken coop to their sorrow and death and our two- or three-day pollution. The deer were plentiful and could be seen often. The cougars kept in their own territory and people seldom went into their territory, which one of them was in the higher mountains in back of Dufresne's and toward Six Mile. Only once was I there. The Dufresne twins and I had decided to go looking for huckleberries there. My father asked if he could go with us, to which we all agreed. He carried his lunch pails like the rest of us, and also a revolver which we ignored. On our way home, after we had looked the country over and found no berries, we were startled by a scream which I thought was a woman

in dreadful pain. I said who could that be, and my father said that it was a cougar. From then on, it was entirely the cougar's country without any interruptions from us.

The country around that was not fenced in as belonging to certain farmers was government range land. The farmers let all their animals that they were not working run free on this land. We would even let our milk cows graze in the summer. They would always come home a night to their calves, which we kept pent up. This would last till weaning time when the cows did not want to come home for milking. Then I would have to ride a horse after them. They were often stubborn about coming home and would try to hide in the thick jack-pines. Once started home, they would take their own sweet time. They usually grazed in the bottom not far from the creek. All the farmers cows grazed there. I had to learn the difference between the sounds of the cowbells in order to tell which ones were ours.

The end of the story.

[End of Summary]