

Voices from the Past

A History of Canyon Creek area, Madison County, Idaho

Interviewee: Oswald J. and Myrtle Munns Neeley

October 30, 1971

Tape #17

Oral Interview conducted by Harold Forbush

Transcribed by: Devon Robb
Edited by: Jamie Whitehurst

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Harold Forbush: Through the facilities of the Upper Snake River Valley Historical Society at North Center Rexburg, Idaho the reel to reel taped interview will now be transferred onto a C-60 cassette this 5th day of April 1984.

HF: With me this morning about noon this being the 30th day of October 1971, here at my office in Rexburg to have come that we might discuss and learn something more about Canyon Creek area. Mr. and Mrs. Os Neeley. Now I think that we will start with you Mrs. Neeley by asking you to state your full name and the date and the place where you were born.

Myrtle Neeley: I was born in Smithfield, Utah. My maiden name Myrtle Munds Neeley, was a daughter of Harry Munds who was a Sheriff of Madison County here for several years. I was three years old when my dad came to Idaho and he homesteaded on the Rexburg bench.

HF: Ok, now we have you state your full name and the date and place you were born.

Oswald Neeley: Well my name is Oswald J. Neeley and I was born down here in Burton three miles west of Rexburg, in 1901 on the 23rd of July.

HF: And what induced your people to come into the Upper Snake River Valley? Did your father – what part of the country did he come from originally?

ON: Well he come from Neeleyville down there in Utah. And then they come up here and he and his brother was in the sheep business. And they was the first guys that took sheep over in Teton Basin to Summer. And my granddad Johnson, they had 320 acres down here in Burton and my dad had a ranch out there...

HF: Now this was on your mother's side?

ON: Yeah. No this was on my... yeah it was on my mother's side. Yeah, that's right.

HF: Johnson. Do you know what his first name was?

ON: I think his name was Andrew.

HF: Andrew Johnson. Ok. Now later on your father was encouraged to go up into the Canyon Creek area.

ON: Yes sir.

HF: Now can you tell me the circumstances that encouraged him to go up there and buy out a homesteader?

ON: Well my brother and I had a brother-in-law that wanted to go into farming, so they looked all around. At first they went up on Antelope and there wasn't anything up there they could get and they went up here on Canyon Creek and they seen this here ranch up here that we have now and made a deal for it. And then later on in 1920 and '21 we had a real bad drought. So my

brother and brother-in-law got discouraged and they left the ranch. They thought they could do better by working for wages. So that left my dad and I to take care of the ranch.

HF: Now what year did your dad and your family first go up there?

ON: In the fall of 1917.

HF: And whose homestead did they purchase?

ON: George Forduice and Pertsy Forduice. [Pronounced For-dice]

HF: George and Perssey Fordi.

MN: Forduice.

ON: Well we didn't buy that right from those people. We bought it from Frank Turner, the real estate agent here in Rexburg and along with that deeded ground we also bought some state lease that Frank Turner had. And at one time that was owned by the Sinoway Sheep Company.

HF: I see. Well now of the homestead was it a 160?

ON: It was a 240.

HF: It was a 240. And let's see I want the spelling of that Forduice.

MN: F-O-R-D-U-I-C-E.

HF: And can you, Os, give me the location of this homestead?

ON: Well it would be three miles north of the Canyon Creek Bridge. I think that would be just about...

HF: Now this would be fairly near the mouth of Canyon Creek?

ON: Yes sir.

HF: But on the east side.

ON: On the east side of the Canyon Creek.

HF: And it lies within Madison County.

ON: Yeah. And then we're right down in there where Canyon Creek empties into the Teton River. We are right on the mouth there. But there was some state lease between this homestead and Canyon Creek and the Teton River, see, on the west.

HF: I see. Now as a matter of fact does your property embrace the mouth of Canyon Creek?

ON: Yes sir.

HF: In other words Canyon Creek, the mouth of Canyon Creek as it flows into the Teton is located on your property?

ON: Yes sir.

HF: On your deeded property, now I guess?

ON: Yes sir.

HF: Do you have any property west of the canyon?

ON: No.

HF: You don't have any property on the west side. It's all on the east side.

ON: It's all on the east side, yeah.

HF: I see.

ON: We also have some property that we bought from a man by the name of P.P. Worrel here years ago that's right in the Teton River. After Myrtle and I were married we bought 320 acres of deeded ground down there on the Teton River.

HF: Now was this on the north side of the river or all on the south side of the river?

ON: It was on both sides.

HF: The Teton River then flows through a portion of your property.

ON: Yes sir.

HF: Well isn't that interesting. Now when you first went up there in 1917 and bought, was there much evidence of wild life on what is now your ranch along the river?

ON: Oh, once in a while just strays would come through there. There never was too much wildlife. Maybe in the fall of the year where they trail out to in these sand hills for winter, they would be in there for maybe a week at a time and then all at once they would come up missing...

HF: Now would this be deer and elk?

ON: No elk. We never did see any elk. Very seldom did we ever see – I never have seen an elk in there.

HF: I see. Now just for the moment let's comment both of you if you will, as you'd like to make the comment, about the wildlife in there, the things that live. Now this would be the small animals, reptiles, any type of thing that lives down along the Teton River on your ranch, you know.

ON: Well once in a while you can see a lynx cat in there, a wild cat, but they're awful scarce. There's deer in there, like I say in the fall of the year but they go and come, you know.

