

Voices from the Past

Main Street of Rexburg, Idaho
between 1899 and 1922

Interviewees: James Steven and Elnora Jacobs Skelton

January 28, 1970

Tape #52a

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Harold Forbush: The interview which herein after follows and which was originally placed on reel-to-reel tape is now being transferred onto a C-90 cassette, being done this 29th day of March 1984.

HF: [Following] history of the Upper Snake River Valley. Today it's my real joy to come to the home of Mr. and Mrs. James Steven Skelton Sr. of 145 W. Main St. here in Rexburg, Idaho. It's the 28th day of January 1970 and about 5:30 in the afternoon and it's a real joy to having been invited by these good people who are old residents of the area. I'm going to talk to you first, Mrs. Skelton, and ask you your full name and where you were born and when.

Elnora Skelton: I was—my full name is Elnora Jacobs Skelton and I was born, December 18th 1886 in Logan, Utah.

HF: And who were your parents?

ES: John Lewis Jacobs and my mother was Elnora Flamm Jacobs.

HF: Now, Mrs. Skelton, what induced your mother and father to move to the Upper Snake River Valley and bring you?

ES: Well, they—my father was a builder, a carpenter and builder, and he came up here and helped build the new town. You know, he helped to put up the buildings and he also went in partnership with my mother's father, Henry Flamm, in merchandise, a general merchandise store.

HF: Were they partners?

ES: Yes.

HF: And what was the name of the store?

ES: Flamm and Company.

HF: Flamm and Company, but your father Jacobs was...?

ES: My father was John Lewis Jacobs and he was the partner, beginner for this store. I mean they went in together. My father put in most of the money for it and my grandfather managed the store. My father never worked in the store, he was building houses and meeting houses and the schoolhouse and most everything we needed for a town and he never worked in the store at all but he was interested in it, you know, and he helped to found it.

HF: About what year did your father move his family to Rexburg?

ES: Eighteen. Let's see, my mother as here, came up first before she was married. She came with the original pioneers in here. My grandfather was one of the original pioneers that was called from Logan, Utah.

HF: About how old were you when you were brought here?

ES: Well I wasn't born yet. She was still single, just a young girl when they moved up here. And then she had met my father in Logan. They both lived down there and my father was a builder and he was up here, you know, and came and then they fell in love, you know, and they decided to marry. My mother went down to Logan and they were married in the Logan temple, in Logan. And my father and his father helped to build the Logan Temple and the Tabernacle and the AC College. He was a builder, my father and his father, my grandfather was a builder for all of Utah, you know, especially Cache Valley. But they did building and furniture. He also made most of the furniture at that time, in Logan, and mother came up here, you know, with the pioneers.

HF: Had your grandfather come...?

ES: My grandfather Jacobs, my father's father.

HF: Did he come from England originally?

ES: No, he came from Switzerland, but he had lived in Illinois with two brothers there in Illinois for some time. I don't know how long but they all originally came from Switzerland.

HF: Were they converts to the church?

ES: Yes.

HF: Originally your grandfather was a convert of the church in Switzerland?

ES: Yes. I don't know though whether he joined the church before he left there or after they had got here to America. I really believe it must have been after they got here to America. None of his people ever joined, he was the only one.

HF: Mrs. Skelton, what do you first remember about Rexburg, when you...?

ES: Well, there were no sidewalks or anything, you know, just a little village. It was built up from one house after the other. As I say, my father was the main builder, really, around and my mother's brother had learned the carpenter business along with my father and they learned it from my grandfather, you know, my father's father. And he had a carpenters shop and made most the furniture, as I say, for Logan. And 'course they brought theirs along with them, everything that they could bring and my father helped to make chairs and furniture when he got up here.

HF: Did he have a shop?

ES: Well, we had a little shop, yes, sort of back of our house. He did a lot of his indoor work, but most of it was outside.

HF: About where was your house located?

ES: Well, it was—do you know where the Adam's school is?

HF: Yes.

ES: Well, that used to be our first ward church along in there. Now they built a new one beside it. You know where the First Ward Church...well it's just on the block, just east, on the corner of the block was our house and we had half of the block.

HF: Well now, in the early days, that block was used as the Tithing Office, wasn't it?

ES: Yes, all of that. That whole block, was ours. It was sort of, well, I guess they took it up just like you would a farm or something. I don't know how it was. I don't know how the arrangements were. But anyway, he had the title to it and he sold part of it to my uncle, Daniel Flamm. He was the youngest one of the Flamm boys at that time you know, I mean my grandmother's family. He had a second wife just, just before they moved up here. My grandmother was the first wife.

HF: I'm going to just turn now, to your husband, Mrs. Skelton, and ask Mr. Skelton to state where he was born and when.

James Steven Skelton: I was born in West Weber, Weber County, Utah, on January 14th 1880.

HF: This means that you just quite recently had a birthday.

JS: Yes, on the 14th of this month I was ninety-years old.

HF: Isn't that amazing! And you're just as sharp and alert. I really appreciate the opportunity of being here in your home tonight to both of you.

JS: I'm getting along pretty well, although I stumble around, fall down.

JS: I don't slip.

ES: He fell not long ago.

JS: That's how I got this black eye.

ES: Oh, he can't see at all.

HF: And got that black eye huh? I see. Well now, Mr. Skelton, can you tell me a little about your own folks, your mother and dad? Where did they come from?

JS: Well they came from Pennsylvania, Pottsville, Pennsylvania. My father's father Skelton was a miner in the mines in Pennsylvania, foreman in the mines. And they migrated here in 1860 to Utah and they landed in Salt Lake and was located up at Farmington.

