

Maureen and Mike

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**Oral History Number: 120-011f**

**Interviewee: Golda Lewis Penner Langley**

**Interviewer: May Vallance**

**Date of Interview: circa 1978**

**Project: Bitterroot Historical Society Oral History Project**

Golda Langley: —Langley. When I came to Montana in August 1930, I came to teach school at Overwich School. I had an aunt who was postmistress at Darby, is why I came. The children at Overwich School that year were Richard and Clifton and Ben Carney, three brothers and Harry Wentworth and May Langley and Gilbert and Donald Burgoyne. I think I got all of those. There were nine—no, there were Charles and Vernon Langley, too, nine of them. There were big ponderosa pine trees around the school. These trees were new to me and I thought they were beautiful. During a rain the bark was so red. We often ate our lunch out under the big trees and found—if you have ever seen piles of bark at the bottom of a Ponderosa tree, you can really find most any kind of a little picture if you have a good imagination. We had much fun doing this. At that year, there was an elderly man in the neighborhood who used to come down to the school at lunchtime because one of the girls always brought him an apple or a sandwich.

The next year, 1931 and '32, some of the children had moved away, so we only had four pupils: Harry Wentworth, May Langley and Chuck and Vernon Langley. In 1934 and '35, I taught at Beavertail School. Some of the people called it Rombo School. There were 12 children that year: Ben Carney, three Donnaca children: Helen, Lowell, and Jim Donnaca, Mercedes Robertson—let's see, three Langley children: Verne, Bobby, and Charles, and two Holt children: Bernita Holt and Jackie Holt, and Vernon Hallford. I think I got them all.

That school was built out of very big logs, very old logs, and some of the big logs were still in the yard. We sat on them to eat our lunch and found it wasn't a very good place because we got a lot of wood ticks, we thought probably, from the big old logs. The school bus was interesting. Some of the children lived way up Nez Perce. Bill Hallford built a school bus, just a square little building on sleigh runners and pulled it with a horse. Oh, he had a stove in it, too. I think it was that year that my husband, Walter Langley—it was very deep snow and very cold and we had a truck. We picked up the school children on the way to the school, but we got stuck in the snow. We had left our little girl at home alone thinking we'd be back soon. When we got stuck we were a little frightened about having left her alone, so the children and I started back for our homes, but she was fine.

May Vallance: [Whispers] Your legs.

GL: Let's see. Then I taught at Beavertail also in '35 and '36. That year there were only six children: Ben Carney, three Donnaca children: Helen and Lowell and James, and Mercedes Robertson and Vernon Hallford. That was a very interesting year. In fact, both years were interesting. We had a hot lunch program.

MV: How did you manage the hot lunch?

GL: The parents took turns fixing the hot lunch, and each, I'm sure, tried to outdo the other. We had the most delicious hot lunches. Each child brought a lunch pail with anything they would like for dessert, our bread and butter, and then the parents furnished one hot dish. We certainly had an interesting hot lunch program.

MV: Did you do anything in the way of social community activities at the school in the evenings or did you have any special programs for them?

GL: For special days, we would have programs. Children would take part in the programs and then the younger children in the families would come. Oh, too, I had a piano, which I put in the building in the Beavertail School, and the Donnaca children had very nice voices; we even had part singing. The children enjoyed having the piano there.

MV: Did the parents ever come to these programs?

GL: Oh, yes. The parents always came.

MV: Did you have evening parties? Did you have dances or anything like that?

GL: No, we didn't. In fact, Beavertail was one room—fairly small. Oh, we had an earthquake. A Helena earthquake occurred during that time. I believe, anyway, it was an earthquake whether it was in Helena or not or not—

[Talking over each other]

MV: Yes, '35.

GL: Shook the building. It had happened at 12 o'clock at night, and the children were feeling bad that they weren't awake when it happened. So at about 5 'til 12 the next day, our building began—but we had discussed how you should get under your desk or stand in a doorway, and at 5 to 12 when the building began to shake, our eyes enlarged, but we didn't get under the desk or do any of the things we had talked about. But of course, there was no damage. That was at Beavertail. Did you want me to go on about—

MV: Yes.

GL: Then in '36 and '37, I taught at Grantsdale. There were three teachers in Grantsdale. I had the middle grades and Mrs. Villaboozer (?) had the upper grades and was principal and Mrs. Alita Vinicke (?) had the lower grades. I taught there two years: '36-'37 and '37-'38. That was the last years that I taught.

MV: Again, did they have any community activities at Grantsdale? Box socials or dances or anything like that?

GL: We had PTA meetings at Grantsdale, but we didn't have dances. We had a special Christmas program, which we put on in the Grantsdale clubhouse. It was during this time that— was it Mrs. Closter or Ms. Clost?

MV: Maybe she was Cora Clost—

GL: Cora, it was Cora Clost put on the very special festival and the Grantsdale... Merlin Larson was the queen, although I think it was a countywide project. I think it was put on at the fairground. It was a rather big affair.

MV: Yes, it was fun. I remember that they did put on some community pageants at the fairgrounds at one time.

[Break in audio]

MV: As long as your husband Walter Langley is not available, I'm sure that he has told you some tales about his experience in going to school on the West Fork. Do you have some that you could tell us?

GL: He moved to the West Fork in 1922 up near Overwich School, but there was no teacher, so he stayed with the Whitney family near the Beavertail School where he milked the cows that winter when he stayed with this family. Sadie Whitney was the teacher that year. She was the Whitney family's daughter. When they got a teacher then at Overwich School, he went there. The first teacher that he had was Mildred Martin. Two years ago in Arizona we saw her, which was a surprise and were glad to see her. Then the next teacher he had at there was Alma Carmichael. Walter had a special book that he prized that his father had given him and a pack rat chewed on it, which made him very unhappy, so he brought a shotgun to school and when the pack rat showed up in the school building, he shot the rat in the building. They had to discontinue school for a few days.

MV: [laughs] Well, they didn't live very far away, half or three quarters of a mile.

GL: Yes, I think it was.

MV: You don't remember any other incidences that happened with Walt? I imagine he was a fairly mischievous boy, but yet a very nice boy.

GL: I can't—I didn't meet him until 1928 was the first time I'd met Walt. He finished the 8th grade while Alma Carmichael was teacher there.

MV: Alma was from Corvallis, wasn't she?

GL: Yes, she was from Corvallis. Do you want me to say some of the other teachers that were there?

MV: That might be a good idea, yes.

GL: Other years. I think it was '28 and '29 that Bessie Wylie was at the Overwich School, and '29 and '30 was Kathleen Holloron. Then there was several years when I was there and then there was a Mrs. Close taught at the Overwich School and then Sadie Whitney who had taught at the Beavertail School before, then she taught at least one, maybe two years at the Overwich School. Then Tom Stanford can tell you, there was another teacher there, I can't think of her name but Tom Stanford would know it.

MV: Well, this has been very interesting and we certainly appreciate what you have told us and the time you have spent with us relating these interesting things.

[End of Interview]