MN: They are migrating from the mountain 'cause they're out on the desert.

HF: Now have you found coyotes or wolves or bear ever get down there?

ON: No, no bear. Once when they used to have a lot of sheep up there in the fall of the year you'd see a coyote once in a while, but after they quit letting the sheep run in their stubble and that ended the coyotes. We haven't seen a coyote in there for years and years.

HF: Now you don't ever recall of seeing a moose down in there.

ON: Once in a while you'd see a stray moose in there.

HF: Now over the years of course, perhaps up further on river where they call the narrows and that would be on further east of your ranch.

ON: Yes sir.

HF: Quite a few rattlesnakes. Now down around your ranch have you notice any rattlesnakes?

ON: Well when we first went up there they was a lot of rattlesnakes. We used do our farming up there with horses and we'd cut a head laying around our field and use it for hay for our horses. And boy you'd go out there and haul that hay in and shove your fork and under a bundle or shock of hay, man they would come out a bouncin' and sometimes there would be two or three rattlesnakes on a fork, on the pines. Man there was a lot of rattle snakes in there. But in the past few years we very seldom see any rattlesnakes in there.

HF: Now further up the creek I know personally there are a lot of bull snakes. Bull snakes and rattlesnakes seem to be kind of enemies. Isn't this so or is it?

ON: Well that's what they say but I don't think so.

HF: Don't ya?

ON: No, I don't.

HF: Why don't you?

ON: Well over in our country you can see a rattlesnake and a bull snake and one will be going one way and one the other and they never bother one another. And I've heard a bull snake will kill a rattlesnake but I don't believe that. I've been watching these snakes and I just don't think a bull snake will tackle a rattlesnake.

HF: Have you seen bull snakes down at the mouth of the creek?

ON: Yeah.

HF: Will they come down there?

ON: We have bull snakes right around; in fact, we had a bull snake right up around the [Inaudible] this year.

HF: Now have you ever noticed their habitat, where they live or how they winterize? Have you ever uncovered a place where they have hibernated for the winter?

ON: No I haven't.

HF: Either one of them.

ON: No, I haven't.

HF: I see.

ON: But I've been told that at one time that there was a jungle of rattlesnakes down there on Canyon Creek. Our neighbors, when the Butlers lived up there they told me there was a den of rattlesnakes down there but I was never curious enough to go down to see if they was there or not so I couldn't tell you about it.

HF: Now Mrs. Neeley, turning to you in a moment, when were you and Os married and did you, after your marriage go to the dry farm to live?

MN: Now we were married in March 11, 1925 and on April the 1st we went with a team and wagon up to the dry farm to live and we have lived there ever since.

HF: Had you been up there before?

MN: No, I didn't.

HF: Did he give you an idea of were he was going to take ya?

MN: Well he was kind of secretive about it. When I got there I was rather taken aback. The house, it was a long house – I'd imagine it was about 24 foot by 14, one big long room. And it was...

HF: Now had this been built by the original homesteader?

MN: I don't know. Do you know?

ON: Yeah, I think it was built by Forduce himself.

HF: I see.

ON: I think that's where he was living.

HF: Ok, what type of a roof did it have?

MN: It had a shingled roof, but the walls was footboards up right and then a one by four [inaudible] it and that's the way we build cow sheds nowadays. Then the inside of it just had some building paper stuck onto the boards.

HF: How did you heat the home?

MN: With a cook stove.

HF: Just the one cook stove.

MN: Just the one cook stove.

HF: Did it have more than one room?

MN: Well there was an addition onto the back that they used to keep the saddles and stuff in but we slept in one corner of this big room and lived and ate in the other end of it.

HF: Now how did you get your water for culinary and drinking purposes?

MN: We hauled it from Canyon Creek with a tank and a team of horses.

HF: Now in other words right below your place or did you have to go up the creek?

MN: No, you have to go over to were the highway is now or go down the...

HF: Dug way?

MN: They go down that dug way where the old store used to be and they had a filling station there where they run the ditch out along the side of the canyon and then it was high enough so that they could drive this tank down under the filling station and it would run in the tank and fill it up and they'd haul it.

HF: Now in other words this tank was loaded on a wagon?

MN: On a wagon.

HF: And about how many gallons would it hold, the tank?

ON: That tank held 500. That held 500 gallons.

MN: About 500 gallons.

HF: Five hundred gallons. And you would use this for your drinking water and also for stock?

ON: Yes.

MN: Well now for stock we got real scotch about that deal. In the winter time there would be a huge snowdrift in the pile in there and then they would cover that up with straw in the spring and that snow would melt and run down – they caught it and put it in a big trough. And they had a cistern in there when the trough would get full then they would let it run into the cistern and store it to water the horses with. And that usually lasted up until about the last of June wasn't it? And then after that they would have to haul water for the horses too.

HF: Now did you people have a cistern on your ranch then that you would put your drinking water and so forth in?

MN: No I never would drink water out of the cistern.

HF: Out of the cistern.

MN: We drank it right out of the tank.

HF: Out of the tank. How often would you have to go up there and get this tank filled?

MN: Oh about twice a day.

HF: Twice a day!

