PREFACE

This manuscript is the product of a tape-recorded interview conducted by Joyce Reynolds for the Oral History Office, Sangamon State University. The interview with Emma Snodgrass took place during September, 1980 in the home of her granddaughter, Phyllis Crews, 1101 Ruth Place, Pawnee, Illinois. Joyce Reynolds transcribed and edited the tape and Cathy Caughlin final typed the transcript.

Emma Adams was born in a sod house on the prairie in Kansas, July 9, 1887. At the time of the interview, Emma was an interesting ninety-three year old lady with a remarkable memory of her early childhood. She came to the Pawnee area in 1899, when she was twelve years old, the oldest child in a large farm family. She married a farmer, Bruce Snodgrass in 1908, and they raised two daughters, Marcella and Lorene, on what is still the family farm, a few miles north of Pawnee.

Joyce Reynolds is writing the History of Pawnee and is involved in the Oral History Program at Sangamon State University to help her reach this goal. She is an artist and the author of six published books.

Readers of this oral history memoir should bear in mind that it is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, narrator and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. Sangamon State University is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for views expressed therein; these are for the reader to judge.

Emma Snodgrass, September 17, 1980, Pawnee, Illinois.

Joyce Reynolds, Interviewer.

Q. My interview today is with Emma Snodgrass. The date is September 17, 1980.

A. Well, we lived in Kansas and we had prairie fires. And one that we knew in the family--Bruce Doyle was his name--he come running [on a pony]. My dad and a neighbor had gone to the county seat in Kansas [with] a team and wagon. That's what they had in them days.

But first of all, Eileen [midwife] lived with my mother [and] on the ninth of July [1887] the rattle snakes went through the roof [the day the narrator was born]. It was a dug out [sod house] and I don't know what lights they had, and I've wondered and wondered, since I got older. I didn't realize it then when I was younger, but there was steps that went down [to the sod house]. I heard them talk about how the sheep would get stranded in the snow and pile in there [on the steps]. And then what a time they'd have!

Q. Where were the rattlesnakes at?

A. It was in Kansas where I was born.

Q. You were born what year?

A. 1887. I don't remember if it was 1886 or 1887. But I'm 93 now. I guess it was 1887.

Q. You mean 1887.

A. Well, this time I wasn't quite two years old. My dad and this neighbor went to the county seat, and another neighbor [Bruce Doyle]--that we knew real well--came on his pony, running to tell them there was a prairie fire coming. He didn't stop, but warned the people to get out of it. [The fire] was so wide and it was going like that [fast motion]. The prairie fires that they had there. My dad had drawn out a barrel of water from the branch for my mother to wash that day. She [my mother] was pregnant with my sister Susie that's two years younger than me.

When Bruce Doyle come and said there was a prairie fire coming, he was warning all the people along the line where it would go. Well, Pa had got him some sows and had them all in six pens, and he got Ma a hundred dozen pullets and they had a little house built for them. I could just see them things cause Ma's told me so much about them. She grabbed a shawl and put it around my shoulders. It [the prairie fire] was in April. She went through the barn where they had a stallion and a mare tied with halters to a manger. She had the butcher knife and she cut them loose. [It was] the first time the

stallion had been loose in five years and [later] they found him several miles from home. He got out of the fire. He didn't get burnt at all. But the sows, had their noses and their ears burnt, and some of them they had to kill them, and some of them lived. When Bruce come by he turned them [hog] houses over, but the fire was so close it caught them. And that [the burned hogs] always did get on my mind.

Q. Your mother told you that?

A. My mother told me that. And when she got to the barn door [where] my dad had a western saddle a hanging on a hook, she saw that the shawl she put on me was afire. She had to just drop it off and leave it burn in order to get me out of the fire. [Then] she went to that barrel [to get water]. He [Pa] had a hundred bushels of corn piled up on around there. She saved that corn and saved me, and Pa scolded her because she didn't save that western saddle. She told him she didn't feel one bit [bad] about it. She done good to get me and the livestock out. And I think she did!

Q. She didn't save the saddle, but . . .

A. She went right by it but she didn't even think of it.

Q. Well, I wouldn't have thought of it either. You were two years old when this happened?

A. I was just two years old then. But Ma's told me so much [about the fire] I can just see it.

Q. Tell me about your mom and dad.

A. Then when we left Kansas my sister Susie--she was born in April--and we came back to Illinois [Missouri] when she was a year old.

Q. When Susie was one?

A. Yes. I don't remember much more, but when my brother Earl was born, (laughs) we took him out through the kitchen. He was born a black baby. I got the glimpse of him and I thought that the old pack peddler--my mother had told me the pack peddler brought the babies--had brought us a nigger baby. (laughs) The doctor ordered him put in a pan with some whiskey in it--just hold his head out and rub him--his blood hadn't started--and when the blood started he got all right.

Q. You thought you had a black baby!

A. And he wasn't no black baby. (laughs) But you know then I was getting a way up to where I noticed things more. And then right on down the line there was ten of us.

Q. How old were you when Earl was born?

A. When Earl was born I was about four--I was almost five years old.

Q. Tell me about your mom and dad. Your dad was a farmer?

A. Yes, all his life and a good one too. If there was ever a little patch of woods anywhere in the distance, he'd always clean it for the first crop. [And raise] all he could on it the first time. A lot of people had them [patches of woods] around their homes. When it come time to thrash, he was always on the straw pile--making big money--five dollars a day.

