

Voices from the Past

Frank Keefer

By Frank Keefer

June 20, 1970

Tape #37

Oral Interview conducted by Harold Forbush

Transcribed by Wendy Crofts September 2006

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Brigham Young University- Idaho

Harold Forbush: The available facilities of the Upper Snake River Valley Historical society makes it possible to transfer from reel-to-reel tape onto a C60 cassette. The interview that follows and this is being done by Harold Forbush, the technician of this process on this fifth day of April 1984.

Oral History of the Upper Snake River Valley. The time is eight a.m. Saturday the twentieth day of June 1970 and I'm in the home of Mr. Fred Keefer, of 633 Twelfth, Idaho Falls. With me is Mr. Jerry Glenn of the Ricks College Library. And we're here for the purpose of chatting with Mr. Keefer on early days of Eagle Rock and his experiences with law enforcement in the early days and of Bonneville County in other related experiences. Mr. Keefer we usually commence these interviews with a question to you. Will you kindly state your full name and the date and place where you were born?

Fred Keefer: Fred W. Keefer. Born in Eagle Rock, Idaho January 29th 1891.

HF: Now Mr. Keefer, what is your present address? Of course I've given it at 633, and over the years how would you like to characterize your occupation?

FK: You mean starting from the beginning?

HF: Well, just in a word or two, what is your occupation? What has been your occupation?

FK: My main occupation has been twenty-one years in sheriff's office in Bonneville County.

HF: Well that's good enough. That's fine and of course as we go through the tape we will realize that you've been engaged in a lot of extra curricular activities which you will share with us this morning. Something about your father? His full name and something about his background if you would share that with us?

FK: My father was William Walker Keefer, born in Franklin County near Cambridge, Pennsylvania. He was born in 1852 and passed away in 1940 in Idaho Falls. He left home in 1878, landed in Omaha, Nebraska where he learned the carpenter trade where he worked for the Union Pacific Railroad. He was sent from there by the railroad officials to come to Eagle Rock to build shops, depots and other buildings for the Utah Northern Railroad.

HF: Did the Keefer family have origin maybe in England or one of those European countries?

FK: We could have had.

HF: They probably have as a family been in the United States for a number of years. Do you have anything beyond your father's?

FK: My older sister was back in Pennsylvania one time and she said she found an awful lot of German books up in the attic. I think they were what they call Pennsylvania Dutch. That's the reason I'm so slow most the time.

HF: Well now, on your mother's side just briefly. Do you know her name, her maiden name, and where she came from, a little bit about her background?

FK: My mother's maiden name was Dora Virginia Shoemaker who was born in Cambric, Pennsylvania 1857. Passed away in 1938. She taught school for many years and was county school superintendent in Shamrenburg at the age of 18.

HF: Fred if one were to endeavor to mention a family trait on your father's side, on the Keefer side, what might be suggested? In the way of the musical talent or a leadership talent or working with your hands or some family trait that seems to have carried through from father to son?

FK: I wanted to finish something Harold about my mother.

HF: Oh! I beg your pardon. Go ahead.

FK: I will always think of the gift my mother had. When we left Pennsylvania at a very early age, and all alone, landed in Abilene, Kansas on the way to meet my father in Eagle Rock. This was in 1884, just four years after the outlaws run out of Abilene and Wild Bill Hickok was killed by Jack McCall.

HF: That's interesting item isn't it. Anything else about your mother?

FK: Well, she was quite a writer. A good manager of the house. She had seven children.

HF: Did she teach school at all after coming out to Eagle Rock?

FK: No.

HF: Now, with reference to the question I asked a moment ago, relative to any family traits. Can you suggest anything of this nature on your father's side or on your mother's side?

FK: Well there was a little incident that happened many years ago and the city of Idaho Falls wanted some of our land north of the city. And father and I went to one of the councilman here and I've never forgot what the councilman said. He said, "You Keefer men are not speculators or gamblers." He says, "You're the backbone of this city and we'll see that you get every dime this property is worth." And by the way when the council met next night, the same councilman got up and said, "I don't think that land is worth any more than what taxes they paid on it."

HF: I don't suppose it'd be essential if we get his name.

Jerry Glenn: You mentioned him a minute ago, he was working for you.

HF: Well, now it was then the railroad affiliation and the duties on the railroad that brought your people here into Eagle Rock?

FK: That's right.

HF: Your father came here by assignment to build the yards and the facilities for the railroad.

FK: Right.

HF: And what date did he arrive? Would you state that again? I can't recall it now.

FK: He arrived in 1879.

HF: 1879. At that time the community was called Eagle Rock, was it not?

FK: That's right. Eagle Rock was not changed to Idaho Falls until August 26th 1891.

HF: 1891. Huh, that's an interesting fact that I wasn't aware of.

FK: My oldest brother Phil and Frank and I were born in Eagle Rock.

HF: Now were there other members of the family born and came with your parents?

FK: No.

HF: Well your dad arrived alone didn't he?

FK: That's right.

HF: And your mother followed subsequently?