MN: Yeah. I remember when we were first married that Os hired Rulon Wade. Then he had a team of mules and Rulon was only about 12 or 13 and he used to drive that team of mules once over in the morning and one in the afternoon and that's all he did that first summer. He was an independent little rascal. That one mule was so tall, I just never could understand how he'd get that harness on it as short as he was, but he was too independent. He'd put a pole up, he said, "That's my job and I'll do it." And he harnessed that team and he hauled the water there.

HF: Now when you first went over there, Os, in 1917 with your father had this Mr. Forduce cultivated and broken up from the sagebrush and so forth?

ON: That particular piece of ground had been farmed in there for quite a few years; in fact, I think it's the first farm that was ever cultivated in there and farmed as long as it's been farmed. It's one of the first farms that was ever plowed up.

HF: In the Canyon Creek area?

ON: In the Canyon Creek area, so I've been told. But the rest of it we broke it up. And I was just telling you about the state lease and that was all up on a hill just to the west of this homestead and that was all in sagebrush and I helped break that up out of sagebrush.

HF: Did you do this all with horses and plows?

ON: Yes sir.

HF: Would this be a two bottom plow?

ON: At that time it was a two bottom plow. Later in the years we got to using three bottom plows with 12 head of horses on them.

HF: When did you first get your power driven equipment say your first tractor? I guess that was the first piece of power equipment that you had wasn't it? A tractor?

ON: Yeah, a tractor, yes sir. Well we had a combine that we had to pull with horses but it had a little motor on it to run the machinery part of it.

HF: Before you got your tractor?

ON: Yeah but it went with it...

HF: Was this before the First World War?

MN: No it was about '33.

ON: I think we was using horses up there in the First World War and I think it was in, you know I took them horses down...

MN: I know Jackie was going to school. She was born in '27 and she was going to school so that puts it at '33 when you traded those horses in on that tractor.

ON: So I guess it would be about '33 when we bought our first tractor.

HF: But you did have this so called combine before then?

ON: Yeah.

HF: Very much before then?

ON: Well yeah we bought that, you see we did some fall plowing up there in '17 and we had a crop in '18 and we bought this combine with this little Leroy motor on it and we pulled it with horses and that's how we did our harvesting up there for several years.

HF: I see. In other words, you in your raising grain you didn't ever have to bind it and shock it and things like this?

ON: No, we never did.

HF: You never did.

ON: But we had neighbors that did.

HF: That did.

ON: But we didn't.

HF: I see, but these neighbors that did that only did it for a year or so because you were on such a big scale.

ON: Well when we went up there the ranch that they bought and put all together was around 800 acres and that's all that we had to start out with.

HF: Now this would be the homestead and the lease?

ON: Yeah.

HF: And all the other pieces that you acquired?

ON: At that time yeah. Since then we have acquired more land that that.

HF: Well what's your present holding then?

ON: Around 5,000 acres.

HF: About 5,000. Now is that all in one unit?

ON: No it goes over to the south across the highway.

HF: Oh, I see. But you're all in Madison County.

ON: We're all in Madison County, yes.

HF: And your property all lies east of the Canyon Creek.

ON: That's right.

HF: Now as we consider the early homesteaders up there can you suggest to us who some of the very, very earliest were, as they come moving into that area of what is now Madison County.

ON: Well there was, Myrtle can tell you that, but those homesteaders was in there before we went in there. So she can tell you who the homesteaders were.

HF: Does you got a list?

MN: Do you want a list of them?

HF: Yes.

MN: I was just counting them here and there's 42 that was east of Canyon Creek.

HF: That were east of Canyon Creek?

MN: East of Canyon Creek and in Madison County. Forty-two families lived in there at one time.

HF: That's amazing, 42 families more or less homesteaded, you say, in that area.

MN: Yes.

HF: Well then Myrtle why don't you just go ahead and just name them off. And then we'll have then anyway.

MN: Ok. These 42 families start with Henry White, Johnny Wardale, Tancy Penny, George Forduice, Percy Forduice, John Robb, Frank Harriman, Hearl Willy, Bill Peterson, Bill Parks, Lou Parks, Bill Barney, Frank and Whit Pincock, Sam Bell, Harry Egelston, George Browning, Dave Browning, Abe Zinding, Niels Nielson, Joe Humphrey, Ira Davis, Bill Lee, Avery Lyman, S. E. Travis, John Olsen, Francis Lyman, M. E. King, George Harriman, Bill Fosset, Tom Terry, Henry Smith, Guy Williams, Timmy Drinkwater, Henry White, Id Howard, a Mr. Stewart that's grandfather to Wesley Stewart, I don't have his first name, Tom Clark, John Weaver, Charlie Cazier, Hans Sorensen, and Rube Casper. That is on the east side of Canyon Creek. Now on the west side of Canyon Creek.

HF: Now would that go pretty much – the full extent are east and north wouldn't it on the east Canyon Creek. In other words, there were farmer's way to the south and then down to were you people...

MN: Yeah this extends from Warm Creek, Carlton Creek...

HF: That would be on the south.

MN: On the south down the river to where Neeley's farm is now, the Forduice place.

HF: Ok.

MN: Then on the west side, the furthest west was Hyrum J. Clark. And he said he homesteaded that in 1907. And then there was Joe Stevens, Carl Gillet, Lyman and Lawrence Garner, Charles Carry, Alma Beck, Pete Jensen, Lou Bird, and Archie McKinley. And that's all the homesteaders I have on the east.