Q. That was big money!

A. Yes it was. But nobody else would do it. He just put goggles on his eyes, and put good heavy clothes on, and he'd just follow right along with the thrashing machine.

Q. He was a hard worker then, wasn't he?

A. (nods) We had some hard times.

Q. What kind of a woman was your mother?

A. My mother was a little woman. She wasn't as big as you. She was short. My dad was a big husky man--and nice looking. I've got his picture. He was still good-looking when he passed away at 89. I don't know, we had lots of sickness and we had lots of trouble, but we was always happy. And we never went to bed cold or hungry!

Q. Now a lot of people can't say that.

A. And ten of us.

Q. There were ten of you . . . eight children? [ten children]

A. Two of them was born after I was married.

Q. Tell me about the trip from Kansas.

A. From Kansas back to Illinois? We was all so happy. My dad's name was William but my mother always called him Will. She says, "Will, I've stood it through two births here [Kansas] but I don't want to have to stand another one." She meant she wanted to go back to Waltenville to her people and her home. Of course it wasn't convenient them days like it is now. Nothing was. [When] we went back . . . I think we was about nine days in a covered wagon. And my mother's own uncle--and his children came with us--he'd lost his wife, but he had an older daughter. They was four of them. And we just made a picnic of the whole trip. Us kids would get out and we'd run and play--of course when we was jogging along in that old wagon,

we had to sit still and look out--but when it stopped we was out seeing what we could see.

Q. How old were you, Emma?

A. Four.

Q. When you came here to Illinois?

A. Well, we came here in 1901.

Q. To Pawnee?

A. Pa come up here and shucked corn for Uncle Will Silver. Then he came back in the winter. Lela was born in 1900 and it was the next spring that we come back to Waltenville.

Q. So 1901 you came here from Kansas? Tell me more about the trip.

A. And we settled right out here a little south of Pawnee. And we lived there just about a year. Then we moved over by New City and we lived there ever since.

We spent two years in Missouri. That's when we had the uncle with us--when we come back from Kansas. I don't remember too much about that. I remember it just--maybe more from hearing them talk about it--than really. When we went to Missouri I was four. We just stayed two years. I had one brother, Charlie, who was born in Missouri--and my sister Susie and me in Kansas--and all the rest was born in Illinois.

Q. You had a big family.

A. Yes, ten of us.

Q. Tell me more about the trip. I understand you did a lot of interesting things on the trip.

A. Well, we had an extra horse along with us in case something happened and something did happen. Uncle's horse kicked him on the shoulder--and broke his shoulder. They had them [the horses] tied too close. They had feed boxes on the back of the wagons where they fed them. This big old horse of Uncle Phillip's--he was mean--he didn't want no horses near him. And old John got around a little too close--and he kicked him on the shoulder. He [the horse] didn't have a bit of use of that foot and we had to leave him, but we had another one to put in to come on with. And we brought two cows and twelve laying hens.

Q. Brought them with you? How did they travel? How did you get the hens to go on a wagon?

A. The hens was in a coop. When they wanted to feed the horses, Pa just took that coop off and shoved it under the wagon. It didn't bother anybody. Then he had . . . his two boxes to feed his horses in to give them their hay. And the chickens set on the ground all night. But in the daytime--when we stopped--we put the chickens out and they'd just pick all the grass all around where they could put their heads out--through the coop you know. The idea was--my mother wanted them and my dad fixed it so she could have them. Just as if they couldn't have bought a few white hens when they got back home. They [the hens] laid right along--all that trip.

Q. They never stopped laying?

A. No, they didn't stop.

Q. I can't imagine a trip like that. I just can't.

A. My cousin fried a skillet of bacon--I well remember this--and she took the bacon up and just pulled it back. We had fires--and a great big skillet with an oven that sit tight right on there--and we had tongs that reached down on top of that. [That's how] we'd get off that [skillet]. But she [my cousin] set her skillet of bacon off and forgot about it. She turned around--it had a handle on it--the skillet did--and she stepped on that and throwed that grease up the back of her leg--and just made a blister all along. Her daddy scolded her and Ma said he shouldn't of scolded her--she didn't do it on purpose. She just screamed. Then they had quite a chore to dress that leg all the rest of the way home. We was about half way from Missouri to Waltenville.

Q. Now Waltenville's in Southern Illinois?

A. Waltenville's in Illinois.

Q. The Southern part of Illinois?

A. That's where my dad and mother was both raised.

Q. What was your dad's last name?

A. Adams.

Q. Adams. Will Adams.

A. William Irah Adams.

Q. And what was your mother's name?

A. Mary Ellen Newell. She was never very well.

Q. She sure had a lot of kids. That might have been one of the reasons.

A. She didn't have time to feel good or get around and so much like [some]--only just to have the babies--and then somebody else had to help her to take care of them. That was me a lot of the time, because I was the oldest.

Q. You were the oldest.

A. And the youngest one's a living now. There is just four of us left. There was seven girls and three boys. The boys is all gone. There's four girls left, but none of us is worth a hoot! (laughter)

Q. Tell me about the boat trip.

A. As we come back from Missouri--at Chester, Illinois--we crossed the Mississippi River on a steamboat. We had them two cows with us--and one horse. And I had to stand in the doorway that went to the works of that thing and keep them [the animals] back here on a place.

