

INTERVIEW WITH: Myron Willis and wife, Zella Mecham Willis

INTERVIEWER: Vern Condie

INTERVIEW NUMBER: one

DATE OF INTERVIEW: January, 1963

PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Willis home, Henrieville

SUBJECT OF INTERVIEW: Henrieville early history and memories

TRANSCRIBER: Marsha Holland

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Recording equipment: original reel to reel copied to cassette tape.

The following interview was part of a project that Vernon A. Condie, Beaver, Utah worked on in the early 1960s when he was a park ranger for Bryce Canyon National Park. The purpose of Mr. Condie's project was to collect local oral histories in order to enhance archival material for Bryce Canyon National Park. Through collaboration with Mr. Condie, this interview was copied from the original handwritten transcription and taped interview, both currently in Mr. Condie's possession. Myron and Zella Willis' daughter, Carma Barton, kindly helped with editing and adding information for the appendix.

Tape one, side A

VC: OK, so you start to talk to us now, will you?

MW: The reason my father lived here was on account of the range was so good for cattle. And he loved to run cattle. He didn't like farming so much as he liked to run cattle. And the range here was good. He had been out here and as he looked over the country, and worked on East Fork, then he decided to move Mother out and her family. He had one wife and family here, then he decided to move the other because there was too much running back and forth to look after the two families. He moved the other family out here and now, what year did we move out here Ma?

ZW: Eighteen and ninety-one.

MW: He moved out here in 1891 and he run the Kanarra Co-op herd, cattle herd, on the East Fork. He had been down in this country and seen that it had been good cattle

country, so he moved Mother out here to keep from running back and forth, so he could take care of the two families.

And it was a good cattle country, so he used to ride for the Kannarra Co-op. In order to have his cattle together, the Kanarra Co-op and his'n, why that was one reason he come out here.

VC: Can you tell us something about some of the main families that lived here at that time or in your early boyhood days?

MW: Well, there was about fifteen families here when we moved out. Twelve or fifteen, wasn't there Ma?

ZW: Well, I imagine, yes.

MW: But I couldn't remember any of them.

VC: Do you remember anything about the settling of Tropic?

MW: No, well, when we moved here there was only one family that lived in the Tropic Valley, one family and that was Samuel Pollock's father, Bill Pollock's father. He lived down in the valley there below the highway now, and that was the only family that lived there when we moved here.

VC: OK, we'll have to hold this closer, so we can pick you up.

MW: There was a little settlement over in what we called the East Valley, that is over east of Tropic, then we moved down the valley, we come on down the creek, there were few families living along the creek by Cannonville. Then there were a few families at what they called Georgetown, down there south of Cannonville. That is all broke up and gone now and there ain't no body living there. There were about fifteen families living here when we moved here. They had the school house, run a school, and a church house, and had a bishop and councilors.

VC: Did you ever hear of who the bishop was?

MW: Bishop Goulding, Daniel Goulding and Moroni Savage and...

ZW: Grandpa Riggs, W.S. Riggs was one counselor for awhile and then when your father come they put him: Grandpa moved away, and they put your father in as counselor.

MW: We were here quite awhile before they put my Dad in as counselor, wasn't we?

ZW: That is what I said, after Grandpa was moved.

VC: Can you remember anything about or any talk about Bryce Canyon becoming a park?

MW: No, in the early days, nothing a'tall. The East Fork in general was just open country. There wasn't no government supervision at all. You could run your cattle up there, your sheep up there, just the same as you could any where else on the range.

VC: I see, the people who ran there were not necessarily interested in homesteading it, just to run it in the summer, right?

MW: Yeah, there were some of them that homesteaded down by Ruby Syrett's and there on up the creek a ways there were some homesteads, but then the other part of the East Fork was just open country. You could go where you pleased as long as you didn't trespass on somebody else, you know.

VC: Tell us something about any interesting incidents that happened to you, any experiences during your time here that would be of interest to us.

MW: Well, I don't know as I would.

VC: Do either of you know when Henrieville was settled?

ZW: Wasn't it in the year of eighteen and seventy-eight.

VC: 1878. Then was it settled prior to Cannonville and Georgetown or later?

MW: Pardon me, but this was a bigger settlement than there was under The Dump anywheres, by the time we moved in here, Henrieville was. There was quite a few down along the creek to from where Cannonville is now, on down the creek a few miles and then in what we called Yellow Creek, there were a few settlements up along in there. But Henrieville was the biggest settlement in this section of the country when we moved here. I believe there were fifteen families here.

VC: Then was Cannonville and Georgetown settled prior to Henrieville?

MW: Yes, yes, what families there was when we moved here was settled quite a bit before Henrieville was settled.

VC: And who was Henrieville named for?

MW: Well, I wouldn't know.

VC: Was it named a after some man named Henry?

MW: Well, if it was, it was named after someone who lived in Panguitch. Do you know how it come to get the name Henry?

ZW: It was named for President James Henry of a, he was the President of the Panguitch Stake. He was well thought of by everyone. I think his name was James L. Henry. Well, I'm not certain... (inaudible).

VC: Will you hold this microphone and tell us anything you could about Henrieville?