FK: That's right.

HF: Is it your understanding Fred that Eagle Rock was pretty much built by railroad people, railroad interests?

FK: That's right. The railroad shops were started a few years after that and moved out in 1880 to Pocatello. The population dropped down from two thousand to four hundred people.

HF: Is it your understanding that the shops actually were designed by the UPP people to be located at Eagle Rock rather than at Pocatello?

FK: I think so.

HF: In the first instance. Then by 1880 the railroad people had concluded that Pocatello was the better hub for central location for the the shops.

FK: That's right.

HF: Well that's rather interesting.

FK: Father had the job supervising the moving of the shops.

HF: Did he assist also in relocation and construction there at Pocatello?

FK: No.

HF: What facilities had they constructed here in Idaho Falls before they were moved to Pocatello, as far as you know?

FK: Well all I remember was the depot, on the south side of the town. The railroad roundhouse was where the new apartments are now located on the north end of Park Avenue. This building was later used as a show house for traveling shows, but that was the first roundhouse.

HF: Well now, of course, the Narrow Gate Railroad from Ogden came up through here in about 1878-79.

FK: Yes.

HF: It was built by Utah people as I understand it. This Narrow Gate Road.

FK: That's right. It was called Utah Northern Railroad. It ran from Corinne, Utah to Butte, Montana.

HF: To Butte, Montana.

FK: By the way Father said when he started on that railroad, it was only sixty miles long and when he quit the railroad it was 460 miles long. And he built every depot: fashion depot, freight depot, and every water tank on the road.

HF: Well when you say four hundred and some odd miles long, would that be the distance from Corrine to Butte? It wouldn't be that distance would it?

FK: I wouldn't know on that. But that's what he had in one of his letters. Father was a man that would never talk to ya. We found about fifty letters that he had written in the early 80's from Montana to my mother back in Pennsylvania, and he had all his experiences in there, things we had never heard of. It was very interesting bunch of letters. He said, "I must leave in the morning to go to American Falls. I'm putting a bridge across the Snake River." Things we never heard of. I have all mother's back.

HF: Well was the Union Pacific then involved with the interest in this Northern Utah line? I mean was it all combined together?

FK: They evidently were, because otherwise they wouldn't have sent my father and my uncle Gabe from Nebraska out here to work on [inaudible].

HF: Your Father and his brother?

FK: Yes.

HF: Oh yeah.

FK: Gabe Keefer.

HF: I see. Now Fred could you give us a little information of your own personal experiences and your knowledge of early conditions and life here in the community of Eagle Rock?

FK: Well, my twin brother and I were born in Eagle Rock, Idaho in 1891, same day as President McKinley and also the same day as my oldest brother Phil. So Frank, Phil and I all have the same birthday. My folks lived on Water Avenue in the third house that was built east of the railroad tracks. The morning that we were born the snow was six feet deep on the streets. My father had built a six-foot picket fence around our yard and they said the snow was even with the top. The purpose of the high fence was to keep the starving cattle out from getting into the yard. They used to tell me about hard winters. The year 1888 was one of the worst winters on record. It was one of the great blizzards that came down from Canada driving thousands of cattle and wild game here to die in the streets. I heard this memory of Eagle Rock is what my mother said. She was asked what first interested her and she said it was the hundreds of cattle and watching them go to potholes along the Snake River.

When I was five or six years old my father hired a limber rig and took us all up to what is well known John's Hole. There was an enormous dredge located there. It was at least forty feet in height and was sure an inspiring sight. It had been used to dredge the river from Calamity Point to here. My father had been hired to dismantle it.

To say that our childhood was a normal one, would be putting it lightly. We were born before the days of the automobile and the electric light. We bought our water from a man with the name Tom Nixon who delivered it twice a week at fifty cents a barrel. In the

spring the streets were two feet deep with mud. What sidewalks there were, were made of wood. We had no TV or telephones, so you youngster can see things were a little rougher in those days.

The railroad was built in 1880; the telephone was invented in 1899. The railroad shops were moved to Pocatello in 1887. The population dropped from then to four hundred. These were tough days in Eagle Rock; a boy had to do a lot of scheming to make a dollar then. It was quite a sight to see cowboys riding up and down the streets shooting six guns. The zone keeper on Eagle Rock Street, which was the main part of town, told two tough riding cow hands that if they shot his lights out again, he would blow their heads off. And then, one full of cactus juice shot them out again and the zone keeper was good to his word, killing them both.

The law enforcement officers, which were few, were not only tough, but sometimes cruel. I remember a relative of mine telling me about a man from Montana who was wanted on a minor charge. The man with a partner landed here in the winter and hid in a straw stack some miles from here. The officers surprised them shooting one of them and instead of bringing his body here, he brought just his head in a gunny sack which was placed on a bar on Eagle Rock Street.