Q. How did you do it? What did you keep them back with?

A. I just stood there and had a stick. That's all I done.

Q. How old were you then?

A. Well, I was about seven.

Q. And you had to keep those cows back?

A. I had to keep them back with a club. (laughter) I was scared to death. They just rolled the wagon on like it was on a bridge. And we wasn't the only ones--they was others. You know, it's a mile across that Mississippi--at Chester, Illinois. Have you been down there?

Q. No, I don't think I ever have.

A. You have ain't you. (granddaughter in room) Well, it's a mile across it there. And that's the way we got from Missouri to Illinois.

Q. And you had to watch those cows all the way?

A. I had to watch those until we got across and out on the road the other way.

Q. Did your dad farm in Waltenville?

A. But my mother stayed in the boat--in the wagon--she didn't get out of the boat. Pa got out, but he didn't help me guard them cows back. That was my job and I had to stay and do it.

Q. You had to work hard, didn't you?

A. Yes, I did.

Q. What were some of the jobs that you had to do when you were little?

A. Well, I helped saw tie timber--to make bacon with--when we lived in Missouri. My dad made ties and sold them--twelve cents a piece--and he'd bring home a chunk of salt bacon and corn meal. We had lots of cornbread. I wish I had some of it yet.

Q. I bet it tasted better than anything we have today.

A. Oh, boy. I helped do that [saw tie timber]. Earl, Susie and me sawed it. We'd get a tree down and then my dad would work it up. We'd pull brush and shove it back out of his way so he could go right on. He managed to have a load every Saturday to take to Cheyonee--that was the name of the little town. He put them ties off into the river--that wasn't the Mississippi. What was the name of that river? I can't think now. But anyhow he shoved them ties off in that river and they'd lashed them together with wire and put them down the line.

Q. Was that the St. Francis River?

A. St. Francis! That's right. That's right! Yes, that's the St. Francis River. I used to sneak out of bed--go with my dad to his fish hooks--early in the morning. He pretty near always had a good ol' fish on them.

Q. You'd go out and check them?

A. I'd go with him when he'd go before time to go to work. Ma and the other children would be in bed and I'd slip out and follow Pa. I'd help him get the fish out. (laughs)

Q. And he always had fish.

A. (laughs) One morning we met a mama possum on the way and the dogs got ahold of her--and shoot--them possums was all over the place. She had them in her pocket. And I was scared to death.

Q. Did they kill the . . .

A. Pa picked up one of them little possums--little baby one--and he put him on a hook. What do you think he caught? An eel fish--four foot long! When he went back to that hook, that's what he had and he took it home. My mother says, "I'm not going to cook that thing. It's a snake." "Why," Pa says, "it's an eel, and they tell me it's real good eating." And lo and behold they settled it by--if it had a float in it like other fish do, she'd cook it. Otherwise she would not cook no snake. She cooked that--and she didn't have too much lard--she had to be sparing with it. But when she got that fish done, she had a teacup full--but it was yellow--from that eel. It

was the fattest thing--and the best fish I ever tasted.

Q. It was good to eat?

A. It was good! And an old man that lived there told Pa, "Don't ever turn an eel down." They're the best eating there is."

Q. I'd of never thought that.

A. It was black--oh, it was four feet--but I don't remember how many inches around. But I seen it.

Q. Well, when you got to Illinois then you were just a young girl. Right? Your dad farmed in Waltenville?

A. Oh, yes, we stayed at my aunt's, my mother's only sister, for a couple of weeks. He [Pa] found him a little [farm]--twenty-five or thirty acres then. He just had two horses and a harness, but he got a little old plow--and he got a plowing somehow.

Q. What did you raise in southern Illinois--the same thing you'd raise up here?

A. Now, that makes me think of it. That's unusual. We raised castor beans.

Q. Castor beans?

A. Castor beans. You probably never seen a field of castor beans and she (granddaughter) never I know. Well, Pa would have anywhere from six to ten acres--and he made a big sled with two runners and braces and he put a ten bushel wood box [on the sled]. You'd get all kinds of wooden boxes them days. Now you can't find one made of wood. Well he put them on--and then he put shafts in that--and he put Earl on the horse to ride--and he put Susie on one side of the box and me on the other--to pull them [castor bean] down to us and cut the ripe ones. They didn't all ripen at once. When they come out they was all big as down my thumb. The beans had one, big pod and they was little ones all around--and a little bean in every one. When they was ready to cut, they was dark--and the others was coming right on beside them. Some of them [would] be that long--four inches. But he [Pa] knowed when to cut them. And then come the trouble.

Q. What were they used for? Did you eat them?

A. No! They was deadly poison.

Q. What were they used for?

A. We scraped a place on the ground as big as this room [twelve by fourteen feet] and we put little stakes in that. Pa did. Then we

put--they had regular bean paper they called it--it was tough paper that moisture didn't hurt. And we'd put that [paper] clear around there--throw them pods that was ripe in that--and pop! pop!--just like popping pop corn. They popped out when the sun shone on them. We had to hurry when a rain come up to get them in, I tell you. We got a dollar a bushel for them. Now imagine, all that work.

Q. What were they used for?

A. Why, to make castor oil. (laughter) And your hands would have that on them and make you sick. I been sick many a times from hot sun coming down on you. Now Earl had a job that he had to watch. He had to stop at a certain place. They planted them beans four feet apart.