HF: The west?

MN: On the west side. Oh yeah, there was a Charles... what's Craig's place up there?

ON: Browning.

MN: Browning from Sugar City, homesteaded that up there too.

ON: I don't think so.

MN: That's what they told me.

ON: Did they? Well then I guess...

HF: Now well you people, either one of you, have an idea how many acres were talking about here?

ON: Well 42 times 160 acres.

HF: You're assuming that every homesteader had 160 acres and I suppose that would be true wouldn't it.

ON: It's pretty accurate.

MN: No I think there was a few exceptions. George Browning gave me a lot of detail on these homesteaders and he said that there were some of them that only – there's only 80 acres available. Most of them had 160 but there was a few in there that there was only 80 acres available to them.

HF: Now a lot of these homesteaders filed and then because of failure to meet the homestead requirements or because of indebtedness they foreclosed against them. So a lot of them that you've named here were only there many two or three years.

MN: Long enough to prove up on there homestead and sell it.

HF: In your investigation, did you ever ascertain about the very earliest ones there? And about what year would this be?

MN: Well now, Hyrum J. Clark told me that he homesteaded in 1907 and that his dad homesteaded down closer to Newdale in 1902, but he took what they called a 'desert entry' and they had to have water on this land at a certain time, there was a deadline when they had to have water on this land.

HF: When they had the regular homestead?

MN: Yeah, then that would qualify it for homestead. They had a right to stay there and that was when these fellows went up to get the water out of Canyon Creek to make this Newdale Canal. But he said they didn't get the water there in time before his dad to prove up on that land.

HF: Now when you said the Newdale Canal you mean the Canyon Creek canal, don't ya?

MN: Well the official name for that is the Newdale Canal, I got corrected on that.

ON: But it come out of Canyon Creek.

MN: We call it the Canyon Creek ditch, but the official name for that stream is the Newdale Canal.

HF: Now where does it have its diversion point?

MN: Right at the Green Canyon hot springs; just down there about 100 yards from the springs.

HF: Do you know who had a part of first initiating that and putting it up? Didn't they put a dam in there to make the diversion?

MN: Yeah. Now I got this information from George Browning and Hyde Clark and Casey Casper, they're the ones that gave me these names and there was the Schwendiman brothers. There was five of them. They were originally from Switzerland. And there names were Sam, Godfrey, Rudolph, Fred and Johnny and then along with them there was Lorenzo Greggs, and Hyrum Clark Sr. instigated the construction of the Newdale Canal. And Burt Terry, Tom Terry and Joe Stevens must have also been implicated in the plan because they were the only settlers on Canyon Creek that used water from that canal. 1902 was the year that the first water was available for the irrigation uses.

HF: In 1902.

MN: Now there's kind of a conflict of dates here. Now, Hyde Clark said that the work had begun on the Newdale Canal about 1895 and Johnny Schwendiman said '96.

HF: Well that's very interesting. I have a little data on that. I believe it said the actual filing for the water was June of 1900.

MN: Of 1900.

HF: For the actual diversion, actual filing for the water for it. And I believe, I got this from Andy Anderson, but this is all right. Now let's talk a little about the canyon. Os can you describe this canyon, were it has its origin and are there little creeks feedings this Canyon Creek at the head waters?

ON: No, there's not a spring or a thing that's down in that canyon. The only thing that feeds the Canyon Creek would be Pony Creek and Calamity Creek and Warm Creek and that would be the...

MN: Carlton Creek and Wrights Creek.

HF: And would these be just sort of dry beds later in the summer?

ON: That's right.

HF: In other words, it's spring run off then from the snow waters.

ON: That's right.

HF: That would collect way up in the mountains there. They call these a big hole.

ON: Well Calamity Creek runs year round. There's a little water that runs into Canyon Creek from Calamity Creek.

HF: And it must have maybe a spring that feeds it.

ON: It could do. I haven't been up to the head of that creek.

HF: Now in the early days, the Pincocks went up there, or somebody, discovered Warm Creek up there where they built...

ON: Where they built the hot springs?

HF: The hot springs up there. Now this is kind of the head waters, isn't it, of this Canyon Creek?

ON: Well no.

HF: Is it in that neighborhood?

ON: Canyon Creek goes up further than the springs.

HF: It goes on further south?

ON: Further on south.

HF: I see.

ON: But I don't think it – now there is a warm creek up there and I don't think it has anything to do with the springs for it comes right of the springs just right were they had the old swimming pool and it didn't have anything to do with Warm Creek and then about a mile and half further up the creek is where Warm Creek come out.

HF: What as you understand it, was it just a kind of a warm hot, hot springs that sprung up right of the ground.

ON: That's right. From right out of the ground.

MN: I have some definite information on that.

HF: Why don't you go ahead, ok.

MN: Should I read it to you?

HF: Yes, why don't you go ahead and make your comment. Where did you get this from?

MN: This is on a plaque that is up in the Green Canyon Hot Springs lobby and its says, "The springs issue forth from the base of the big hole mountain a little east of the present buildings at the temperature of 115 degrees. It flows at a hundred and thirty gallons per minute allowing the pool to fill completely in approximately 12 hours. The water contains magnesium lime and a trace of iron. The first white man to visit the springs was Wilson Hunt in 1811. Most of the trappers of the area mention them in their journals. A most unusual phenomena can be observed when leaving the Green Canyon area, the Newdale Canal is farmed from Canyon Creek and the pool campground. This canal is on the same level as the road. As one leaves he can follow the canal on the left side of the canyon as it appears to go up hill. When you arrive at the highway the canal is still at the same level as the road." I thought that was interesting.