My father was a carpenter and had his shop on the corner of Park and Broadway where the Pharaoh Store now is. There was no corner here then so my father made cobbles. I can still see them on the rafters of his shop. They were sure nicely made with lead [inaudible] on the outside and the inside was lined with lace. Very seldom did my father get anything for making them as there was very little money. One day, Frank and I were in the shop when some men came in and said that a man had been run over by the train on Eagle Rock Street. We both went along with the men and found that the poor fellow had been kicked off the train for bumming a ride. Both of his legs were cut off and he had bled to death. And then we carried the torso out; we each carried a leg. We laid him down in the shavings and father got busy making a box for him. I have never forgotten that sight and will always remember that he had red underwear on.

I started to tell you how hard it was to make a dollar in those days, but I must tell you how we did make some money. Where the California Packing Company now is across from the sports park was a large old-fashioned mill where the farmers brought in their grain to be ground into flour. These farmers nearly always had a crate of chicken in their wagon which they would sell to the restaurant. Some of these chickens got out of their crates and so when nobody was looking, we helped them out. It got so there was quite a flock of them. We went over one morning, Phil, Frank, and I, and my oldest brother went ahead on the old bridge and crossed the sports park dropping a little grain as he went along. Frank and I brought up the rear. My father opened the doors to the shop and we herded them in and caught forty five chickens. Now we had both chickens and eggs to sell. The chicken business didn't last too long. A new family came to town and brought their best chicken with them. The chickens in those days were the game variety and liked to fight. These boys brought their best fighters over one day and we had a chicken fight. My mother was very tender hearted and she never liked to see anything hurt. When she saw

what was going on, she made us quit the chicken business. Then we started raising pigeons. We had quite a demand for the young ones, you know, and the squabs. We got fifty cents a pair for them. A man approached me one day and said he would take all that we would raise if we would take them to the river bridge near what is now the Sportsman's Park. This park, by the way, was not named until 1939 when I got permission from Chase Park, then mayor of Idaho Falls, to name it. Well we took these squabs to the end of the bridge every Saturday. We didn't know then what he did with them, but we found out later.

This town at one time had a notorious red light district on it. I remember one morning my father saying, "Well they rolled another old man in the river last night." On the south side of the river bridge, was another isle which I will come to later. I mentioned the words 'red light' as they are called by the sophisticated people, or at least they so make you believe. But nevertheless, they were there. It got so bad on the isle that finally the city fathers ordered them off. Some of them were lodged on Eagle Rock Street, but their main place of residence was the rock on Capital Avenue and A Street, running as far west as Memorial Drive. Now for the other building on the isle, that I have mentioned which was south of the business was the first city jail. My father and I were in the Dick Chamber Saloon on Eagle Rock Street about nine thirty p.m. I couldn't have been very old, I don't know yet why I was there. But we were both there and ran in with the sheriff of the jail. The small frame building was sure burning. I remember telling the sheriff to hurry and open the doors, the men inside would be burned up. The sheriff said well he'd set it on fire. We got him out and rolled on the ground to put out the fire. I don't know what happened to the poor fella. The next day father told us boys to get some sacks and carry the burnt nails to our home on Water Avenue. We carried several sacks of them and they were burnt pretty bad and as light as a feather. I told father that I didn't think they were good for anything and he said yes I know. I wanted something for you boys to do.

HF: By way of comment at that point Fred, what did he have you do with those nails?

FK: We threw them away.

HF: You didn't construct anything, or attempt to?

FK: No, they were absolutely worthless.

HF: I see.

FK: Before I go to the next city jail, I must tell you about an experience my brother and I had when we were five years old. The Wrigley Brothers Circus was playing west of the railroad and south of the old mill. Father took us to see it. When we got to the railroad crossing west of the railroad bridge I told him that we couldn't step across the ties on the track. There was no plank there then like there is now. We were only five and small for our age. Father never looked back so we crawled on our hands and knees all the way across.

The second city jail was a small frame building which was located back of where the Cress Nosses store now is. My father did most of the city's carpentry work. The first goof was lodged in jail one night and escaped, and was never recaptured. How he got out was particularly peculiar. There were two cells, but he was not locked in either one. On top of the cells was a large ladder, why it was there no one could say. Anyway he took this rock and poked a hole through the shavings and the shingles and got out. When I was sent to repair, I cut a board the size of the whole and laid it in without nailing it. All I did was nail the shingles. I thought if I was ever put in jail I would know how to get out. I was never put in, though I should have been many times.

In the early days we always had a sandstorm once a week which usually lasted for three days. You couldn't see across the street because there were no trees or grass and very little coloration to hold the sand. Those days my brother and I would go to the Indian camping grounds. The camping grounds were on Crow Creek near the river. And also the slaughter house. The Indians use to get the hearts, livers, and unborn animals to eat. They often asked us to eat, but we seldom did. Those were some of my happiest days. We learned how to tan hides, make bead belts and moccasins and other things. One morning when we got there, we saw a very large gathering of Indians and tents. The tents were of better quality than we had seen before. I learned later who and why these Indians were there. They were the Lemhi Indians, numbering four hundred seventy four. They were moved by the government in 1909 to Fort Hall Reservation.