Q. They were that big?

A. Yes. Now that was hard work. Our neighbor raised tobacco.

Q. Tobacco?

A. Pa just raised what he wanted to use, but this other one raised it for the market. That was Faye's dad, Marcella, Gene. (called granddaughter Marcella)

Q. Now, tobacco grew down there real good? Down in Waltenville?

A. Yes, all around--and he [Gene] had a wagon made. He had a route that he hauled this [tobacco] around. Thank you Marcella. (Phyllis gave Emma a glass of water and she called her Marcella) [I should] tell her what I done to Pa down in Kansas!

Q. Go ahead and tell me now.

A. Ma lost her thimble and she lost her thread. She lost her comb, and I don't know what all. She says, "I tell you, Will, them gophers is coming in the house and getting it now." We didn't have no screens. The doors was wide open. And Pa, on Sunday, was a sitting down by the house--leaned up right on the step. I don't know what they made it out of, but they had a step to get up in the house. Pa was a sitting up on the edge of that and leaning back. I come a running around there to him and I had something in my hand. I'd caught a grasshopper, and I wanted to put him away. And there was a gopher hole right there. I shoved him in that. Pa seen me put him in. He says, "Ma, would you like to find your thimble and thread and stuff." "I sure would!", she said. It didn't rain much there through the summer. Anyhow, Pa got the spade and dug it out. That was everything that was lost! And I'd put it there. I was just two years old.

Q. That was in Kansas.

A. In Kansas--two years old.

Q. Phyllis said to ask you [about] where you got your shoestrings? (Phyllis is the granddaughter)

A. Where we got our shoestrings? Well, my dad killed deers and we eat the meat. I helped him--we tanned the hides--I held them hides up and my dad took a knife and come right down [those] deer skin hides and we got our shoestrings. That's right.

Q. How could you keep that much meat? You didn't have a refrigerator did you?

A. No, we didn't have no refrigerator and we didn't have no flies either. You know we didn't keep it [the meat] very long. But in the winter time, everybody that had fireplaces would hang a hind-quarter right at the edge of that, and they'd turn it every day. Then all you had to do was go and slice it down. Boy, it was good!

Q. You just kept turning it around? How many days could you do that? Just keep turning it?

A. Well, just keep turning it until it was all gone. The outside would be cooked--cut if off and the other would start cooking.

Q. It was good eating? (laughs)

A. Oh, my God--Old Uncle Billy Osborne--that was my mother's uncle that lived down there. That's how we happened to go to Missouri. And he knowed . . . . He knowed when to go deer hunting--and where to go to get them--and how to handle them after you got them. Pa just fitted in. He said Pa was a good one to help him.

Q. What else did you make out of the hides besides shoestrings?

A. Well, I don't remember that we made anything.

Q. Just the shoestrings?

A. Yes, that's all I remember.

Q. Did your mother make all your clothes?

A. She sure did--with a needle and thread.

Q. Where did she get the material?

A. Little towns--wherever we stopped. She'd get what she could. But my grandmother Adams--that's too far back.

Q. No, go ahead. Tell me.

A. She lost her husband [in] the war and she had eight children.

Q. The Civil War?

A. The Civil War. And he had got pneumonia and died--her husband. She had sheep. She was a farmer. And after he died--she had her oldest child--Uncle John--[to help her]--and she sheared that wool off of those sheep--and carded it--and spun it--and knitted clothes for her children out of it. Now you talk about something hard.

Q. Oh, my.

A. But, Lord, she just done it right along. Pa said it didn't bother her a bit. Everybody else was. When you're in Rome you gotta do as Rome does.

Q. (laughs) That's true. That's true.

A. But now Ma never had much time to do any of it. If she took care of her babies [that was all she could do]. She had just a little tub, and a little bit of wash water, I remember--and that's what she'd wash them in.

