

Born 11/29/1882
Mt. Aire, Iowa

Interviewer: Effie Amicarella 1977

IDA BROWN Tape #1045 (Mrs. Glenn Brown) Mother of Iva Whipple
Page 1 (Mrs. Brown died in April, 1979)

When did you come to Lafayette? We came here in 1920. We came to Denver in 1919. And we've been here ever since. We've lived in this house about 55 years. What is the address here? 302 West Simpson. Where were you married? In Valley City, North Dakota. We lived there about 15 years, I think. And then you came on here. We came here for Mr. Brown's health. He had asthma. And how many children did you have? We had two children. Iva and Cecil.

I understand Cecil was quite a ball player. Well, he liked to play ball. He died when he was 13. He had been sickly almost all his life.

What are some of the things you liked to do when you were a child?
Oh, I liked to do most everything. Oh, I liked to ride horses; we used to ride horses a lot. If the weather was bad, we'd straddle a horse and ride it. We had to go about two miles to school to a little country school. How many were in your classes? About 30. And that was all of the grades? Yes, from the first through the eighth. They never had no report cards then. You'd go to one grade one year then you'd go right on to the next whether you deserved to pass or not. I never did get a report card. Did you go on past the eighth grade then? No, I never went any farther. We lived on a farm. I helped on that and then when I was old enough, I worked out at some of the neighbors. I used to go out in the field and help my dad a lot. We used to raise quite a few beans. We'd pull them when they got ripe and let them dry. We'd pile them up out in field and let them dry, get good and dry. Then we'd take them in the barn and up in the barn loft, we'd put a great big old tarp, canvas tarp, down and pile a bunch on that and then we'd pound them and then we'd pound them to break the shells so the beans would come out. We'd use anything we could get a hold of to pound them with - a pitchfork, we'd pound with the back of it; or an old broom, or stick or anything. And then when we'd get them all done, there'd be a lot of chaff and stuff in them and when the wind would blow hard some day, we'd pick that canvas up and put it on the ground outside and then we'd put the beans in a pail and pour them up and down and let the wind blow the chaff and stuff out. What kind of beans were these? Pinto beans and butter beans and those white beans and some little tiny navy beans, they called them soup beans. Then every night after we got that all done, we'd take a bunch of them and spread them out on the table and we'd sit there and pick out the bad ones and get them ready to cook.

What was the main crop your father raised? Mostly corn. That's about all we raised. Oh, buckwheat, we raised buckwheat. We did raise a little wheat, enough for our own flour. They'd take buckwheat and the wheat to a mill and then they'd get half of the wheat for grinding the rest of it into flour. That's where we got our flour. Buckwheat the same way.

Did you raise almost anything you needed? Oh yeah. We raised most everything. We bought just sugar and coffee and tea etc. We had our own meat. We always had a big garden. We didn't have refrigerators or anything. They'd pull the cabbage up by the roots and they'd dig a big hole in the ground and put straw on the bottom of that. Then we'd turn our cabbage with the heads down in the hole and then cover it up to keep it from freezing. That's the way we kept our cabbage. We had a meat house - just a little small place and he'd cure his meat and then he'd hang it up in there and build a fire and he had it fixed so it would smoke and that's the way they smoked their meat. What kind of wood did they use? Hickory most of the time. If they couldn't get that, then they'd use corncobs. They made better than some of the other wood; they made it taste better. Oh everything, I guess you could call it a hundred years old from what it is now.

You washed on the washboard, I suppose. Oh, yes. And we made our own soap. We'd take wood ashes - my dad built a place to put the ashes because they weren't wood all the time - and it was small at the bottom and it would come out flared at the top. And we'd put the ashes in there and then when it got about full, we'd pour water on them and soak them up good and that water would run down through and that would make lye and that's what we made our soap out of for washing. Then my mother would fix some of it some way, I don't know how - for hands and for bathing - and she'd put perfume in that to scent it up. And that's where we got our soap. We've had a lot of people come in the library these days asking how to make soap, it's surprising. We've had to copy off a number of copies of it for people. You can use lye to make it, now, where they had to make their lye, you can buy it.

We bought our own coffee. YOU had to buy green coffee. Green coffee beans. My mother would buy maybe 10, 12, 15 pounds at a time and then she'd roast it in the oven. And us kids would grind it. We had what they called a coffee mill; it wasn't very big. We'd grind that coffee.

How many children were there in your family? Ten of us. But the oldest one died when she was only about 13 months old. So there were nine of us lived to be grown. The youngest one, Hal, he's about 74 years old. Do you get together with them sometimes? Not very often. It's too hard for everybody to travel, isn't it? Yeah. My two youngest brothers, one of them is in Missouri and one is in Iowa. And my sister's in Nebraska and myself and that's all there is left. My oldest brother just passed away this past year; he was 96. You're a long lived family then aren't you? Did your mother and dad live to be a good age too? My mother was 91. My father was only 73. I had a grandmother that was 103. I have a cousin living that's 99.