HF: Were they converts to the church?

JS: Yes, converts to the church.

HF: And then they located in Farmington?

JS: Yes.

HF: And then they later moved up into Weber?

JS: Yes, up into Weber. I was born in Weber. We lived in Weber for about two and a half years. And then my father was went back for immigrants and so on, worked in the church and around you know.

HF: I see. What encouraged your father and mother to come into the Upper Snake River Valley?

JS: Well we—I was going to say—after I was about two and a half years old we moved up to Lewiston, Cache County, Utah. That's in Cache Valley and we lived there until 1898. I went to school in Logan to the AC one year. And then we moved up. We wanted to get out. We had a good farm, but water was scarce and so we had to move out.

HF: I see, when did you move here then?

JS: Come here in 1899. May the 6th 1899 we arrived here.

HF: And you would have been almost nineteen years old.

JS: Yes.

HF: Well, you'd been past nineteen. You were a little past nineteen years of age.

JS: Yes, that's right, I was a little past.

HF: Did you have brothers and sisters?

JS: Yes, I had four sisters and two brothers. There was seven children, my mother and father.

HF: How did you come up here?

JS: By wagon, yes. We brought all our livestock from the farm down there. We had two horses and two teams, two wagons, hauled our chickens, even brought seven head of sheep that we had.

HF: Were there other families that were in the group with you?

JS: There was one family that joined us, we met up with on the camping and they come from the Portneuf Canyon on up and they moved on up to Marysville.

HF: The roads were pretty rutty and muddy on the way up that spring weren't they?

JS: The roads wasn't so bad, we had pretty good roads. There was nothing prepared much but it was dry. We had good weather. We came up here in May, left down there in the 13th of May.

HF: Well now, when you arrived did your father establish a farm, get a farm?

JS: Yes, we was on our way to Teton City. That was where he came up before and looked over the country and decided to get a ranch up there. It would be the Newdale country now. But when he got here in Rexburg he run across a lot of men that was with him. My father was in the Black Hawk War in Utah and also went back to Omaha to haul immigrants from England, when they had that migration in here, you know. And so he run across a man by the name of Mars, Joe Mars, that was the officer here and he talked him out of going to Teton because we had schools and everything here and up there it was short and he said you could go out and get your right place later. There was a lot of land here then for the taking, see? So Dad decided to stay here.

HF: Where did he locate his farm then?

JS: Well he finally bought a farm over in Hibbard.

HF: Do you remember some of the early neighbors out there who lived next to you?

JS: We didn't live there, we always lived in town. We never lived anyplace in this country only here.

HF: Then where was your home in town?

JS: Well later, after we'd been here a month or so, we located in rent while we bought a place from Mr. Bell, William May Bell, an old pioneer who was down here in the second floor next to the fair grounds.

HF: And was that your home place?

JS: That was our home until I was married, we lived there.

HF: You lived with your father and mother. And was his farm ground—did he farm anything right in that area?

JS: Well, yes he farmed when he got started over there. And in that year we stopped here, the railroad came from Idaho Falls up to St. Anthony.

HF: That same year?

JS: That same year, 1899. And I always tell them I brought the railroad in with me.

HF: Did you help to, to work in building the railroad then?

JS: Yes, I worked on the railroad from Rigby to St. Anthony, three times. Drove a team and scraper first on the grade, went back and helped build the approaches on the crossings and we hauled the ties and established it all late that fall when we started on it in July, before I got added. We started out here in this big farm of McMillan Farm it was then.

HF: Let's see, you helped them construct the trestles over the, the Snake River?

JS: Well, I just did team work, like hauling timbers and stuff.

HF: But that would have been quite a challenge for them to cross the Snake River, wouldn't it, with the railroad?

JS: Well it was all over. They had—the railroad—they had a bridge, a wagon bridge, across the railroad right across the Snake River.

ES: My uncle helped to build that bridge across. My mother's brother, oldest brother helped to build.

JS: And that was down here. This was down in this direction see, it's Lorenzo that bridge? There was a pile of bridge. We crossed a bridge there when we came in, it had a bridge.

HF: I see. There was a bridge then when you came in?

JS: Oh yes.

ES: That's what I mean, that's what my uncle helped to build, that first bridge, they had across. Before that they had to cross in boats.

HF: Ferry across?

ES: Uh huh.

HF: I see. Well now, what was the town like Mr. Skelton?

JS: Just a big village. Well, to give you one description of it, the road came into the town, we drove in about the same thing as is would be now on the highway. And we went all the way up and scattered.

HF: Did most of the homes, were most of the homes in what is now the northeast part of town? In those days were most of the homes?

JS: It was kind of, there was what they called, down here there was a colony of the German immigrants that were sent up here. They had down in this part, in fact it was just, about evenly located with the buildings. There was about 1500 people here.

HF: Now that, when you talk about the German group that was on west Main?

JS: No, that was down here in, where the Third Ward meeting house is now.

HF: Oh, just in the southwest part of town.

JS: Yes, southwest that's right

HF: Southwest part of town.

ES: A lot of them came as immigrants when my father was on a mission. He converted a lot of them and brought a colony in.

HF: Now, you arrived before your husband, is this correct?

ES: Oh yes, I was about fourteen, I think, when he came to town.

HF: You were about fourteen.

ES: About fourteen, don't you think that's about it?

JS: Well, it's under that.

ES: Well about that, 13-14 something like that. But, when did you say you came, '99?

HF: In '99

JS: In 1899 in May of then.