Q. My grandma used to do that.

A. I'll betcha. That's a long time ago. (tape off)

Q. Could you tell me about flying jennies?

A. About what?

Q. Flying jennies. I understand you used to make them.

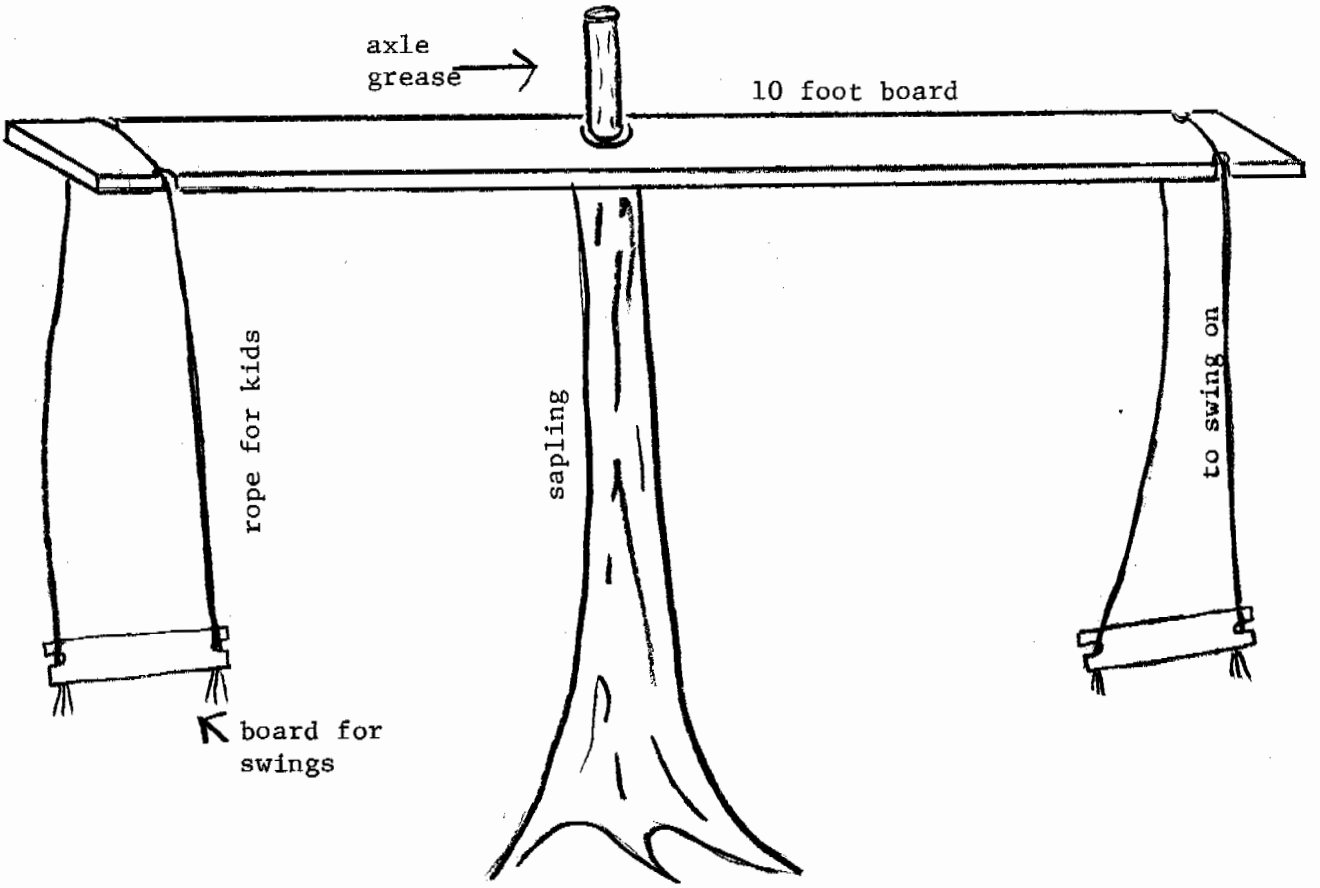
A. Why, I sure can. Flying Jenny--you take a sapling about four to six inches through, and saw around it--and you cut down and split them pieces off--and left that one middle a sticking up on your tree sprout. And then take a board about ten foot long--and bore a hole in that, and set that hole right down over the wood where it was cut off. They'd put some [axle] grease on that. Then they would take ropes and put out on each end of that board. A kid would get in--and then I was the biggest--I had to push it. I'd get ahold of it way back here, and pretty soon I'd have them a going way up in the air. [I'd] get called down [for it]. If they'd fell, they'd a been broken. [It would] just a busted them as fast as they was going. You'd be surprised.

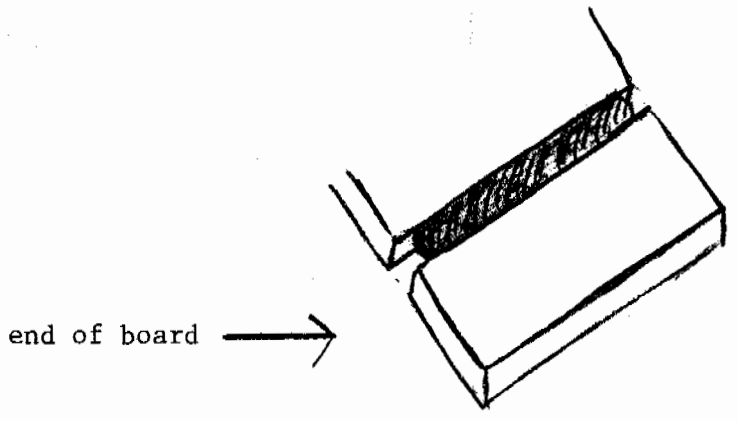
Q. I've never seen a flying jenny.

A. Well, that's a flying Jenny. And I'll tell you . . . I was so much around that--and I bruised my right foot on that post the flying jenny was on. I don't know where they got their boards but they had lumber for anything around there. But anyway, I bruised my foot and I had a stone bruise on it. I had to lay in bed for a while. It just crippled me. Oh, it was a bad one. And Uncle Tom "Petty" (nickname) was there. What do you suppose he done? He put cow poultices on my foot to draw it.

"Flying Jennie"

4 feet above ground





Q. What's a cow poultice?

A. Manure. (laughter) Warm-he'd make the cow get up out of her warm place where she was laying down. He had a paddle he made. He'd say, "El"--he always called my mother El--he'd say "El, get ready, I'm a coming." And he just slapped that right on my foot and Ma . . . wrapped it. I can remember that well and good.

Q. They thought manure would draw out the hurt?

A. Oh, it did. My goodness.

Q. It did?

A. Don't you know that manure and the inside on that egg-that stritin will draw a sore to a head quicker than anything.

Q. I don't think I'm going to do it.

A. And when you get a burn--a bad burn--if you can get to it--get clay--pure old yellow clay dirt--wet it and put it on there--and you'll never know you had your burn.