HF: Fred, by way of comment once more, where is Crow Crick from here, and how far would you have to travel, you know, to reach that point, you and your brother?

FK: Well it's not a half a mile, but it's over a quarter, north of my home here.

HF: What stream is it? Is it designated some other way now?

FK: No it's the same. Crow Creek runs adjacent to the city, comprised at one time, one of the largest sections of the city. My father was offered that whole addition for ten dollars which he didn't take up.

HF: How large was the city of Eagle Rock? Would it be in the vicinity of Lava Street today? I mean it was in that section of town, wasn't it?

FK: Yes.

HF: How many blocks square would it have been? Do you have any way of knowing? Comparing it? It didn't cover a very large area did it?

FK: Not over three or four or five blocks.

HF: Well that's very interesting on your journal your reading is there some more there that you could share with us about the early days of Eagle Rock?

FK: Well my mother used to get mad when they're laying out streets and would uncover a skeleton. She would say why don't they have someone that was here in the early eighties when the people were buried wherever it was handy. Whether you know it or not, the first cemetery was south west of what is now Capital Avenue by the river. Although there had been several skeletons found near town. The best one I remember, not so long ago was uncovered behind what now is Penny's store. I would have liked to have known how he came to be buried there. Because he still had on his bones and his legs a small pair of cowboy boots.

Now I read an article awhile back from what he'd written about the livery stable but they were a long ways from the truth. He said the first livery stable was on Capital Avenue, well there was half a dozen before that. The first livery stable I remember was on the back of what was the Johnson Bakery in the Sportsman's Park run by Sam Taylor and Anderson. But we won't go into the livery stable, I have them written all down here.

HF: That might be interesting though. Do you recall a man by the name of Jack Anderson?

FK: Yeah.

HF: Was he responsible for the construction of the Anderson Bridge across the Snake?

FK: He was some relation to him, yes.

HF: What did they have in the early days? Didn't they first have a ferry to ferry people across?

FK: The first ferry was located nine miles north of the city. Eagle Rock was named from a large eagle nest on a rock. The ferry was later moved down to Eagle Rock to cross the Sportsmen's Park where you still see these buttons. This first bridge they put in there washed out and a couple years later they rebuilt the bridge.

HF: At the same place?

FK: Same place.

HF: Now that's where the bridge is now as it crosses West Broadway?

FK: No it was south of there.

HF: South of there.

FK: You can see the old buttons there on the Sportsman's Park there if you went down.

HF: Well let's see then, I'm not too familiar with this as maybe I should be, but the Farmer First Bridge then was south of the present bridge, at the west end of Broadway?

FK: That's right.

HF: Do you remember anything about its construction, the first one? A lot of logs went into it?

FK: It was built out of logs but the first one was washed out and a few years later they rebuilt another one there. And they called it a toll bridge, and the toll out of it was terrible high. It was only supposed to run for 20 years, but after 24 years W.H.B. Crow, one of the oldest pioneers we had in them days went to Boise and had the toll discontinued so it was open to the public again.

HF: Who constructed that? The county or the state?

FK: This first bridge?

HF: I mean the toll bridge.

FK: Talyor and Anderson as far as I know.

HF: Was that the county or what type of government or what authority constructed that and determined what the rate to the toll would be and so on?

FK: I don't know how to answer that. I know the date they put in the bridge and they charged the toll for crossing it because there was thousands of horses and cattle acrossed there all the time.

JG: Apparently, then it was a private enterprise in place.

FK: Yeah. You're right.

HF: Yeah you think it was?

FK: Yeah.

HF: You have any idea, Fred, what the rates were, just to give us an idea?

FK: No. No, I do not.

HF: Now on this rock, Eagle Rock, the nest of the eagle or whatever it was, where is that located with reference to this present bridge at the end of Broadway? Is that futher north or south?

FK: Well it was supposed to be nine miles north of the present bridge.

HF: Can you describe the rock or something about the physical features of it?

FK: No.

HF: This may sound kinda silly to you. I mean, I'm just interested in knowing about its parents and what it looked like.

FK: No, I never looked at it. I'd like to tell you another experience my brother and I had in the early days. In the Lava beds west of town, my twin brother and I rode out there one day and found a perfect cone where the lava had come out of the ground. I went down into this cone one day and was sure surprised to see how large it really was and looking around I found the skulls of several animals that had fallen in and couldn't get out. I gathered several of them and put them into my shirt. But when I started to crawl out I couldn't make it and my brother had to go back to town and get several more ropes to pull me out. And I'll say this for him, he took his time and never came back until the next day. I was doing alright though. I found a porcupine not to far gone and roasted a hind leg with some twigs I found. We after all these years, about six of them, have some of these skulls. I'll show you one in the back room. I tried many a time to find this cone, but I was never able to. We learned to ride horses at a very early age, and spent many a summer on the Fort Hall Reservation buying ponies from the Indians and bringing them here, breaking them and selling them. One bunch we brought here had a horse among them that had six feet. We took him to the fairground here and exhibited him. We charged a dime to see him. About this time we got restless and decided to see Yellowstone Park. This was in 1910.