ES: Well we were married in 1906, but we had been friends, you know, since about 1904 when we started to go together so, but I think...

HF: Now you mentioned that your home was up where the First and Eighth Ward is now in that area.

ES: Yes

HF: And your home was in the northwest part of town.

JS: Yes, down here.

HF: Down here in the northwest part of town, where the fairgrounds are now.

JS: Yes just across the street and a little south from the fairgrounds. Where bridge goes into the fairgrounds, you know, go down here by the place right over on the block next to the canal there.

HF: Well now, in 1899 I don't suppose there were too many, had there been any cement sidewalks put in by then?

JS: Oh not at all. There were planks, but that was a luxury, the plank sidewalks. And the road was, in wet weather, was almost a bog.

HF: Now did the Main Street run east and west as it is now?

JS: Yeah, it's the just the same as it is now, same dimensions and all. It's been improved since, 'course as we've lived along through it. I'd make this remark that we had about twelve, or a dozen, business houses on Main Street on the south side.

HF: Can you remember them starting from the east and going west?

JS: No, I couldn't recall. Well I can tell you some of the names. What I was going to say it was seven of them saloons.

HF: Can you remember any of the business houses?

ES: Oh yes, my father was interested.

HF: Your father was the owner of the one store and that store is where the Idaho Bank of Commerce is.

ES: Yes.

HF: And uh what other...?

ES: My father built the original building and I think its part of its there yet. I think they kind of, I don't know if they took it all out or whether they built onto it but that big part is there yet, the original rock building that he put up for the store.

JS: There was two hotels.

HF: There were two hotels and where were those located?

JS: Well one was located right where that service station is up there. You know, there's one on the corner and the next one up? There was a hotel building there.

HF: Across from the courthouse?

JS: Well no, that's, that's down this way. Way down on this way. I can tell you some of them. There was the Flamm and Company, there was ZCMI had a store up across from the courthouse right across the street.

HF: By the Upper Valley Equipment?

JS: Yeah, I suppose that's it now, I think it is. It was a garage for a long time. Finally they used it for a dormitory for the college. And by the way I helped break grounds for the new college building there. I was working for man by the name of Sanders, Dave Sanders, over on the railroad and they opened up to build the college. He took his whole outfit over and put in the canal around the hill for the water and dug what he could with the scrapers. And so because I was driving a team, see, so he took his outfit over and put them on there a day.

HF: Now this is where the present college campus is?

JS: Yes.

HF: And this was for the first building?

JS: The first building, the main center building there.

HF: That's the Rock...?

JS: The Rock

HF: The Rock Administration building

JS: Yeah, that's it, administration building.

HF: And you helped break the...?

JS: Ground, the first ground where it was at.

HF: And that was about 19...?

JS: That was 19...?

HF: Two or three or four along?

JS: 1900, no 1901, wasn't it?

ES: 1901. That's when you started in business.

JS: That's right. 1900 is when it was.

HF: Now you started your business in 1901?

JS: 1899 is when it was.

JS: That's the same year that I come here. Because after I got here I went to work on the railroad and uh, had the teams and stock and everything. So I worked on it all fall and then went to school a year that is during the winter. I was late getting started, but I went to the college.

HF: At the academy?

JS: Yes, at that time there was still the First Ward Meeting house up on where the pump is now was part of it. And we had part of it held in this brick building across from the courthouse, you know as I was telling you, that dormitory?

HF: Some of the school work was held there?

JS: Yes, some of the classes

HF: I see. Well now, Mr. Skelton what kind of a business did you open in 1901?

JS: I bought into a butcher business, what I'm in now. That's my business.

HF: I see. Now where was that business located?

JS: Well it was uh, I got a picture of it right there in the shop.

ES: Wasn't it right where you are now? I thought it was in the same place.

JS: No, it was up where—you know where the Kings Store is?

HF: Yes.

JS: Well that was my entrance. There was one of these saloons. They had a sign built on like you know that place was where Eric Darty was over across the street there too, that was the size of the buildings except Flamm and Company. They had to stop building, it was there for years.

HF: This was a wooden structure then?

JS: A wooden structure, yes.

HF: About how large a building did you use as your butcher area?

JS: Well, it started by Ricks's in the fall of 1900.

HF: Which Ricks's? Which Ricks?

JS: W.A. Ricks and George Ricks, they were brothers, and they started a meat market. And I worked on the railroad that first year I was in. And the next year I went down to Blackfoot to run a branch from Blackfoot up to Mackey.

HF: A branch? What do you mean?

JS: Well they run a, you know, a railroad, there's a railroad goes from Blackfoot put up to Mackey for the mine up there?

HF: And so you worked on that railroad?

JS: I was out down with a saline party. And then when I come back in, in the fall, in August, I went to work for these Ricks, at Thanksgiving time, about, when I got back. They would buy up turkeys here and ship them to you. They had a market for their turkeys. We had to dry pick turkeys so I got a job in this meat market and that cooked my goose.

HF: It captivated your interest anyway, didn't it?

JS: Been there ever since and started out picking turkeys and I still sell turkeys on Thanksgiving.

HF: Well isn't that interesting. Well then you bought the Ricks' out then?

JS: Yes. A little later they broke up and wanted to sell out. So me and a young man by the name of E.C. Winter, he was a baker, of the Second Ward then, son. And he'd been working at the ZCMI store up in this time. This beginning wasn't in the college, see, they hadn't got it yet. The store was discontinued and they made the...

ES: Little college—I mean the school there.

JS: Yes, I went to it.

ES: You did good.