Q. What did your mother do when you had a fever? Or something else? They couldn't run to the drugstore every time they got sick.

A. No, they couldn't. They just had to take care [of] us with what they had. Sometimes we had to just suffer it out.

Q. What were some of the other home remedies they had? There just wasn't a whole lot you could do back then.

A. What?

Q. There wasn't a whole lot you could do.

A. No. (tape off)

Q. What was goose grease?

A. Well, it was where you cook a goose and have a lot of grease left.

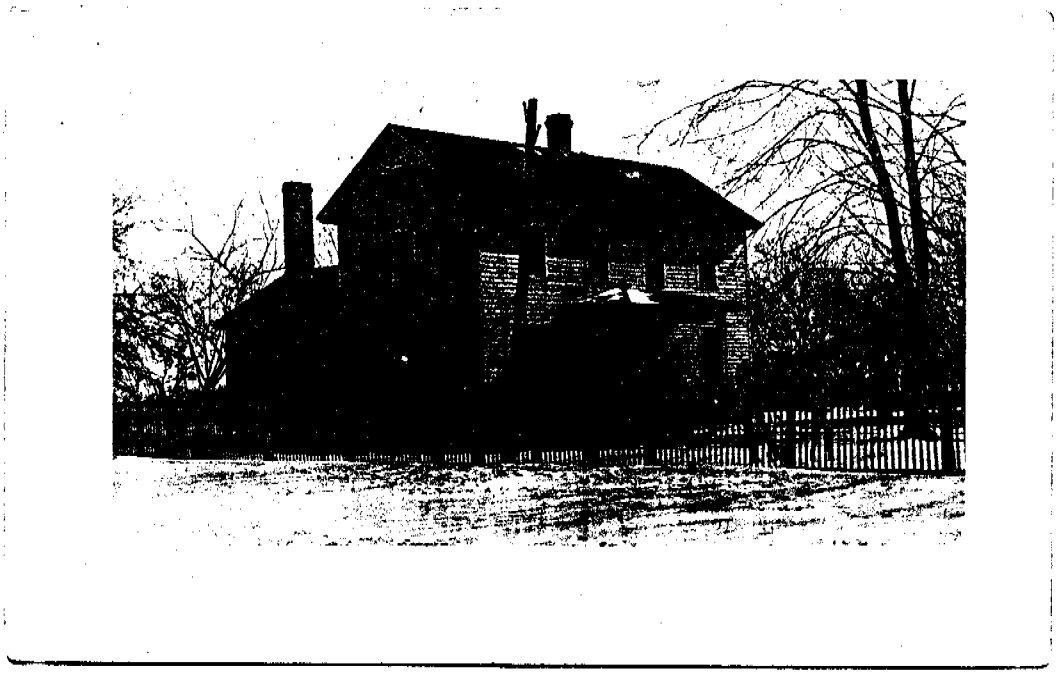
Q. What did you use it for?

A. Put in some turpentine and put it on your chest when you had a cold.

Q. For colds. What was something else that you used like that?

A. Well, now for frostbite, my dad always had some mink oil. He trapped a lot. You know what a mink is? He rendered some lard out of that. Of course, we didn't take it or anything like that. It

Emma Adams Snodgrass is the oldest daughter in a large farm family. She is on the left, back row.



The Snodgrass Family Farmhouse.

was terrible. But it would take the frost out if you got your hands frostbit, or your toes. They used to [get frost bite] a lot you know. We didn't have warm shoes. And you put that mink oil on and it helped that right away. And that was old Uncle Billy Osborne's remedy.

Q. You just kind of shared remedies back and forth?

A. Yes.

Q. And you're how old right now? 93?

A. I was the ninth of July.

Q. Ninth of July. Those home remedies weren't too bad then. You're looking good!

A. I feel like heck though. (laughter) I don't know how that'd feel I guess, but I hear people say it. (laughs)

Q. Well, my grandma would have been about your age.

A. Is she living?

Q. No, I lost her about five years ago. And I still miss her.

A. Oh.

Q. Emma, tell me about when you came to Pawnee now. You were just a young girl weren't you?

A. I was twelve years old.

Q. Twelve years old. And you settled right out here.

A. Well, now was I twelve years old? I must have been right around twelve?

Q. And you went out on the farm where you're at now? No, over here?

A. South. South of Pawnee. I don't know which way's which here. But I know we was south of Pawnee. That guy [who] sold vacuum cleaners lived on the farm that we lived on. Pa worked for Uncle Will the first year till he could get ahold of a harness and things to do his own farming. Then we moved out.

Q. What made your dad decide to leave Waltenville area and come up to Pawnee? What made him decide that?

A. Well, we could raise better crops up here than we could down there, but we can't anymore. They had peach trees down there and they cut them all down--took the stumps out and planted it in beans and with fertilizer. They've got more out of it then with the peaches, and it's less work.

Q. Down south?

A. Down in Waltenville.

Q. But he thought he could get better crops up here?

A. Yes, you could go down there and get peaches this time of year, but not anymore. They don't hardly keep enough for their own use. [They] break up everything and sow it in beans.

Q. Where did you go to school, Emma?

A. Well, I went to school in Waltenville.

Q. When you came up here, where did you go?

A. I went to the Lone Prairie School down by Waltenville. I don't remember the name of the school that we went to in Missouri. But I do remember how far we had to walk. It was three miles.