Tape Ends

HF: Tape two continuing the interview with Fred Keefer.

HF: That meant that you were about nineteen years old?

FK: That's right.

HF: Okay. Go ahead and tell us the story about going to the park.

FK: We saddled up a couple of horses and with five dollars in our pocket started out. After we left St. Anthony there was very little habitation. I remember the Sherwood place, and also the Tauty, Utilly Rodem Gun Flint known as the Railroad Ranch. We slept one night in the Sherwood's barn and one night at the Railroad Ranch. Through the park we stepped out into the open. We lived on Fig Newtons and sardines. This was before the day of the auto. Tourists were taken by busses known as the Willey Stage Company. The park was patrolled by park rangers. We camped one night by the Madison River and I remember asking my brother if he didn't think if this would be a good place to hold up if we still had our guns. But he persuaded me from this; it would be folly. In coming out of the south entrance I will never forget how mad the guard at the gate was. He said, "How in hell did you kids go through there with two loaded guns?" I said there was no one here so we went right on in. When we got to West Yellowstone we were down to our last can

of sardines so we rode a few brons there and got enough money to come home. We were gone ten days. There was one instance while in the park I forgot to mention. We were sitting under a pine tree during a downpour of rain when a young lady came over and said, "Wouldn't you boys like to come inside our building and listen to some singing?" Well there wasn't anything else to do so we said we'd go. When we got inside we found that we were inside their church as it was Sunday, which we had forgotten. I think this was an LDS church. What made it unusual was we both were wearing large wooly chaps, spurs and six shooters. But we didn't back out and enjoyed the service.

HF: Fred at that point can you recall in response to my question, some of the old attractions at that time, that seemed to be well remembered of the park? For example, what comments might you have about the geyser, Old Faithful, and some of the other things that you remember specifically?

FK: Well I don't remember too many instances, but I do remember one thing. My brother standing there by the Old Faithful when a man walked up and said, "If that's all I've got to see here, I've lost my money's worth." Just then another man walked up from New York and he said, "Boys, wonderful, wonderful, wonderful."

HF: About how many days did it take to go through the park?

FK: Ten days.

HF: Ten days. And you followed, I guess, what they call the loop?

FK: Yes.

HF: Going through Yellowstone and coming back out of West Yellowstone?

FK: Yes. That year I went to the mountains and took up a homestead and ran cattle for twenty-five years. And then sold it out and came to town, worked for two years for the Bonneville County Sportsman's Association, raising fish. This phase of my life I won't dwell on except to tell one of my experiences. One of the city councilmen came to the park and said a group of men from Los Angeles was coming here. They were chamber of commerce men from Los Angeles. He wanted me to get a horse and ride south of town and meet the bus. He said the bus would be in at five o'clock in the morning and for me to hold them up. I didn't like the idea but finally agreed to it. I met the bus and stopped it with a couple of rounds from my forty five. They came out with their hands up and started dropping their money into my hat. I was doing pretty good until the mayor and chief of police and others came onto the scene. These men were a fine bunch of fellas. They said it was not only the most unique meeting, but the most welcome one they had had. I got several letters from them wanting me to write to them. I'm sorry I never did. That fall I went to work in the Bonneville County Sheriff's Office.

HF: Now say, this would have been the fall of 1930?

FK: You mean when I held the bus up?

HF: When you started working for the sheriff's office.

FK: The fall of 1939.

HF: Fall of 1939. And you work for the sheriff's office pretty much off and on or was it pretty much continuous?

FK: Steady.

HF: Steady.

FK: Same shift for 21 years, the night shift, where I got all the troubles.

HF: This took you up to 1960?

FK: 1959, I believe, or 1960.

HF: 1960, 21 years. As a member of the sheriff's office, undoubtedly you, Fred, you learned a little about the background of the sheriff's office. That is who some of the noted sheriffs who preceded you and some of those who personneled the the office over the years. Would you make some comments about the early history of the Sheriff's office in Bonneville County?

FK: Well the first sheriff I remember was Charlie Krittler, but I only worked for him once. He called me in one day and told me to take a paper over to the judge who had his office in the VLM building on Broadway. I took the man over and the judge says, "Fred what's he charged with?" And I says, "Drunkenness." The judge studied [inaudible] a minute and he says, "Prisoner released." After the man left I asked the judge what was the reason he turned him loose. And he says, "Well I was drunk myself last night and I didn't feel like fining him."

HF: Ok Fred, any other comments?

FK: Well, I only worked for Mr. Krittler just once then I was working for the Sportsman at the time. Sheriff Neppin was the sheriff and he kept coming down and using me all the time on cases, so I finally quit and went to work for him. He was a right good sheriff. After he resigned why Sheriff Dean Wilken took over and between elections, Bob Geyser took over. I think Bob was only in about three or four months and the last sheriff I worked for was Al Hessen.