HF: Yes that is interesting.

MN: You know there are two forks to Canyon Creek, they call it north and south fork of Canyon Creek. And then there's Carlton Creek and Calamity creek.

[Side two continuing and concluding the interview with the Neeley's]

MN: Creek and Calamity Creek runs into the canyon right there and Warm Creek. Then you come on down here's the Green Canyon Hot Springs, just below that is Wright's Creek and on below that is Pony Creek and that is all the tributaries of Canyon Creek that I know of.

HF: Now these little tributaries are all east, excuse me, are all south of the present day Green Canyon.

MN: Wrights Creek and Pony Creek is north.

HF: Is north?

MN: Of the present day Green Canyon.

HF: I see, I see but...

MN: The rest of them are all south.

HF: Now the Pincocks – where the water issues forth, that's about how forth that's about how far south of the present day Green Canyon?

MN: It's just right up on the hill.

HF: Just upon the hill.

MN: East, right, straight up east. They just run the water in a pipe down the hill to the present Green Canyon.

HF: Now do you people remember when the Pincock people went up there and started catering, you know, to the public, built something up there so you could swim and so on? Os, do you remember anything about it?

ON: I don't – when we went up there they was using the old swimming pool up on top of the hill but it was there, I don't know just when they started to have that opened up for the public.

MN: Well I can give you some help on that. That Jack Casper, I was talking to him, this is a son of Rube Casper. And he said that he worked there for Tom Terry from 1915 to 1918 and this must have been the time when they constructed their public facilities 'cause he said that they just had a little pool there and they were charging ten cents a piece to go in swimming. So he didn't have the ten cents but he went down below and jumped in and took a swim before they chased him out. So that must have been between 1915 and 1918 when they put up the building and made the public facilities.

HF: Now once the public facilities were arranged can you describe, will either one of you describe, just what they had in the way of facilities?

ON: Do you?

MN: Go ahead.

ON: Well they had, it was a big, it looked like a barn built over this – they had it cemented, the pool itself was cemented and then they had this big building that looked like a barn over the top of it. And they started to shingling it and they never did shingle it all and so you can see up through the rafters and everything. And that's what they used there for years and years and years. You had to go up a little old narrow dug way and at that time when they had these Model T

Fords, some of the Model T Fords could make it and some of them couldn't. You'd have to have a bunch with you so you could push the Model T Ford up the hill to where the swimming pool was and it was just a little narrow dug way.

HF: Now who operated it at that time?

ON: Henry Pincock.

HF: Henry? Henry Pincock. I see. And was he assisted by his family?

ON: Well his family lived up there, they lived there and I think at that time they had to do their washing by hand or in these other gasoline machining machines to wash those bathing suits and that so they was using the...

HF: Was it customary for them to open the hot springs up, Pincock Springs, up in the spring and keep it open until late fall?

ON: Oh yeah.

HF: They didn't even try to keep open in the winter time.

ON: No. They never did keep it open in the winter time but they had it open right as soon as they could open it up in the spring. It was really a nice – that pool was just as nice as the one they had, only it isn't filled up as good but they had everything right up there just like they have down below, but it was just a ram shake of a building compared to what's down there now.

HF: In other words they had dressing rooms for both men and woman.

ON: Oh yeah.

HF: And a nice desk. And I guess they catered to the sale of little eatables, didn't they?

ON: Yeah they did.

HF: Candy and pop and things like this.

ON: Yeah they did.

HF: I specifically don't recall when they moved down, but we could get that date I'm sure.

ON: Well Bob Thueson is the one that moved the springs from off on the hill to where the present location is now. And I can't remember either what year that was, but that hasn't been too many years ago.

HF: Now is it your understanding that to this warm water, hot water, they definitely had to add cool cold water?

ON: No I don't think they had to add any.

HF: Up on the hill?

ON: I don't think that they added any cool water to it; in fact, I don't think that far up on the hill they didn't have any cold water. And I don't think they – the time they fill that big pool up down in the lower end would be cool enough for them to swim in and if you really wanted to take a hot bath you could come right up there where its coming out of the pipe.

MN: Merritt adds cold water to it now.

ON: He does. Well I don't think they did up there.

HF: You don't think they did up there.

MN: I don't think they did.

ON: For I don't think there's any cold water up there. I think since they moved it down there they've drilled a well so in case they have to...

HF: Now for the farmers who went up and homesteaded east of Canyon Creek, how many crossing were there to get over on the east side of Canyon Creek?

MN: There's two.

HF: Two crossing. Can you tell me where they are?