ZW: Well, the first people that came to settle here, there were about eight families of them. There was the Littlefield brothers, Frank, Jack, "O" and Dave, and Edwin, and Sam Littlefield, and Sid Littlefield. Then there was the Thompson brothers, Greg, Jack and Will Thompson and then Joseph Ingraman. They were mainly attracted to this country by the stories of two men, especially, that heard them talk of it. One was James Andrew; he was an Indian fighter and Arn Thompson.

Recording stops, then resumes

VC: What we'd like you to tell us especially about putting in the irrigation water in this undershot, which you mentioned last time, that goes down to the west farms, when you did it, and you mentioned something before that you mortgaged the water, and I wanted to know a little bit more about how that took place.

MW: I see. (Chuckles)

VC: And something about how you used to heat the houses and when you got your electric lights and your culinary water that matter up to like a city than a village like it used to be. (Background chuckles).

MW: Well, I'd rather not try it. I'm afraid I couldn't connect it up.

ZW: Well, just tell him like you did the other night, he said.

MW: Well, I couldn't remember the dates and the year, and I've gotten so I can't remember things like I used to. I don't remember when we put the culinary water in (see appendix i) and I don't remember when we put the undershot in. (see appendix ii)

VC: Oh, don't you? I think you were telling me it was somewhere around 1919.

MW: I couldn't say.

VC: Can you tell us anything about the Indian experiences that you or your father had before?

MW: No, I couldn't try to tell it. I wish I could.

VC: Roy Willis is your nephew, isn't he?

MW: Yes, yes.

VC: Well, he was telling me something about an Indian incident that happened down here pulling on a woman Indian, how they used fight over them, fight over the Indian squaw, pull on one side, then pull on the other, and so on. And she is buried around here. Do you know anything about that?

MW: No, I don't know anything about that.

VC: Well, then I guess I'll just get from her what she's got on the paper.

Interview ends.

CULINARY WATER

From the time the town of Henrieville was established until March of 1942, the residents of Henrieville obtained their culinary water from the creek on the south side of town. The water was dipped from the creek in buckets and put into barrels. It was then transported approximately ½ mile from the creek to their residences on what was known as a 'water lizard'. The lizard was a wooden sled with two runners and a frame to hold the 50 gallon wooden water barrel in place. It was pulled by a single horse. The water was then left sitting until whatever silt that may have been in it settled to the bottom before it was used.

Myron P. Willis was President of the Irrigation Co. When it was decided to pipe the culinary water to town from the spring, six miles to the north of Henrieville. Harry Quilter was secretary, and Luther Moore was a board member. There was one other board member whose name I can't be certain of.

It took a lot of time and effort to work out a solution to finance the project. The farmers were the only ones who held enough collateral to secure a loan. Finally, all the farmers agreed to mortgage their water stock as security for a loan. The members all owned from only one share to as many as one hundred shares of stock., but it was finally agreed that they would all have equal shares in the pipeline. A loan of ten thousand five hundred dollars was finally obtained through a government agency at an annual interest rate of 3 %, for a time period of twenty years. That was a considerable amount of money at that time. The government agreed to match the amount of the loan with a five thousand dollar grant. They also agreed to provide engineers to supervise the project.

The actual work of the project began in 1940. Each stockholder agreed to work out one membership, or one tap. Memberships cost one hundred sixty-five dollars each, which could be paid in cash or the equivalent in labor on the pipeline. The six miles of trench was dug by hand, the top of the ground being cleared by caterpillar. There was a total of forty memberships signed up to accomplish the work. To dig the trench, prepare the spring box, and lay the pipe took two years. Finally, in March of 1942 the first glass of water was taken from the pipeline at a spot where the head- house was later built. Residents then collected their water from the pipe until such a time as the digging of trenches throughout town could be accomplished; eventually bringing the water directly to each household. Later on the pipeline in town had to be redug & lowered to three feet instead of two, as the engineer had directed, because the line kept freezing during the winter months.

UNDERSHOT

Gradually as the town of Henrieville grew, and therefore more farms were established, there came a need to split the stream of irrigation water into two streams. One stream watered the farms to the south of town and was called the south stream. The second stream accommodated the farm ground on the west of town and was called the north stream. The farms on the west were separated by a huge dry wash which was approximately one hundred eighty feet wide and thirty feet deep. The farmers had to construct what they called a 'flume' to carry their share of the water across the wash. The flume itself was made from wood, and was supported by large wooden timbers. Although there was some leakage, this system worked fairly well until flood season. The large flash floods, so common to our area, gave them a lot of problems.

Finally in 1949, with help from the Soil Conservation district and the Farmers Home Administration, a project was undertaken to pipe the irrigation water across the wash through means of an 'undershot'. The undershot consisted of one hundred eighty feet of fourteen inch steel pipe, which carried the water underground across the wash. The cost was one thousand six hundred dollars taking two months to complete. It proved to be a wonderful solution to their problems for a time, until the occurrence of a few proverbial flash flood seasons. The huge flash floods which carried large boulders, as well as other debris, finally did their work of eroding down to the pipe, causing damage to the pipe. The most effective way they found to repair the holes in the pipe was to tightly wrap and wire rubber inner tubes around the damaged area of the pipe. This constant seasonal maintenance continued until the eventual installation of the sprinkler systems in use throughout the valley today.