HF: Those earlier sheriffs did they inclined to be pretty rough? Did they wear a gun and were they all rather untrained in the sophistry you might say of law enforcement work or just how would you comment about them?

FK: Well they were really smart on their law, but they never did carry their gun. I was the one that always carried the gun. I was always the one that took them up to court. It was quite a ways from the county jail upstairs and I took some very dangerous men up there to be tried before the judge. I remember one in particular, he was a Cajun out of Florida and I knew how dangerous he was. He cut a man up in the jail there pretty bad one night. Well as usual the sheriff says, "Take him up to court." I took him out of the jail and now I said, "You stay three feet ahead of me. No more and no less." I got up there and the judge gave him five years in the penitentiary. We started out the door and I said, "The same rule goes." And I got him back and locked him up, but he almost killed a man over in the state penn I found out afterwards. I had a lot of dangerous men in there. I looked it up one time, that there'd been men confined in that jail from every penitentiary in the United States, even Alcatraz.

HF: Actually you're talking about transients coming through, individuals coming through by escape?

FK: That's right.

HF: Did you have any experience with local men that turned out to be pretty desperate?

FK: Yeah, we had several of those.

HF: Now can you tell us something about the court house as it now is, when it was constructed?

FK: I think it was built in 1912. The trouble with that jail down there, and Sheriff Wilkin was a great man from the county. He always held down expenses. Well, he had one of the poorest setups there for a jail that I ever saw. I coaxed him for years to put in a cage right inside of the door, like these other states have. He finally put one in, but he didn't put anything over the top, so I'd open the second door and look up above to see who was standing up there with something to hit me with. Finally got that done, and he welded the bars around there, but they were so weak that one night a fellow pulled one of these bars loose where it was welded, and he was a Mexican and he slipped through the bars and hit me over the head with a two-by-four off of the table. Then he and another fellow got out. So we caught them the same day, but when they got back to the office, from the hunt why, the FBI had the two in the office. Of course, I had done something that probably wasn't right when I tore into the Mexican and gave him a few good ones on the jaw and when the sheriff says, "Get a hold of Fred, get a hold of Fred." One of the police men says "Let him go!" I hit him from behind. So we sent those two over to the penn. I've been hit several times over the head with iron bars and so forth. One of the state patrolmen said, "You always did have a hard head."

HF: Have you've been sent as a law enforcement officer after men, bringing them back from some of the state expedition proceedings that you had?

FK: Yeah. Nearly all of the expeditions of the western country. I think the farthest I was east; I went with the sheriff back to Sandstone, Minnesota. We got a man that escaped out of the jail by cutting a hole. And it's hard to believe but the hole was only 12 by fourteen inches. We measured it several times. But anyway he got through it and headed back to Minnesota. That was one of the farthest trips I made, but I have brought them out of San Francisco, that was a tough old sergeant on death bed in San Francisco. "WHERE'ER YOU FROM?" "Idaho Falls." He turned to the sheriff, "Have you got a gun?" The sheriff says, "I never carry one." He said, "My deputy always carries one." "Let's see it." So I took it off. "What a pig sticker that is." I didn't tell him the history of this here big old '45 I was carrying at the time. It had killed a [inaudible] man on the Eagle Rock Street one day.

HF: You had to do that?

FK: Well the police did.

HF: One of the police.

FK: That gun got so heavy that couldn't carry it any more and I gave it to my brother. He's got it over in his apartment.

HF: Have you ever had any experience investigating any local murders or anything of this nature?

FK: Oh yes several. I had a funny experience something in Jackson, Wyoming one time. Sheriff Methis and I went up there to get a fellow and the man weighed 230 pounds and he was half drunk, only 25 years old. We got him in a bar, took him over and locked him up in the Jackson Jail. I don't think there'd been a fire in that jail for twenty years, in the winter. About half way up to town, I turned to the sheriff and [inaudible] "Sheriff Methis what did he have on him, when you shook him down?" "We didn't shake him down." I said, "What?!" "No we didn't shake him down." "Let's go back." So we went back and I took a knife off of him and a pint of whiskey. But it was a good thing we went back. He says "I'll sign your exhibition papers, but I wouldn't spend a night in this jail, I'll freeze to death." The funny thing about the fellow was two sheriffs and I went up town and got our dinner and when we got back I said, "I think I'll wash up before I start out. [inaudible] suggest you go down these steps here and turn to your right and you'll find the wash room." Well this man said, "I think I'll wash up too." I thought it was funny that they would let him go down those steps; it was fourteen steps. We went down more steps, I got him back up to the top but he whirled around and jumped the fourteen steps to the basement. There were half a dozen rooms in that basement, and I went through two of three of them and I finally caught him crawling through a two foot hole where they put the coal in the basement. I yelled at him: "Come back." And he made no move so I put the '45 right in the middle of his back, and he came back out with his hands up. So I handcuffed him and took him back up upstairs. Methis, he always liked a good joke, he said, "Hey, I got a pretty good deputy."

HF: Well I'll tell you, you've had a wealth of experience in this tough thing.