MN: Yes. I looked into that quite thoroughly. They say the first – now Casey Casper told me this, so did George Browning and Mrs. Tess Burns, they all agreed exactly on these crossings. There's only two. The first bridge constructed over Canyon Creek was about a quarter of a mile down stream from the mouth of Wrights Creek. It was known as the old Indian Crossing or Rocky Ford. A long dug way was constructed on the west side of the canyon so wagon travel could cross the creek. Later on, down stream and several miles a better dug way and a bridge is constructed to where George Allen had a small store and post office about 1901. Mr. Harris, a man from St. Anthony, Idaho owned a livery stable and a hotel at this location also. It served as a half way house for the freighters from Teton Basin to the Upper Snake River Valley. About 1906 or '07 Mrs. Chris Jensen, divorced, purchased the hotel from Mr. Harris. She hired Tom Terry to care for the livery stable and horses. He was one of the original homesteaders in this area. A few years later they were married. George Allen wanted to retire so he left and Tom and Rebecca Terry built a store on front of the hotel and they also took over the post office. It must have been a busy place around there at that time. Mrs. Tess Burns says that she and two other girls worked there for Mrs. Terry for three years. Around 1915, the Terry's sold our their holdings to Fred Davis who operated it a few years before he sold the keys to Dean Clark. Now fire in 1921 destroyed the store and the hotel. It was never rebuilt. Keith Clark had a small store and had the post office on top of the hill, on the east side of Canyon Creek and a new dug way was

constructed on the west side of Canyon Creek during 1919 and 1921. It took two years to build because the rock work had to be done by hand. A man by the name of Tempest, from Rexburg, contracted the construction of that work. By this time the Model T Ford and others were the means of transportation so a road with a better grade had to be constructed. By 1925, Joe Stevens and his wife operated a small store in the building now used by Wayne for the granary. Ollie Archibald carried the mail from Newdale to the residents on Canyon Creek after that day.

HF: Now with the youngsters coming along among these dry farmers and so worth, why surely they must have had to establish a school so that the kiddies wouldn't have to walk over a mile or two, or so, to school. What can you tell me about the first school at Canyon Creek?

MN: Well I got this information from George Browning and he said that the first school there on Canyon Creek was a frame building not very large. It's the one that Wayne Stevens is using for a barn now, right on the rim of Canyon Creek as the dug way goes down into the creek. And later on there were too many children they decided to build a larger one. They built the rock building now. It was a two room rock building and the teacher lived in one room and held school in the other. And this building now has been purchased by Wayne Stevens and he's remodeled it and it's his home. It's right on the road as you go to Green Canyon Hot Springs just off of Highway 33.

HF: Very good. Now Mrs. Neeley can you tell me about the teachers? If possible give me the earliest one and going on down as your have learned what they are, the teachers.

MN: Well I can't get too much information about the very first teachers. Now Jack Casper said he could remember the teachers. Now he was there between 1915 and 1918. And these are the teachers he remembers: a Ms. Mabel Moore, Margaret Marroll from Idaho Falls, and he said that there was a Stella Jensen about 1910 that taught in there and he thinks she was from over around Jackson, Wyoming. Then in 1922 Bertha Weekes taught there at Canyon Creek and Elsie Law and Goldie Hosner. Now Goldie Hosner married one of the natives up there, Alfred Ziding. And Wayne Ark taught in '27 and Ellen Long about 1930, Wanda Stevens about 1933, Don Wilmore in '35 and '36 and Melvin Jones in '37 and no one is quite sure about this last teacher but they think it is Mrs. Stucki, as the last teacher on Canyon Creek.

HF: Very, very good. Did you personally know any of these teachers?

MN: Yes, I...

HF: And did your youngsters attend school there?

MN: My girls attended school there when Wanda Stevens taught in '33. But Bertha Weekes that taught there in 1922 was a cousin of mine and I think that Aunt Becky had something to do with her going up there. Then Elsie Law and Wayne Ard, I went to high school with them but they taught before my children were old enough to go to school.

HF: Now the years that your youngsters attended, I presume was a school which offered educational background from the first through the eight grades. Is this correct?

MN: Yes. Yes. All the eight grades was in the one room.

HF: And there was just the one teacher for all of eight grades?

MN: Yes. I sent the girls there one year and then after that I brought them to Rexburg.

HF: And you mentioned that the teacher would live in the one room and then the other was used specifically for educational purposes.

MN: Yes.

HF: Have you been in the school?

MN: Oh yes.

HF: Could you describe it just briefly? What did it have in it, the room where the teaching was taught? Could you describe the benches, or the chairs and the walls, the blackboards, the heating facility and just a little comment about it?

MN: Yes in that...

HF: This would be the rock?

MN: In the northwest corner of the building is a large heater, I think they had to stoke it with coal. And on the eastside and the south side was a long black board and the desk were the type made of cast iron – the seat to one desk and the desk for the one behind was all in one unit and they were lined up six lines of them and it was about seven long. They weren't all full. There wasn't too many going to school there.

HF: About how many would you say?

MN: Oh...

HF: 20?

MN: I don't think there was over twenty. I don't think there was that many.

ON: About more like 15.

MN: Yeah, more like 15. There was Wayne Stevens and Frank and Grover Browning. They were in Lee Hubbard, they were the big boys in the upper grades when my girls were in the first grades.

HF: I see.

MN: And there was Leonard Roth had two girls going to school there and George Browning had four or five children going to school there.

HF: Now...

MN: Casey Casper had some children there.

HF: Were either one of you ever called upon to serve on the Board of Trustees?

MN: No.

ON: No we never were.

HF: Now about church. Where did those who were interested in Mormonism go and maybe there were those interested who belonged to the Protestant Church or something. Did they have a separate place? What facilities were available for religious purposes?