When you came to Lafayette, what did you do here? Just stay home?
Yeah, I didn't do anything except keep house and take care of the two kids. Things were a lot different than now, weren't they?
Oh yes. Why don't you tell me about it? Well, what can I tell you? We didn't have refrigerators then. No electric sweepers. No washing machines. I washed on the board after I came here for a long time. Then we finally got a washing machine that turned with a crank. I'll bet wash day was a long hard day, wasn't it?
It was. It was a tiresome day. And you didn't have electric irons. No, we had to heat the irons on the stove. I've often wondered how you knew when they were hot enough and to keep scorching things. You'd wet your finger and put it on the iron and if it sizzled, it was hot enough. If you burned your finger, it was too hot.

What else do you want to know? Oh, about some of the people you knew here in Lafayette. Did you know the Lafayette Millers at all? I knew one woman by name when I saw her - seems to me like her name was Sarah. Was there a Sarah Miller? Yes, there was a Sarah. She wasn't here too long after I came here; she moved to Boise or someplace. And I don't think she was gone too long when she died. So I really can't tell you anything about them; I didn't know the old Millers.

What are some of the changes you've seen in Lafayette? Just about most everything. The population more than anything. There were only about 1800 here when we came. The water situation is about the same. I can't see much difference in that; there's always been trouble over the water. We do have paving now; that took a long time. Yes, we didn't have nothing like that when I came here. And we didn't have the sewer. And I can remember when they put this pipeline down through here, or not pipeline, water line.

Where did your husband work? Well, he was a mechanic and he worked at the garage and filling station. He had a filling station - he and another fellow for several years. He had his own garage, that's what I meant. He had what they used to call the Green Front Garage. And then the Texaco Station down here - he had that. The Texaco Station was still here when I came here; Tony Guinella had it. He (my husband) sold it to Tony Guinella. He got so he couldn't take care of it right anymore, because of his health and he sold it to Tony. Then he had a Conoco Station up on the corner on Baseline.

We didn't have a refrigerator or icebox then. On our back porch, we had shelves put up in there and we'd butcher our meat in the fall, we'd butcher a beef and a hog, and then we'd dress a bunch of fryers and some stewing hens and some turkeys. And we'd wrap them all up and put them all up on those shelves and they'd freeze and they wouldn't thaw out until late in the spring. So that's the way we kept our meat. That's a beautiful

deep freeze, isn't it; it didn't cost a penny. No. We had all kind of meat froze out there. Anything you could freeze, why we'd stick it up on one of those shelves. And it would stay froze until spring.

If we wanted to go someplace, we'd never take the road for it; we'd just take off across the fields in our sleigh. And drive over wire fences and everything else. It must have been a fun childhood, though. It was.

You used to go to dances, didn't you? Yes, I saw the time when we'd put four horses on the sleigh and go to dances - to get through the snow. Where did you dance? Different people's homes. Square dancing mostly - that's about all I knew.

What did you have in the way of Christmas time? How did you celebrate Christmas? Well, we'd go to - all the folks would get together and celebrate. We never had a Christmas tree up there in Dakota. They didn't have no Christmas trees up there. They'd chip in a few for the churches and the schools so they could have them and that's all. Nobody else had a Christmas tree. What did you get for Christmas then? Did you get presents then? Yeah, like they do now; they gave presents. And we'd all get together and have a big dinner. Of course, my folks was never up there after I went to Dakota. I was back home one Christmas. But Glenn's folks and us would all get together. When you were at home in Iowa, what kind of gifts did you get for Christmas? Oh, just the things you get here, mostly. You didn't get so many toys because they didn't make them. You had to make your own toys. They got some candy and nuts, the little kids did. And the rest would get presents. Did you ever have a store doll? Not that I ever remember. I don't ever remember having one. Did they make dolls for you? Yes, they'd make imitations. Not very often, though. Well we didn't get very much. You couldn't buy it - they didn't have it.

How many years were you and Mr. Brown married? Sixty-five. (They celebrated their anniversary in October and Dad went in ____.) Four years ago today. That's a nice long life together. Yes, that's a long time. You're blessed. He was sick for about - he was off work 20 years. That's a long time to be sick. He wasn't that sick - he could go fishing and all that - he could sit around and fish along the stream or lake. Do you like to fish? No.

(One beautiful thing that happened was that TV came in when my Dad first became ill and he was told to be quiet if he wanted to live and with that new TV, that was the greatest thing that ever happened. He just sat around and read and watched TV. I don't think he had the first one in Lafayette but he had one of the first. It was great, absolutely great).

On our 64th wedding anniversary, he wanted to go to church. And he wanted to go the Presbyterian. He's a Presbyterian. He wanted to go up there where Ray was so we went up there to church and to Ray's for dinner. And the minister preached on getting along and he said we were a prime example of getting along - 64 years.

What church do you attend here? The Baptist. Have you seen a lot of changes in the church through the years? Oh, yes, quite a lot. There's a lot more members now. I haven't been for quite a while. So I listen to television, the sermon on that. They've done a lot of remodeling on the little church from some of the pictures that I have. They had done a lot before I quit going.