FK: Yes and I found out something Harold. I always said that anybody running for sheriff should always spend eight or ten years as a deputy first. When I quit I was still learning something.

HF: I suppose that's true.

FK: Yeah.

HF: Twenty-one years as deputy. Well now you mentioned the night watchmen and night work when the period of our twenty-four hour day most of the troubles did take place, can you comment on any highlights, of any highlighted experience?

FK: Well I took the night shift because I had a lot of property here and I thought I could take care of my property in the day time. But after putting in twelve hours down there I didn't have anything left to work with. There was just too much going. Mental work is worse than physical work.

HF: Over the years, Fred, this collecting of artifacts of the area has been well more than a hobby, I suppose. It's been a real part of your life, extra-curricular part of your life. What got you interested, you and your brother? I suppose we should bring your brother in on this because you fellows were together so much of the time, in your earlier years I presume.

FK: That's right.

HF: What got you interested in making a collection of artifacts?

FK: Well there were days when my brother he got so he spent most of his time in the taxidermy shops so I went to work for my father on these bridges and dams. By the way, my dad built the first dam on the Snake River across from the court house. And I had a lot of this stuff I'd saved over the years. In fact, I never did throw anything away. I've still got my dress that I wore when I was a year old, also my shoes.

HF: Like and old friend of mine Cal Terrington up in the basin, when he passed away he had literally everything that he had brought into the house including the grocer's weekly advertisements. Can of beans and a few of these things like this. He'd saved everything. But you've had occasion to collect a lot of pictures, old pictures of early events and people, personalities. Why don't you tell us and describe some of these for us?

FK: Well if anybody thinks there's no pictures in here they ought to try in this house. I think this frame, I took all the pictures off the wall and washed the walls and washed the pictures and put them back and there were 133 pictures. Every time I went to the sheriff's office they'd always say, "What do you do to put in the time?" I don't have enough of

time. I've got eight rooms here. I do my own cooking and washing and cleaning. I'm always making something.

HF: Now are these pictures of individuals you have known over the years? Pictures of places and things?

FK: They're nearly all scenes of Eagle Rock days. There's a picture up there of the old flour mill, the [inaudible] railroad. There's one of the old Brook's house. There's one of the first city jail and Sportsman's Park. The second water powering plant they had here.

HF: Now where's this power plant you speak of? Where is it located?

FK: North of the swimming pool. It's a city park now.

HF: Eagle Rock, or Idaho Falls at least, had its own power plant initially, didn't it?

FK: Well, as I said, the first power plant was down south of the railroad bridge, close to Sportsman's Park. And the next one, as I said, was on Crow Creek.

HF: I see.

FK: The one on the south of the Sportsman's Park there was built in 1912 when Lowen Carter was the mayor.

JG: Fred I see you have a letter here from President Johnson. You want to read it or make some comment on it? I think that's pretty nice.

FK: Well I kept hearing about LBJ's brand all the time so one day I decided to make him a brand. I made some little branding irons out of heavy wire and I took a cow hide and branded LBJ on it and put it into a nice frame with glass over it and sent it him. He sent me a personal letter, thanking me for it. He said, "This is the kind of gift that I like."

HF: That's interesting.

JG: Fred you said that you had worked for the Bonneville Sportsman's Association for a couple of years. Now were you instrumental in getting the small zoo and the fish hatchery down there, everything started on the island?

FK: Yeah that's true, but my brother's the one that put the museum in there. I done most of the work on the cabin there.

JG: I see.

FK: But I had a lot of fish in there. So I do say that the places when to pieces since I quit it.

JG: The reason I asked you the question Fred as I remember as a boy the first time I visited that park, I think they had a trout in there weighed, according to the man I talked to, 33 pounds. Can you verify that? Was there ever one that large there?

FK: Nope. I don't remember that trout, but I do recall the largest trout ever caught in this part of the country weighed 37 pounds, caught by Pat O'Neal.

JG: What was the largest trout you ever had there at Bonneville?

FK: Oh about six pounds.

JG: About six pounds.

FK: I'll tell you something about them trout.

JG: Well I think that trout they told me was what it was, probably a sturgeon. They ever have Sturgeon there at any time?

FK: Not that I ever heard of, if we did have them in the river. I had a bunch of big trout there weighing six or seven pounds and the pond there for tourists to look at and I had them pretty tame too. A lot of people don't believe this, but Larry Peterson's father Pete was there, he could verify that I had a grinder there in that little house where I ground the meat for these small fish. There were a thousand little holes in them grinders and the only way you could clean them was tapping them on a rock to get the meat out. So I'd tap them on the rock and I noticed these big trout were always waiting for me. So for a few days I didn't feed them, I didn't clean it there. I found somewhere to clean it somewhere else. So then I got some meat and put it in my hand and these trout would swim by and take it out of my hand. A lot of people don't believe this, but it's the truth. I had one trout there that was about seven pounds and had a crooked nose. I called him Old Eli. He got so tame that when I stroked him on the stomach, he'd roll over. One day some tourists came down there and said they'd heard about my tame trout. They wanted to see it. So I told them to stand up above and watch so Eli came up and ate the meat and I stroked him a little bit, and he jumped out of the water on the land. There's a fish story, but this one is true.