Q. You had to walk?

A. Over across the corner of the mountains. We was in the foothills of the Ozarks.

Q. Oh, that's beautiful down there. But what school did you go to here in Pawnee? You still went to school when you were 12 didn't you?

A. I was just a trying to think. I cannot remember that one. The name of it.

Q. Let's see there was Hedge College, Beaver Dam. There was Lyndora.

A. We only lived there one year. I just can't remember. Then we came back up here.

Q. Was it a one room schoolhouse?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. It was around this area? Was it the Sanders school?

A. Oh, I went to Pleasant Hill school here.

Q. Pleasant Hill school.

A. Yes, here. And then when we moved, I went to North Cotton Hill. And that was the last one I went to. I never did go to high school.

Q. How far did you go? Just like grade school?

A. Yes.

Q. And you never got to go to high school.

A. No, I never did graduate--only just from grade school.

Q. Well, how did you spend your teenage years?

A. Work, work, work is all I ever did. When we first come up here--through the summer I would work for an old lady out by Pleasant Hill--and she was the sweetest old lady. [I got] dollar a week.

Q. And you worked all week for a dollar. What kind of a job was it? Just helping keep house?

A. This man that had the tobacco--every child within a radius--I'll say three miles--had to work for him through the season if the worms and suckers got on his tobacco. And we got twenty-five cents a day and our dinner.

Q. That was down in Waltenville.

A. That's down in Waltenville. Yes.

Q. Twenty-five cents a day, and dinner.

A. Yes and his daughter was the boss and she was the sweetest thing. She just passed away not long ago. She was like a sister. She was in her nineties. She was a year older than me. Twenty-five cents a day and I bought me a corset--little corset with holes in it. I'll never forget it. Weared it Fourth of July celebration. Oh, I was proud. I just thought I was dressed up.

Q. Cause you've got a corset on?

A. Cause I had a corset.

Q. Was it comfortable?

A. Well, not too. (laughs)

Q. Now, when you were a young girl here in Pawnee, did you date when you were a teenager like they do today?

A. No.

Q. How did you meet your husband?

A. At a skating party.

Q. Ice skating?

A. Over at the North Cotton Hill school.

Q. Was it ice skating?

A. Ice skating, but I didn't skate. A couple of guys got me out on the ice. They was going to make me. I couldn't stand up. I never did like ice and I wouldn't skate. My sister just put them on and swish. I just didn't like them and I couldn't do it. I'd fall and bump myself every time. My husband and a buddy of his came and they'd been to another party up the creek farther--over Horse Creek. And here they come and they scooted down the bank--and hit the ice, sit there and put their ice skates on. And these two guys, Manuel Beam and Emmit Page, they're both dead now. One was on one side, one was on the other. They was gonna make me skate. And I had one schoolmate who was just like me and she didn't [skate either]. When they got me going, they was going to get her, but they never did get me a going. These boys came and scooted down there, and they come right out in front of us. They put their skates on at the bank, of course. He fell; Bruce did. He slipped and he put his feet up and he hit me right there (between the eyes) with his skate, the sharp corner of it, and blood started to running.

Q. Right between the eyes?

A. He had on glasses. I didn't know him. I'd never seen him before. I called him Old Specs. Otto Pape was with him, his buddy, and it wasn't long until we was acquainted. And then come to find out we moved over by his mother and she had pneumonia. She got sick and he [her husband] come over and wanted to know--if Ma she had nary a girl that she could spare for a little while. He said, "Sarah's real sick and I can't leave her." And lo and behold, I met Bruce then. That's the first time afterward, but he was just like a brother. I worked there cause things needed to be done extra over at his mom's. Either him or his dad would come after me. His father got down then and he was sick a long time and I helped take care of him. He was the nicest old man. The family was all nice, but I never dreamed that I'd ever marry Bruce.

Q. You didn't?

A. No, I had a few dates with his nephew.

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE

Q. You said . . .

A. He said, "You'd better talk to Emma yourself. She's gonna make somebody a good wife. That was Bruce's father. Anyway, then he said "No way! I don't want to have any hard feelings in the family." And he went on and on, so finally I'd go with both of them to parties right around home. So finally Bruce told me--he said, "I'm not gonna insist. I don't want any hard feelings. But if you choose me, I want

it to just be me." He said that. And I didn't tell him for quite a while. But when I told Will, he told me he felt mighty bad.

Q. What was Will's last name?

A. Deweese. Will Deweese. Well, from then on I went with Bruce.

Q. How old were you when you got married?

A. Well, we was married in 1908.

Q. Twenty-one?

A. Twenty-one. I knowed I was twenty. And I thought it was twenty-one, but I wasn't sure.

Q. Yes, I just figured it up. So you didn't marry real young like a lot of them did?

A. No.

Q. And then what did you do when you got married? Did you have a big wedding?

A. No, we went to the courthouse in Springfield and Judge Murray married us at four o'clock in the evening. That was the day before Thanksgiving and we went to my home that night. The next day his father died and he had all the chores. He worked like a dog on the farm. He had cattle and hogs. And I went home with him and that was it. I stayed there.