MN: Well according to the information I could gather, the two factions went together and built a community building and it was a Branch of the Teton Ward up there were the Mormons – Joe Stevens was their Presiding Elder and Pete Jensen was his counselor. And the other faction, I really don't think they held any church, it was just kind of a community gathering for them to have dances and parties and picnics and meetings of that type.

HF: Was it your understanding then that both the Mormons and the non-Mormons went together in the construction of this so called community building.

MN: Yes. Yes they did.

HF: Did you have idea of the cost of this?

MN: No, nobody ever gave me any information.

HF: Was this a rock building?

MN: No, it's a frame building.

HF: A frame building.

MN: It's a building that sits right on the edge of Canyon Creek now, its being used by Wayne Stevens for a granary.

HF: And this would be on the eastside wouldn't it?

MN: Yeah on the eastside of Canyon Creek.

ON: And south of the road.

HF: And now prior to the construction of this so called community building, were church services held at the old school?

MN: Yes.

HF: I'd like to ask you just another question or two about the Canyon Creek itself. After these various little tributaries added there spring runoff into the main part, main channel of Canyon Creek, it became quite a little stream didn't it Os going down to your place?

ON: Oh you bet. It was really a wicked creek there earlier in the – till along up until the end of about July it was a lot of water in that creek, well at that time.

HF: Now as that stream flows into Teton Creek is is there quite a drop or does it flow at a kind of even keel?

ON: Well it would be quite a drop. Now I didn't think it had that much a drop to it until these fellows come up talking about the dam that they're putting in on the Teton River and they said it wouldn't back the water up, I think about two and a half miles up Canyon Creek and at one time they said it was going to back the water clear up to Green Canyon Hot Springs, but now they claim it will only back it up two an a half miles up Canyon Creek. So if that's the case then 300 foot of water down there at the dam it would have to have quite a drop.

HF: Is that what they say that the depth would be 300 feet.

ON: Around 300 feet.

MN: The dam will be 385 feet.

HF: The dam itself will that they are going to construct?

ON: Yes.

HF: Now how far is the site of the dam going to be west of Canyon Creek mouth, as it flows into Teton River?

ON: Well I'd say about four miles.

HF: About four miles.

ON: Wouldn't?

MN: I have been told ...

ON: Well four or five miles would be pretty close.

HF: Do you have any idea what the approximate width of that canyon is at the mouth from wall to wall?

MN: Of Canyon Creek?

HF: Uh-huh, of Canyon Creek where the stream reaches the Teton River.

MN: You mean at the top?

HF: Yes at the top, from wall to wall. Would it be...

ON: I think it would be a half a mile across it. Wouldn't it?

MN: I don't think so.

ON: It's...

HF: I was going to suggest to you, would it be 1,000 feet? That would be a fifth of a mile. Would it be 2,000 feet? Fifteen hundred feet?

ON: Well it'd be around 1,500 feet I'm pretty sure.

HF: About how deep would it be from the top of the rim say right vertically down to the water?

MN: Well now they say that the Teton River is 615 feet, vertical drop.

ON: Straight up and down.

HF: You mean from the...

MN: From the rim to the bottom of the river, vertically, 615 feet. Now the dam is going to be 385 feet high. But you see that Canyon is not going to be full of water. You take 385 from the 615 and then you've only got about two thirds of that canyon full of water. Now Canyon Creek, where Canyon Creek comes into the river that would be about the same height. I'd said it was 615 feet vertically drop.

HF: It's that deep.

MN: That deep.

HF: That's fantastic isn't it? Now as you go further south the canyon in dimension lessens, as you go further south and your vertically drop wouldn't be near as great.

MN: No.

HF: Now for example at the point of the bridge, where the bridge now crosses I think someone has advised me that it's a 110 feet from the bridge down to the water.

MN: Yeah, I think that's about right.

HF: And I'm not sure the width of the bridge but one could ascertain that and get that.

MN: Did you ever find out when that bridge was constructed?

HF: Mr. Zollinger went in there in the fall of 1929 and commenced to put his footings in and haul his materials there but he didn't get all of the cement – I don't think all the cement was poured. And he had to prepare a little shoot affair to run his cement down and so on and he was quite proud of that. But apparently he did his job and finished his job as the builder of the bridge by the spring and early summer of 1930. Now I'm not sure when they grated, they may have done some work to grate it so they could start using the bridge right along in there, then of course maybe you can tell me the story, if you people know, how it got burned down. I've bet you've heard it a hundred times.

ON: Yeah.

HF: Os why don't you tell us how it got burned down.

ON: Well I think that at that time Perry Hinckley was a farmin' some of that ground up there on both sides of the – in fact, I think Perry Hinckley when he would come up there to farm, I think he was farming with his daddy-in-law, that would be Mr. Stevens, Joe Stevens. He was us there burning some weeds right next to the bridge and I don't think that he figured that oil on the bridge, nobody maybe would have thought about that but anyways that's what caused the fire and so Perry Hinckley...

HF: From burning the weeds it caught onto the bridge.

ON: Yeah.

HF: And that was a wooden deck bridge, wasn't it?

ON: With wooden deck, with oil...

HF: Saturated oil.

ON: Well I think it was kind of an asphalt and they laid in on there in layers and then after they did that then they pored oil on top of it just like they fix the highways. And it had plenty of stuff and you know that fire was so hot in a lot of places that it warped the frame of that bridge; there's some of those beams that are sagging there, but they said it would hold.