HF: Now that is remarkable.

FK: I went down one morning and there wasn't a trout in the place. The hobos had a big feed along the railroad tracks. They'd come in and caught them and cooked them up.

HF: Now you mentioned Fred that you had one time owned the little island out from the Temple and John Holst Bridge in the Snake River and on that you had constructed a home. Is this right? Of your own.

FK: That's true.

HF: Did you live in this home?

FK: Yes. For over 20 years.

HF: How large an island is it? In footage?

FK: Probably three and a half acres.

HF: About three and a half acres.

FK: We cut those logs off of the south fork of the Snake River and I took one at a time behind a row boat over there. There were no motor boats then. I put a lot of money into that place. But I couldn't put up with thieves, vandals.

HF: Come in and take things, and break things?

FK: Yeah.

HF: And Ruin it. Then you just donated it for one dollar to the city of Idaho Falls?

FK: That's right.

HF: When was this done? About what year was this?

FK: Fifty-eight.

HF: What has the city done with the property?

FK: Absolutely nothing.

JG: Well now is the old homestead still on there or what remains of it? Or have they completely cleaned that off?

FK: You mean the cabin?

JG: Yeah.

FK: It's still there. I wanted to go over a while back with one of the policemen who had a boat. "Nope," he said. "If we can take you over you couldn't stand it." He said, "They just tore that all to pieces."

JG: Yeah about all you see now is willows. That's interesting. I never realized anyone had lived on there.

FK: I had rabbits over there one year. I had over 300 big, white Flemish giants. And Peterson gave me three or four dozen pheasants to take over to see if we couldn't get

them started over there. I cut one wing off them so they couldn't fly off. Just the feathers. Every morning I could see where one of them killed. I couldn't figure out what it was. One morning after a rain I saw a big brown track. I found out it was a cat track.

Well over there, Harold, on the west side of the room, there's an old time table that they had in the ice cream parlors in the early days. The seats come out from under. I think they're quite rare. This other table here I bought from a fellow that had it hand carved over in old Mexico. It's a beautiful coffee table. Over in this other corner is a table I made out of two pair a horse hams. I also have an organ here, a hand organ that we carried, I bought from my oldest brother before he passed away. It's about 60 years old. Of course we have a lot of horns in here.

HF: There's some sheep horns, maybe elk horns.

FK: Deer horns and longhorns. I got a nice pincushion here too, made out of a beaver tail.

JG: I noticed Fred you have a gold pan here. Did you ever do any prospecting on your own?

FK: Yes, I've done a lot of it.

JG: Have you?

FK: There are the scales that go with it.

JG: I notice you have two sets of scales here.

HF: Now is that on some of the tributaries, flowing into Snake in the Upper Snake River Valley?

FK: Yeah. There's gold all along this river right now.

HF: Is there?

FK: In these potholes.

JG: And he has the revolver up here all mounted.

FK: That's an old '45 that was used in the early days to kill cattle and slaughter them.

HF: Now in the back room as you mentioned that you had some other types of artifacts that you wanted to show us. Can you describe the detail of some of those items?

FK: Well I've got skulls from some of my best horses and I got skull from a buffalo that a man gave me in 1909.

HF: Found in this area?

FK: Yes. W.H.B gave it to me for doctoring a horse of his. And several bears skulls there. One that came out of this cone hole over in the lavas and also a badger skull that came out of there. I had to [inaudible] man skull from a New Mexico that's supposed to be around 2000 years old.

HF: From New Mexico?

FK: Yeah. It came out of the cliff dwellers.

HF: In the state of New Mexico?

FK: Yeah. And then I have a churn in there, all kinds of lanterns and irons and I have two beautiful sets of old time carpentry tools made out of wood.

HF: Now you've collected and put together albums haven't you? Of pictures you've collected over the years?

FK: Yeah. I've got three here that are two foot square. I've got over 1,650 pictures in them. There's every outlaw, every Indian chief, Charlie Russell's in there. Brigham Young's in there. And John Brown's in there. You can't anybody that ever lived in the Southwest that isn't in that album. I don't know what to do with these big albums. A lady friend of mine wants me to give them to the historical society in Boise and I might do that.

HF: Well Fred it's been a real pleasure for me to be here along with Mr. Jerry Glenn this morning visiting with you of the early days of Eagle Rock and wherein you have shared with us your experiences in law enforcement, your experiences as an early dweller and inhabitant here of this area. With your twin brother, it is a twin brother, isn't it?

FK: Yes.

HF: And his name is Frank?

FK: Yup. And Harold watch him. He's pretty windy.

HF: Is he? He can really spin them pretty long. It's been real interesting and I appreciate very sincerely the privilege of coming to your home. And again thanks to you Fred.

FK: Okay Harold.