JS: And had a new president come in here, Todd and so we bought out his interest and run it for a year or so ourselves.

HF: The meat market?

JS: The meat market. And then he, quit and so I bought him out. We didn't have much of a shop here, just a wooden case and ice. We had to put up ice to run it in the summer.

HF: Where did you get your ice?

JS: Out here on the river.

HF: On the Teton River?

JS: Yes. There's boot ponds that we could get. They're damming it up here.

HF: How often would you kill meat?

JS: Oh we'd kill a couple of beef a week. Other things in proportion, you know.

HF: Where was your slaughter yard?

JS: It was down here. It's now feed yards, all run by Gardeners down here, a little north of the fairgrounds, down there on the river bottom.

HF: North of the fairgrounds.

JS: Yes. Have you ever been down that way?

HF: I think so.

JS: Well you know there's a red building out, stands out there?

HF: And that's where you had your slaughter yard?

JS: Yes.

HF: And you would kill maybe a beef or two a week?

JS: Yeah, and sometimes we wouldn't kill that much, but we would handled some byproducts like flour and pickles and eggs and all the proposition, you know. When it was cool weather, about nine months of the year, you know we wouldn't have to use ice. And the meat was hung out in the shop on racks. Have you ever seen anything like that or lived during that time?

HF: Well, in other words a person could come in and buy quite a large piece of meat then?

JS: Yeah, you could buy anything you wanted to. We sell it by quarter to them.

HF: And you'd slice it up and sell it by the pound?

JS: We'd sell it by the pound, or if they bought a quarter they'd take it away with them, cut it themselves. They was all butchers in those days.

HF: Well now, you would sell beef, and maybe pork?

JS: Yes

HF: And sheep?

JS: And sheep we had an outfit and we'd sell them. I'd buy sheep off the sheep man around here. Get eight or ten heads at a time. Had a place down at the slaughter house where we could keep them or hold them or in the yards and feed them.

HF: Would you handle the chickens and turkeys and geese?

JS: Oh yes, geese and all that stuff. Sometimes the farmers would sell to us and dress for us themselves the poultry and so on. The old style, you know, they all worked that way, and it just worked up and finally we got...

HF: In all these transactions did you sell for money or for some other commodity?

JS: Well we generally got money, yes. There was scrip. Flamm and Company had a lot of scrip out. It was just the same as cash. We had no bank here. I think the First National Bank Comstock came in here about...lets see it was 1901 or somewhere along there.

HF: Was Mr. Comstock a kind of a partner with Flamm and Company?

JS: It was young Henry Flamm. They had a First National Bank and he was one of the directors, Henry Flamm. That was her mother's oldest brother—not oldest brother but brother, second I think. There was Peter and then Henry and Danny.

HF: And that bank was first in operation with the store, wasn't it?

JS: Yes. They put it right in the center of the store, just a little cage in there. Had a safe and that's all there was to it.

HF: And it was called the First National?

JS: The First National Bank, yes.

HF: Well now, what were the homes made of mainly in the early days as you recall?

JS: They were most of them logs, log and frame and a dirt roof. Our first house was bought down here, two rooms for all that family. There was nine of us. We had two rooms that we got and it had dirt roof. But we got right in and the first thing we had to haul the lumber from St. Anthony and I helped them build a house so we had room after that. We only had to spend one winter with the family in this one house and then we got a house built.

HF: But most of the homes were frame?

JS: Also logs, yes. Frame and also adobe and bricks they made home-made. They had a brick kiln here.

HF: Was that rather early, Mr. Skelton?

JS: That was sixteen years after it was founded, the town.

HF: They put in a brick?

JS: Oh they had brick and they had lumber yards finally. Her father had his shop finally was a St. Anthony B and N they called it. It was a branch down and a man by the name of Fog was, James E. Fog was his partner with and they had this lumber yard there.

HF: Well now Mrs. Skelton, I'm going to ask you. Do you recall the buildings, the homes in the area, what they were made of? What impressions do you have?

ES: Mostly frame.

HF: Some logs?

ES: Well, they started out with little log cabins, you know, but as soon as my father got to building around, you know... At first our house was enlarged, we put in nice three, four rooms lumber, you know, of frame house. And then my father was busy for years putting up frame houses all over. Most of them were frame. Some were made of brick. There was a little brick yard started.

HF: Where was that located?

ES: It was right down here on the highway, just about where Willis Walker's farm is, I think.

JS: That brick kiln when I was come, it was here just on the north of the fairgrounds there.

ES: Oh well, that was later but the first brick that was along that street you know where...

JS: Yeah, there was a brick kiln there. That year about...what was the date when you were up here to live?

ES: I was just a baby when I came, you know.

JS: And I know that

ES: That was in...let's see, I was born December 18th, 1886 and then I must've been about four or five years old or something like that. My father was so interested in building and everything, I should be able to remember more, but I was so young, you know.

HF: But your father, do you remember where he built his first brick home for somebody?

ES: Well he had a partner that helped him. He was the brick layer, that was Mr. Summers. He brought him from Logan to help him build brick and the brick houses, you know and the brick foundations that they built, and rock. They'd haul rock from the hill up there, and made their foundations. And this Mr. Summers, Sorey, his name was, I think his descendents live there yet. Ben Summers, his name was. What was the Sorey?

JS: Heber

ES: Heber! Heber Sorey?

JS: Yes, Heber Sorey. They came up at the same time. He brought them from Logan when he come up to visit.

ES: Well not right when he came. He was here quite a long time before he finally went down and brought those people up to help him build.

JS: He didn't have the woodsmen here.