HF: Now do you people, can you people just from guessing and estimating give me an idea of when that bridge was burned down?

MN: Bud Browning told me it was '38, when it was burned.

HF: Then the Highway Department turned around and built another one.

ON: Well all they had to do was re-floor it.

HF: Only it was with cement this time.

ON: Yeah.

HF: Was it done as you recall quite quickly?

MN: Oh yes.

ON: They didn't do her in one summer. I think it took the biggest part of the summer though to do it. For we was using the old dug way again while they – we couldn't travel, we had to go back down around...

HF: Well now if he was burning weeds, the weeds probably were burned in the fall of the year or in the spring of the year?

ON: I think it was in the spring of the year.

HF: When he burned the weeds? And so by that fall again they had the bridge rebuilt.

ON: Yeah.

HF: I suppose by fall.

ON: I think so.

HF: And you, from one estimate was that it was in 1938.

MN: Yeah, that's what Bud Browning told me. He said he could remember going down there and hob-knobbing around with the fellers that were building it and then how old he was. And he gave me that date yesterday.

HF: How important to you was the construction of this bridge, in your own personal feeling and experience?

ON: Oh boy, it was one of the greatest things they had up in there for – well you know, you take in the spring of the year and you was trying to get up and down that dug way there and the rest of the road would be all covered in snow and it would be a good snow road. And then you would have to pull down that dug way and you'd have to pull up your loads on bear ground from one end to the other side. So that bridge was really a life saver.

HF: It was a real nuisance. Was it a frightening experience Myrtle, you as a young bride going up there, traveling down that dug way in a Model T Ford or whatever kind of a car you used?

MN: Well I wondered what kind of a driver I was riding with a causally.

HF: Oh you mean you didn't drive yourself?

MN: No, not down that [inaudible]?

HF: You mean you were afraid to.

MN: Yes, that's too sharp a curve.

HF: You think this is typically true of most women, they just didn't – it was a horror to them to go out. The Teton Basin people they just didn't like to go out there.

MN: Yeah, if it hadn't been for the dug way there would have been a lot more travel I think.

ON: Well that dug way was the talk of the country, you know. You couldn't load for the rest of the road, you had to load for the dug way.

MN: The dug way, for the bear dug way.

ON: You had to load so you could pull it up the dug way and you couldn't load for the rest of the road for the rest of the road would be perfect but when you got to the dug way then that was your problem.

HF: Well now as you came from the west and wanted to get over on the east side, as you turned off to go down to the dug way, this would be just south of the bridge.

ON: That's right.

HF: A quarter of a mile or thereabouts? Would it be a quarter mile south?

ON: No, where that bridge – when we went up there we was going up and down that dug way and you come right straight down off before they made that hair pin dug way, you'd come right straight down the hill from the west it was right steep right straight off. And then on the east side it was kind of a long dug way and that was when it would be bare. You'd have to ruffle off your sleighs or your wagons on the west side and then you'd hope you could pull it up on the east side.

HF: Now on this dug way as you came and left the road to go down into the canyon on the west side would you go to the right, that is would you go to the south or to the north to get down to the creek?

ON: You'd go right straight east till you crossed the bridge.

HF: Almost vertically right off?

ON: Yep. And then you'd turn and then that dug way went right off to the north till you got up on top and then you'd turned and went right east and then hit the main road there again.

HF: I see. Now to your recollection, Mr. Neeley, what type of a bridge had they constructed to cross over the creek?

ON: Well it was a cement bridge and it was an old bridge and they'd haul the dirt or gravel on it and it was a really high bridge. It would take care of all of the flood river that come down Canyon Creek. It was really a big bridge.

HF: A good solid bridge. And the site for the so called "halfway house," would that be on further south of the cement bridge, or further north?

ON: It would be to the north of it. Just right to the – when you almost when right close to the barn to cross the bridge, it was just right as close as you could get there.

HF: In other words, the hotel and all these facilities lay on the east side of the creek itself?

ON: On the west side.

HF: Oh, on the west side.

ON: On the west side.

HF: It lay on the west side.

ON: And on the north side of the road.

HF: And on the north side.

ON: And then till they put the new dug way in to come down on it instead of using that steep part they made a dug way down there. And it had a hair pin turn in it and I guess that would take care of these here cars when they got them. And so it would come down east and then it'd turn and come back off to the west and it went right past the barn there that they had there to put there horses in.

HF: Would they ever turn the animals out in the summer time, you know, at the dug way down there at the half way house to feed? Was there feed along there in the bottom part of the canyon?

ON: No not too much. They had the barn room there for them, but about that time when we were out there that was, it wasn't doing to good. They were kind of doing away with that half way house.

HF: Now as we close this I want to learn something about the fishing and the hunting opportunities for the homesteaders. Was there fish to be had in Canyon Creek?

ON: Well there was fish to be had in Canyon Creek but I think their best fishing was in the Teton River. Now if you was going to walk down that canyon to fish, I don't think you'd want to walk down on Canyon Creek for it was rockier and hard to get down to and there wasn't any trails and it was really rough to get down onto Canyon Creek. But there were trails down on the Teton River and I think that's where most of them went to fish.

HF: To fish.

MN: Up Canyon Creek [inaudible].

HF: And were there more fishing then on further south on the upper part?

MN: Yeah, Most of it ...

[End of tape]