Q. Well.

A. He had two sisters, one was a school teacher and one just worked by the week. They wasn't home much. But his mother lived ten years and I lived with her and she was as good to me as my own mother. She'd always take my side of anything if me and Bruce had a argument. He'd say, "Oh, they ain't no use to argue against women." And he'd go on. (laughs)

Q. What were some of the things that you argued about? What to do? Or where to go?

A. Oh, just little silly things sometimes. We never had any very serious arguments. He was always good to me. I had backed out on him about getting married because I'd have to go live with three women and I didn't feel maybe we could make it. And I had studied it over and something told me when we started up the walk to get married. I said, "Bruce," and I stopped. He said, "What's the matter?" I said, "I don't think that we'd better get married now." And he said, "Well, why not? I've got the license." Well, that made it seem a little more like we should, I guess. He said, "I'll tell

you what I'll do." [There] was a little place for sale--twenty-eight acres, adjoining [his dad's farm]. You could see clear across. "If Ma and you can't get along," he says, "I know the girls and you can cause they'll all be out and gone, but, if you and Ma don't get along. I will buy that and we will live over there. And Ma and the girls can live just across the branch." In fact, the pasture came right up to the door. And, I'd a better took him up cause that [the other property] sold--my land, awful high not too long ago. But he didn't have to buy it cause we never did have to. We got along all right. (tape off)

Q. Now what did you forget to tell me on the Kansas . . .

A. We had to use cow chips for fuel. Buffalo chips.

Q. Buffalo chips?

A. Buffalo chips. The manure dried the year before where they'd eat the buffalo grass. They had big boxes to get out and pick them up in. That's what we had to cook everything with.

Q. Did it smell?

A. I don't think so. I don't remember cause I was too young then. I guess I heard Ma talk about that more. She didn't like it. The day that she used the water--she didn't use it to wash with--she used it to save the corn and stuff that she had. (thinking of prairie fire)

Q. Well, she saved the important things, even if she didn't save the saddle.

A. Oh, yes, that's right. She knowed what was important. She was pretty good in them days.

Q. Tell me about the circus. Phyllis said that you went to like a circus and you saw an elephant or something. Was that here in Pawnee? The circus?

A. I don't catch it.

Q. When you saw the elephant?

A. Oh, why no we lived out south of Pawnee when we saw the elephant. They moved at night and Pa come and got us kids up early the next morning to go down and see the elephant's tracks in the dust in the road. And it looked just like you'd have a grain sack full of something and set it down and then pick it up. That's what those elephant's tracks looked like.

Q. Did you actually get to see them then?

A. Yes.

Q. Was it a circus?

A. It was a circus that landed in Pawnee at night. They didn't have stuff like they got these days. It was all drawn [by wagons]. The elephants could walk of course. They made their moves from one little town to another one.

Q. Do you remember the name of the circus?

A. No, I don't. I don't remember the name. Of course, it had a name and it was just going from one little town to another.

Q. What other things did they have? What did you see at the circus then? About the same thing they have today or was it different? Did they have clowns?

A. Well, it was not much like it is today. I haven't seen one right lately. But they had funny singing and everything.

Q. Do you remember the ice storm of 1912 that just froze everything? It was in March. March the 20th.

A. March the 20th.

Q. 1912. Do you remember?

A. Well, now, I don't remember much about that.

Q. You don't remember the ice storm?

A. Yes, I remember we had an awful lot of ice, but I didn't remember just when it was.

Q. There were two of them. One was in 1924 and one was in 1912. Didn't it bother you much?

A. No, not them days.

Q. It sure bothered us in 1978 didn't it?

A. And how! (laughs)

Q. Do you recall anything about when the wars came along?

A. You know Gary Buschon. He's the only one I ever knowed anything about going to service.

Q. Was that in World War I or World War II?

A. Well, I don't know. It's the last one.

Q. World War II.

A. Two.

Q. Yes. That didn't affect you much either?

A. Oh, yes, I was worried to death all the time, but he never was in the battle. But he was gone at least three years.

Q. Overseas?

A. Yes, he went everywhere. He said he wouldn't take a whole lot for what he learned.

Q. When was your first baby born?

A. 1913.

Q. 1913.

A. Marcella. Marcella. Then Phyllis's mother. Phyllis is Lorene's daughter. That's my second one. Lorene. I just had the two girls.

Q. You had two girls?

A. Yes.

Q. Your mother had so many children and you didn't have but just two?

A. Some of the girls only had one. And some of them had eight.

Q. Yes, well back in those days, Grandma, there wasn't any birth control. You had babies.

A. Phyllis seems like my own child. Her mother and daddy separated and we had Phyllis a lot.

Q. Grandma, I'm trying to think when you were a farm wife what your day was like. Did you get up early on the farm?

A. Oh, my Lord, yes, daylight. Hardly ever found us in bed. (laughs)

Q. Well, do you remember anything about Pawnee? Do you remember coming to town on Saturday night?

A. Yes, [I remember] old Doc Sprague.

Q. The band leader? And you come up to the square? To listen to the band?

A. I remember Mr. Sprague and now what was that grocery store that was on the corner? What was that guy's name? Uncle Willis went up

there and he says, "Now this is an honest man. He's got a big family and when he comes for groceries if he ain't got enough money to pay for what he needs, I'll pay it." He was real good. But he never had to pay any. Pa always managed to not get more than he had money to pay for.

Q. People would be a lot better off today, if they'd do that.

A. Yes, that's right. Oh, I don't know what's gonna become of the people--the young folks. I feel sorry for these little ones that's coming on. And they don't seem to realize. You can't tell them. They won't listen. (telephone was ringing)

END OF TAPE