ES: My father bought a farm for both of them out here in Hibbard and they still have that, their descendents, you know, still run those farms.

HF: Well isn't that interesting? Well, that's very, very interesting. Now do you remember the hitching posts along Main Street?

ES: Yes indeed and they used them. They had their teams, you know, and most of them just came horseback from the farms, you know. And in the winter they had sleighs.

HF: Would they—now if a boy came in on horse back, he would tie his horse up to a hitching post?

JS: Yes, right in front of the many saloons.

ES: Right in front of the stores. Every store had them, didn't they? Every store had a hitching post.

JS: Stores, yes, stores had them. They had so many, there was Flamm and Company, and Hecksten and Jensen, and then there was a lot of little, like my meat market. I had quite a little business there.

ES: And a man by the name of Squire, started a barber shop, oh before that though...

JS: No, Woodbine was here...

ES: Woodbine was the first.

JS: They had a dance hall down here.

HF: Where was that located?

JS: Right where that service station is that I had mentioned.

ES: There was a big dance hall there.

JS: It was a long kind of an opera house had a stage in it and they used to have shows. That was before Flamm's.

ES: Flamm and Company had an opera house too, up over their store and that was the main opera house. But they had mostly dances in this one didn't they?

JS: That's right.

HF: Now this, your first barber, who was your first barber?

JS: Woodbine. Wallis Woodbine was the first barber that I knew here.

HF: And where was his shop located?

JS: Well it was in this hall out of town.

ES: Excuse me, but I could go back farther than that. My uncle—my mother's sister's husband—started the first barber shop. That was Morgan Nap.

HF: And you remember him?

ES: Oh yes.

JS: Yes, I remember him.

ES: His daughter...

JS: He wasn't in the barber business when I came to town.

ES: No he was gone before you came. But uh,

HF: His daughter...?

ES: His daughter lives in Idaho Falls, her name is...

JS: Merrill

ES: Oh dear...

JS: Merrill, isn't it?

ES: Merrill, Ida Merrill.

JS: You probably know her right?

ES: What's his first name? I should know, I do know but...

JS: LaRue Merrill, you know him?

ES: LaRue Merrill, yes, that's right.

HF: Yes, he's an attorney.

JS & ES: Yes.

HF: And it's his wife?

ES: Yes, his wife is my cousin. She was a Nap, Martin Nap's daughter.

JS: They lived right there close to them, on the same block.

HF: Well now, who was the first doctor you people can remember?

ES: Well, Woodburn was the first one that I knew that was a real doctor. They had a lot of people, you know, that did doctoring and nursing and everything like that but they didn't have any diplomas or anything. This Dr. Woodburn was here quite early.

HF: And where was his office located?

JS: Well he lived with the Marshall in town, Joe Morris. And they didn't even have a telephone here then. Had only one general phone.

ES: Walter Paul did a lot of their doctoring. He didn't have any license or anything. He was just an all round handyman. He couldn't ...

HF: Walter Powell?

ES: Walter Paul, P-A-U-L. He did an awful lot of their kind of medical work, but he didn't have any...

HF: He wasn't licensed.

ES: No, nobody was licensed, it seemed to me. I don't know they just kind of were practical.

HF: Now did he live in Rexburg?

ES: Yes.

HF: I see. Do you remember Harlow Rigby very well?

ES: Oh yes. He was my dear friend and doctor for years.

HF: Was he?

ES: Yes.

HF: And his nurse, his wife, and they practiced medicine here for many years.

ES: Oh yes, and they had their hospital. I used it many times and he was my doctor for a long time.

HF: What other doctors do you recall? Remember Dr. Rich?

ES: Dr. Hyde was a very early one.

HF: Dr. Hyde?

ES: H-Y-D-E.

HF: Dr. Hyde. Did he live right here in Rexburg also?

ES: He lived right close here, about...

JS: Around the corner where that service station is now, he had a brick house.

[End part one]

HF: Side two continuing with the interview and the interview with Mr. and Mrs. James Steve Skelton will be completed.

HF: Loren?

ES: He went to be a doctor, you know, and he practiced here for many years.

HF: Loren?

ES & JS [together]: Dr. Loren F. Rich.

ES: Loren Farr Rich

HF: Loren Farr Rich. And he practiced here for many years.

ES: Yes, he was our doctor and he's a real close friend.

HF: He was a real close friend of yours?

ES: Yes.

JS: He was about the same age.

HF: What, were you fishing and hunting buddies?

JS: Well yes, some, and kind of round the town, you know. And when he came back from his studying in doctoring I had the typhoid fever. I nearly passed out. He was my doctor. He brought me out of it.

HF: He pulled you through?

ES: I guess he was the doctor's first patient and his last. That's right.

HF: Is that right? Well that's very interesting. Well now do you recall some of the early lawyers?

JS: Yes, there was a man by the name of Hix.

HF: Hix?

JS: Hix, yes. H-I-X

ES: He lived in St. Anthony, Hix did.

JS: No, he lived here, down there on the fairgrounds.

ES: Did he now? Did he then?

JS: On the fairgrounds, yes.

ES: Oh, I guess he moved to St. Anthony, anyhow.

JS: And wait there was a...who was a lawyer here? A man by the name of Ricks, Hyrum Ricks. He was a real estate man and he was an attorney.

HF: Hyrum?

JS: Hyrum.

HF: Now who was Cappy Ricks?

JS: Well that was his nephew.

HF: His nephew.

ES: Well let see, you're, you're thinking of President Ricks aren't you the old original? He was...

JS: President Ricks, was President Ricks. He knows all about him.