Who were your neighbors around here through the years? Well, when we first moved up here there was the Hendersons, Dave and Myrtle Henderson. And Lou and Mae Khris (sp?) And Gordons lived next door and Grahams lived over on the corner there. And Charlie Billington. And the Wilsons. And there were no other houses. Most of your neighbors are gone now, aren't they? Yeah, they're almost all gone.

One of the Stobs came to visit me last year. She heard that I had some pictures at the library and she came to my house to visit and was Lizzie. She was from Louisville wasn't she? No, she said she was from here. She was raised right across from the postoffice in the second house. She came through here to see who was still around that she knew. She was 89. We had a nice visit. Of course, I don't know a lot of the people that she knew; it would be better if it had been someone who knew Lafayette better.

Your husband never did do any mining or anything like that? No. He farmed when we came here and then he went into a garage or filling station. How many acres did he farm? A thousand. With horses. We raised wheat and barley and rye and oats.

There was no radio or television or telephones or nothing.

The government bought several horses during the war. Did they give you full price? We never got what they were worth, no. And they came and took two of our men out of the field when they were out plowing and drafted them. One of them we heard from for a long time and all of a sudden his letters stopped and I don't know whether he was killed or what. But the other one came back. He was out to see us a couple of years ago. That's a long time to keep a friendship up, isn't it? Uh-huh.

How did you get your crops harvested without help? We got all those IWWs, they called them then. What did they call them? "I Won't Work". Yeah, we'd get them and feed them a meal or two and then they were gone then and we'd have to go get some more.

I cooked on the cook car up there for about four or five years. One year, I cooked 60 days straight. What is a cook car? That's where they'd have those big threshing machines and they'd go around from farm to farm. And they had, well something like those trailer houses they have now - great big ones that they'd cook in and they'd move it from one farm to the other. I cooked in one of them. The one year I cooked 60 days, they weren't threshing all that time because it rained a lot but they had to keep their men whether they worked or not. What did they pay you to work in one of those? I think I got \$2.50 a week. You had to make all your own bread, all your own cakes? Everything. You couldn't buy anything like that. Maybe I'd be getting a meal and they'd come in and want to move us. I'd cook the meal while we were movin'. They pulled the car by horse, I suppose? Yeah. It was hard. And you'd sleep anyplace you could find a place to sleep. I slept on the table a lot of times and on the floor. Maybe out in the wheat field. Throw a blanket on some wheat in the wheat field and lay on that. Sounds like a lot of hard work to me. It was a lot of work for what you got for it. It was hard work; of course, part of the time I had help. One year, there was a woman that helped all the time. How many men did you feed there? Oh, all the way from 20 to 30. Three meals a day. And you were supposed to have cookies or doughnuts for breakfast and pie for dinner and cake for supper. And you had to bake it all and your bread besides. I baked about 18 - 20 loaves of bread every other day. What did you use for fuel in the stove? Coal. It must have been awfully hot. It was hot in there. I can't imagine feeding that many people three times a day. It was a lot of work. I'd make cookies or doughnuts, maybe pies, after I'd get them all fed and the dishes washed at night. You had to wash all your own dishes besides? Yes. You didn't have no dishwasher. What did you do with your family? What did you do with your kids? Well, I didn't have until the last year and I didn't cook for so many that year. And I cooked in the house. He didn't go out threshing so much that year and I worked for him. It would be awfully hard to have children and cook like that. How did you manage to keep house besides; or did you have to let it go until you could get back here? Well, I had a big garden too and I'd go and pick the cucumbers and things like that that had to be picked and put them down in the basement. Then when I got through cooking for the threshers after the season was over, then I'd make pickles.

(She was curing meat one day and burned down the house) I put some fat in the oven to render the grease out of it for lard and when I opened the oven door there was smoke. Were you burned? Well, I burned my hair and my eyebrows and I burnt my neck and my arms were burned a little bit. It caught fire? Yes, it caught the whole house on fire. We didn't get anything out. We just got some pictures enlarged. The family was sitting there and they were sitting just inside the door. And when the thing exploded, Glenn grabbed Iva and one picture and I grabbed Cecil and the other one. That's all we got. They couldn't get back in to get anything out. You had to get another house then? We were on a rented place then. We sold ours because we knew we were gonna have to leave. We sold our place and we got a rented place. They didn't care if it burned down; they were gonna build a new house there anyway.

Did you do your own sewing or did you buy most of your clothes? I did most of my own sewing. I liked to sew. I used to make all our clothes, that is, mine and Iva's. I used to like to piece quilts. Did you have nice material to use? I had nice material. How much was it a yard? Oh, all the way from 10¢ to 25¢. They didn't have money then like they have now. And things were cheaper then.

Do you remember your first or your dad's first car? Yeah, it was a Model T. In North Dakota; we drove out here in it. (When her grandmother was 100 years old in Iowa, there were only several cars in the county and they came out to give her a ride on her 100th birthday.)

Well, I certainly do thank you for letting us make the tape.
I've enjoyed it.