ES: I know but it seemed to me like he'd had a military career in his youth but he got....

JS: We had Phil Avers too. A man by the name of Phil Avers was an attorney here.

ES: Attorney.

HF: Was he?

JS: What'd I say?

ES: They both lived in St. Anthony. Phil Avers lived in St. Anthony.

JS: Well they lived here too, they finally moved in here.

ES: Did he oh? Oh.

HF: Well now, Cappy Ricks practiced law here too.

ES: Oh yes.

JS: Cappy Ricks was the son of this man that Will, W. A Ricks that I bought the meat market out of. I knew him right from when he was just a little fella'.

HF: Oh is that right?

JS: Yes. He was here.

ES: All of them, about, were sons or grandsons of the original President Ricks, you know. And my grandfather was called to be one of his counselors in the church, you know, and they moved up here. But my grandfather had an accident and had his eyes blown out with gunpowder. He was trying to help some little chop a log that wouldn't chop, so he put some blasts of gunpowder and he was blind for life in one eye.

HF: I see. Now this was, this was Henry Flamm.

ES: Henry Flamm.

JS: Down in Logan, that's before I ever come up here.

HF: That's before they ever came up here? Well now, what comments could you make about the streets in the spring of the year?

ES: Well, I can tell you a lot about that.

JS: They were very bad. Now let one of us at a time.

ES: Okay, excuse me.

JS: We would run a delivery cart, a buggy wagon, from this meat market. And we'd go down the street here and they'd get sloppy and, you know, and there was a ravine, that run through the town and come down along Main Street and they hadn't gotten tilled up to grade and it would just, the wheels of them buggies would going along would just fill up with this mud and stuff and freeze and just go rolling along. Just bog, had quite a time with it. And then after they put the electric lights in, later on, I don't remember how late

that was. But anyways, they put poles right up in the middle of the street and if you had to run away, why, the poles all would stopped them. There was a lot of a mess around here. Just a big old village with everybody.

ES: Worst old mud hole you ever saw in your life. I used to walk to school by a wire fence like that. And the school was where the water...

JS: Pump is.

ES: That was the Academy and they used it, of course, for a school too. I mean it was our church house, but we used it and called it the Bannock Stake Academy, it was when it was started. Because we belonged to Bannock Stake. And then it was changed as the name of the stake was changed until we finally got Ricks.

HF: Ricks College out of it.

ES: Ricks Academy and then Ricks College. But I started when it was Bingham, I think. Bingham. I didn't get in on the Bannock.

HF: I see. Well now, you remember the real wet, soggy, road conditions then?

ES: Oh mercy, yes. We used to just have it clear up to the school. All along that street there, from our place to the school was just a puddle every spring. And we used to just wade to school every morning.

HF: In the early days, of course, they watered their lawns and gardens through open ditches didn't they?

ES: Yes.

HF: You people remember a little something about the first plumbing that was installed in the town? You know, for your water installed in the homes and the first sewer and things like this?

JS: Yes, it was her father that put that in.

HF: The first plumbing?

ES: They built a big well up there.

JS: That's where the pump is.

HF: I see. And then they would pump water and they had pipes going into some of the stores?

JS: Yes. Theses made same pipes they put in.

ES: They found a great big under...

JS: Water current.

ES: Underwater.

JS: They had run this pump continually and crowded and they couldn't even affect the depth of the water. And it was 95% pure. That was a rather good line. We've got the same water now, right here in town, and that is out of these pumps.

HF: But now, of course, they water a lot of their lawns with the hose or sprinkler.

ES: Yes, that's right.

JS: In those days we used ditch water. There was two big streams running down each side of Main Street, this lot here was watered out of the front here.

HF: And they had two large streams coming one on each side of Main Street?

JS: Yes, with a wooden boxed gutter.

HF: A wooden boxed gutter? I see. And then you mentioned that you recall when they had the board sidewalks?

JS: Yes. They were two by fours laid age ways.

HF: I see. About how wide would the sidewalks be?

JS: Well, they were just the same width as they are now. Why they had them, you see they went down to, I think it's this corner right up here, were as far as they come west. That's Center Street is the next block, that would be First Street West.

HF: Yes, that's about as far as they came west?

JS: Then they went up to the...

HF: The Courthouse corner?

JS: Yes, as I remember. Of course a person forgets a lot.

HF: Did people in those days, before the turn of the century and after, raise some pretty good gardens here in Rexburg, vegetable gardens?

JS: I raised a lot of good ones myself.

ES: I didn't hear, I'm sorry.

HF: Vegetable gardens?

ES: Oh yes. Everybody had a garden.

HF: And I guess everyone had their own cow too, didn't they?

JS: Yes, and they had a town herd. All this hill was the finest pasture you ever saw. They run them right here. They would take the herd...

HF: And gather them up in the morning?

JS: And gather them up in the morning, or drive them out like you had a pasture you know, they'd drive them out to the hill and the herd boys, my brother ten years old, when we come here well we lived here we had these cattle and horses and stock to come up to farm, you know and he went out here and herd them himself, just a kid. And he helped in the town herd and they'd put them all in together, they'd all pay a little something, the boys to this herd.

HF: Well was the bench up here near Rexburg a pretty much grass land?

JS: Oh yes. There was fine grass on there and they brought sheep in here by the thousands, raising them up here.

HF: East of here?

JS: Yes, and Dad took up a dry farm right up here, just about a mile above the college there. We had eighty acres up there and they had eighty acres out in Hibbard. That was for farming, and that was all you could handle and...

HF: And now was there much in the way of sagebrush on this land?

JS: Well, it was more like a desert, you know, out here. Not any lava projecting into it, but sagebrush.

HF: It was good for spring pasture, but how bout in the middle of the summer? Didn't it get pretty dry?

JS: Would been plenty of grass on it for pasture if it hadn't been for so many sheep. My uncle—my dad's sister's family, the Hunts—moved up here and he was in the sheep business. They had three or four bands of sheep here for years.

HF: Do you people remember when they started to plow that ground up, started planting in the wheat?

JS: Well there was a farm or two up there that was already started when we come. But there was just a few. This big place up here wasn't taken at all at the time. Yes. I didn't have time though. I couldn't tend to this business, and you had to have a source of something to live on. And when I got into the business and so on, I had the business, I could help the folks out, and did. That's the reason I'm in the business so long because it was the only means we had to support. We had to do something, you know.

HF: Did you have competitors in the business?

JS: Yes, we had competitors, but they were just the same kind of a market and so we had a hand. Wasn't as bad as it is now, they're trying to get us now, pushing in their store and hard on the business, although we're working and going.

HF: Now your son operates the business now.

JS: Yes.

HF: John?

JS: John, he took it. He's taking, well, I've just took him in, he's interested in it and so he helped out. If it wasn't for him now I couldn't fend through.

HF: How many children did you and your husband have? How many are there in your family?

ES: Five

HF: Five children?

ES: There's a picture of them right here.

HF: I see.

ES: Oh, and you don't see them.

HF: That's all right.

ES: Well we have two girls and three boys.

ES: He can't see, here.

HF: I see. That's okay, that's pretty fine. Well now, how many do you have here in town? How many of your family?

ES: Well our daughters. One, she just left today, she's been here this week visiting with us, our oldest child. And she married a Chipman. And they have a music business in

Pocatello, you've heard of the Boston Music? Well that's theirs. That's our second youngest daughter. And then we have Keith that lives in California. He's the builder's son, next to Genevieve there, by this girl. And the Laura came. And then we had John and Jim, that's five. We have ten grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren.

HF: Oh isn't this grand? Well this is truly, truly fine. Well over the years you've got acquainted with a number of outstanding neighbors and individuals, haven't you?

ES: Yes, indeed.

HF: Did you people know the uh, probate judge here in the twenties, Mr. A.J. Hansen?

JS: Yes, we knew him well.

HF: Did you?

JS: Hansen, you know.

ES: I didn't know him as well as he did though.

HF: He was a stake Patriarch.

JS & ES: Yes.

HF: For many years.

JS: That's right.

ES: Yes, he was.

HF: What can you recall about him? Was he quite a handsome fellow?

JS: Well he was very nice looking man. Had a gray beard, an old time, you know...

HF: He had a beard.

JS: Yes, and it was gray and very nice.

ES: I don't remember that, I don't remember.

HF: Well now we've talked a little about the doctors and the lawyers and the merchants. As the time went along you had more merchants come into town.

JS: Yes. They was coming and going and selling out and trading around all the time and every once in awhile a new one would come, you know, in different lines.

HF: Did J.C. Penny put their store in quite early?

JS: Yes, they was in here, let's see---I can't tell you the exact date, but it was way early.

HF: Was it one of the first clothing stores?

ES: Do you mean Flamm's?

JS: No. Penny, J.C.

ES: Oh, Penny.

JS: Yes.

ES: Well they came many years later.

HF: Did the Flamm store sell a lot of...

ES: General merchandise

HF: Merchandise and this included...?

ES: Furniture and even undertaking department.

HF: And clothes of all kinds.

ES: Yes, all kinds. Yes, they had a general merchandise and then the furniture and the undertaking, besides, it was along with the store, but they had a separate building. I think that's what was.

HF: For the undertaking business?

ES: Yes.

HF: Now of course in the early days they had a number of livery stables, I suppose.

JS: Two.

HF: Two livery stables?

JS: Two livery stables.

HF: And where were those located?

JS: Well, one was located right where the—do you know where the woodman building is?

HF: No.

JS: Across the street.

HF: From where?

JS: Well, like from across the Joy Drugstore.

HF: Oh, that's the woodman building?

JS: Yes. Well no, let's see, you asked where the livery stable was. Well do you know where the old State Bank was, they moved out of?

HF: No.

JS: Well that's right on the corner under there, there's a dress maker, you know, where the Village State Bank was.

HF: Yes, the Village, yes, I know where that was.

JS: Well, if you look at the sidewalk right there at the entrance of that, you'll find a strip running along why where one by the name of John Whitney, J.K. Whitney, owned that one. And when I come that one right across the street this way, let's see, it would be I guess right between where the State Bank is now and that building up, the next one up there up.

HF: Can you tell me something about some of the early police that you remember, the local officers?

JS: Yes, there was two men. There was Berto Larson, and Joe Morris. This Joe Morris is the one that was with Dad down in the Black Hawk War and talked him into stopping in Rexburg. And he was here for years as a policeman. And there was the two of them and this Berto Larson was uh, lived here and he was one of the earlier and then they had different ones at different times, you know. But I remember him more because he was just understood the town. The sheriff was a man by the name of Rich. Dave Rich that was sheriff, county sheriff, it was Fremont County then, you know.

HF: Now do you people remember Harry Munns quite well?

JS: Yes, very well, he was constable here for...

HF: The sheriff

JS: Sheriff for years.

HF: How would you describe him?

ES: Harry Muns?

HF: Yes.

ES: Well I didn't know him so well, I know of him, you know, but I wasn't intimately acquainted with him like I was Joe Morris. And he was kind of raked in our neighborhood and he was friend and family and everything.

JS: You see, he was now the sheriff of Madison County.

HF: Yes. Well now the, before the courthouse was built the sheriff's office was...

JS: In St. Anthony.

HF: No they had a sheriff's office here in Rexburg, on the south side of the street.

ES: Yes, they did.

HF: It would've been where the jeweler's store is. Grover Jeweler Store, wasn't the sheriff's office along in there?

ES: No, it seems to me like its up on the next...

JS: They didn't have a sheriff here until the county was set apart. When Madison County got in, why then the sheriff's office was up and they had I think it was right across the street in a little shack where, the Woodman Building is there, along in there. Just one of the stores like them I described to you.

HF: I see. Well now do you people remember Raymond MacIntire when he first started?

ES: I certainly remember him. He was a partner in my father's business.

HF: Raymond MacIntire?

ES: No, Raymond's father. Eli MacIntire was Raymond's father and he was a partner with my father.

JS: They were what you call the St. Anthony B and N Lumber Company.

HF: Oh, isn't that interesting. Now where was that located?

JS: Well that was located right in a little building like the buildings they just tore down there for where Harry Dorty's office was. Just right across, just north of the livery stable I described to you. And that's where, I think it was Harry Munns was the first sheriff we had, wasn't he?

HF: Yes. That's true.

JS: He used to sit in there and when Madison County was. And that was in 19--- when?

HF: Well, Madison County became a county about 1914.

JS: Oh did it? I think it was '13 wasn't it?

HF: '13-'14.

JS: I'm not sure on that. It was right in there close.

HF: Well there have been some great changes over the years.

JS: Yeah, there sure has.

HF: Do you remember where some of the first cement sidewalks and maybe cement curbing was placed?

JS: Right up and down Main Street. It was after the waterworks was put in. They laid the big pipes and then they put in cement walks, tore up these planks...

HF: Who do you recall as owning and driving the first automobile here in Madison County?

JS: Comstock.

HF: What kind of a car was it?

JS: Ford.

ES: Was it a Ford? I don't believe it was. I think it was before Ford.

JS: No.

HF: Those cars couldn't go very fast.

JS: It was Dr. Hyde and Comstock got them at the same time and I think they come in at Ford's.

HF: Did Mr. Hill start the Ford agency quite early, do you know?

JS: Well, he bought into quite early, yes, he's been in it quite a while. But he bought a man out by the name of...I just can't remember names.

HF: Mr. Taylor started his Chevrolet agency quite too didn't he?

JS: Yes. But it was after the Ford, I think. I'm not sure to that.

ES: No it was much later, that was much later than the early history.

HF: Well I want to say again to you people that I surely appreciate the opportunity of coming into your home and chatting with you about the early times of Rexburg.

JS: I'd like to tell you that I was instrumental in opening up College Avenue. I contributed a thousand dollars to it.

HF: How did that come about?

JS: Well, I don't know, we had no places to go and I wanted a meat market. Got along in it so long that I thought I'd like to have my own market without the rent. So we all got together and opened up that street, that's right in the center, it went right through. We had money, you know, and stuff to get some of them out of there, out of places.

HF: Was your place of business located then on College Avenue?

JS: No, but it was right, quick as we got it open, I had the first room down there in the hotel building, you know? I built that right straight up there, cost me thirty-thousand dollars.

ES: He built that building.

JS: And done a lot of things.

ES: That was before the College Avenue was started. He helped to get that College Avenue opened up.

JS: Opened up, kind of promoted it. We had to pay this man, David Charles, that had this saloon, as I was telling you that I was up against there, and we had to pay him for his land. It was valuable property. And there was another. There was a saloon right in the center of College Avenue, we had to buy that out too. The government got rid of some of them, as well.

HF: Well about what year was this? Approximately what year?

JS: Let's see...we got my meat market fixed up. I had this meat market and we went into it in '22 wasn't it?

ES: I can't remember.

JS: 1922. It was along in there, between 1915-1922 before they got it all going. We had to cement it and fix it, all around the hotel.

HF: Was that building which houses the Joy Drug constructed then?

JS: That was Davy Charles, as I tell you. He built that in place when his saloon went out, see. He had a building that was up further from the corner, like where King's is. He built that.

ES: When you got the College Avenue built our meat market was part of the hotel.

JS: Hotel, I built it right in the hotel.

ES: Where that shoe shop is.

HF: I see. Well now when was the Idamont Hotel built at that time?

JS: It was built then, by Eckels.

ES: He helped to build the...

HF: Was the bank in there at that time? Was the bank ever in that hotel?

ES: No, it never was a bank.

JS: No, there was a post office over there for years.

HF: There was a post office for years.

JS: That's right.

HF: That was one of the larger buildings I guess.

JS: Oh that had three stories, wasn't it? Yes.

ES: Three stories.

HF: Now are there any other comments you'd like to make before we close? Do you have any comments...?

ES: I'll think of a dozen after you've gone I guess. What did you like to know?

HF: Just comment about how the town has changed.

JS: How about you calling us up. You're not only just going to work on this are you? They'll just be for your records.

HF: Yes.

JS: Well, if you want to call us up, come in if I ever I get back to myself I'll be up to the shop. You could drop in there.

HF: Well, I think this is really wonderful. I really appreciate the opportunity of coming into your home.

ES: Oh well, we appreciate it a lot. I think it's wonderful.

HF: May the Lord bless both of you.

ES: Thanks a lot.

HF: You bet ya.